



**NEWS page 4**  
Read about a local nonprofit that gives bikes to children in our community



**FEATURES page 9**  
Explore the fascination and criticism of the 'Clean Girl' aesthetic



**SPORTS page 12**  
Read about fall athletes that received the All State and All County award

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THE

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# THE PROWLER

Quince Orchard High School — 15800 Quince Orchard Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 — [@qohs\\_prowler](#)

## Recent policy shifts regarding Israel-Palestine conflict

BY ISADORA KAUFMAN  
*Editor-in-Chief*

It has been over two months since the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine escalated due to an attack on Israel by the militant Islamic group Hamas. The surprise attack on a Jewish holiday consisted of Hamas militants unexpectedly killing and abduction of Israeli civilians from 22 communities and has since led to the death of more than 17,000 Palestinians and 1,200 Israelis, according to CNN.

This initial attack killed 1,300 Israelis, injured more than 2,000 Israelis and x Israelis were taken hostage. The Israeli government responded to the unexpected attack by rounding up 300,000 reservists within two days.

According to the International Conflict Tracker, Israel's cabinet also "formally declared war against Hamas, followed by a directive from the defense minister to the Israel Defense Forces to carry out a complete siege of Gaza." This complete siege, issued by Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, declared that the civilians living within the Gaza territory would be deprived of electricity, food, and fuel. According to the Congressional

Research Service, the Gaza strip already "faced crisis-level economic and humanitarian conditions" prior to the tightened restrictions due to the blockade that has been imposed on the Gaza Strip for over 15 years.

Following the "intense bombardment of Israeli jets- on the Gaza strip - Hamas said it would execute an Israeli captive for every Israeli bombing of a civilian house without warning," according to Reuters. The Hamas group also threatened to broadcast the killing of the Israeli civilians for the world to see across social media.

In an effort to recover the hostages, the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, conducted a full-scale attack on the Northern portion of the Gaza Strip, where much of the Hamas militant group lies. According to Reuters, Netanyahu "vowed to destroy the enemy [Hamas] above and below ground."

At the same time, the Israeli government expressed their intention to help and protect the innocent civilians living in the Gaza Strip from this attack; Netanyahu urged them to migrate to the southern portion of the Strip before the invasion that was planned to take place on October 28. Thousands of Palestinians migrated South in poor conditions, as these travels were

not something anyone had planned for. Not everyone was able to escape the attacks in the North, specifically people with disabilities. According to Al Jazeera, the order to evacuate South did not consider the limitations of civilians with disabilities, "many of whom were unable to leave."

In the past, when Palestinians have been displaced, they have migrated to Egypt and Jordan, but in the current war, "Egypt and Jordan have resisted accepting anyone during the current war," according to International Conflict Tracker. AP News explains how Egypt and Jordan already have a large Palestinian population, and if they were to allow the displaced Palestinians to migrate there now, "it could wreck peace in the region[s]." The countries also claim that Palestinians taking refuge in these Arab countries could pose a threat to the safety of Egyptian and Jordanian civilians, as Egypt fears "Hamas fighters could enter Egypt and trigger a new war in the Sinai Peninsula by launching attacks on Israel," according to AP News.

President Biden responded to the events with a visit to Israel on October 18th, alongside his cabinet, where he talked with Prime Minister Netanyahu in an attempt to resolve the conflict. According to NPR, in the 31-hour visit, "Biden announc[ed] \$100 million in aid to the Palestinians, and convinc[ed] Israel to

agree to allow humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza, and persuaded Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sissi to open up a vital land crossing into southern Gaza."

Following this visit, Biden made a \$100 billion supplemental request to Congress, "making the case to Congress and the American people that the U.S. needs to support Israel and Ukraine not just for those countries, but for U.S. national security interests," according to CBS News.

This request has been extremely polarizing, as \$14 billion of that package would go to Israel for military defense from future attacks. While Biden has expressed sympathy for the Palestinian casualties, according to Jonathon Guyer of Vox, "this money is allowing Israel to continue the war and is [allowing] them to [continue the] large-scale military operation that has so far killed over 11,000 Palestinians and destroyed hospitals and civilian infrastructure."

Biden's aid to Israel is expected due to the United States' long-standing relationship with the Israeli government, as Israel "has received \$260 billion in combined military and economic aid since World War II," according to US News.

Due to the length of this article, scan this QR code or go to [qohsjournalism.wordpress.com](#) to read the rest of it!



## Civilians express frustration over the trend in mass shootings

BY PATRINA PUN  
*Senior Staff Writer*

As the end of the year is quickly approaching, the number of mass shootings each year has continued to bring devastation to many. According to ABC News, there have been at least 627 mass shootings this year in the United States. This is roughly on par with the previous years as 2022 had 645 mass shootings and 2021 with 690 shootings. Mass shootings are defined as an incident in which three or more victims are shot or killed, and incidents like those in Lewiston, Maine; Nashville, Tennessee; Buffalo, New York, and many more have spurred citizens to call for gun reform that has yet to be acted on.

On October 28, in Lewiston, Maine, a U.S. Army reservist named Robert Card of Bowdoin, ME, fatally shot 18 people at a bowling alley and a restaurant, according to AP News. Two days later, he was found dead behind a tractor-trailer in nearby Lisbon Falls from an self-inflicted gunshot. Card did have a history of mental illness that raised suspicion from the community, yet an intervention was never successfully completed.

On February 15, Payton Gendron, a White supremacist, racially targeted and killed 10 Black civilians at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Shortly after, he was sentenced to life in prison.

On March 27, in Nashville, Tennessee, three children, and staff members at a private school were shot and killed by a 28-year-old, Audrey Hale.

Equally important, according to Forbes, there was also a shooting in Birmingham, Alabama on an interstate that left four people wounded on November 11, and a shooting in Independence, Missouri at a mall that left another four injured on November 13. These shootings are a simple demonstration of how there is no restriction to where such danger can take place.

Locally, according to Al Jazeera, there has been a total of 214 homicides in Washington, D.C. just this year, a 37% increase from the previous year which has left citizens worried for their safety.

Each year in this country, an increasing number of innocent citizens are suffering the consequences of the lack of



The three Palestinian victims who were targeted in Burlington, Vermont

substantive gun control.

Civilians are not only subject to sporadic killings but both racially and ethnically targeted.

On November 28, three Palestinian college students were in Burlington, Vermont, visiting their grandmother. One of the students was shot on a walk allegedly by Jason Eaton, the prime suspect who eventually pleaded not guilty on three counts of attempted second-degree murder. The victims' families claimed this was "a crime fueled by hate," as two of the three students on this walk were wearing keffiyehs — traditional Palestinian scarves.

According to the victims in a statement to ABC, they did not know this individual as he "stepped off his porch and shot."

With the recent events of the Isreal and Palestine conflict, the Vermont situation is one example of the increased tension and violence towards Palestinian people. Due to the Israel and Palestine conflict, there has also been an increase in hostility towards Jewish civilians as well. The Los Angeles shooting in March and other antisemitic protests have left Jewish people feeling unsafe and uncomfortable.



# MD snow watch: What to expect in 2024

BY NADIA AUNG  
Staff Writer

With the past several winters being mild, and only getting 0.4" of snow last year, we here in Montgomery County are expecting a harsher winter ahead—cooler than normal temperatures and above average snowfall.

Washington, DC and its surrounding counties are expected to experience 17-22" of snow over the course of this winter. According to Fox 5 DC, the DMV will likely experience one to three "Winter Storm"-level weather events with a high chance for a blizzard-level storm.

Chief meteorologist for 7News First Alert Weather Veronica Johnson said that the average snowfall for DC is 13.6". In fact, counties in Virginia like Loudoun County and Frederick County could experience as much as 30" of snow this year. Johnson said that starting in late December or early January, you can expect some snow fall.

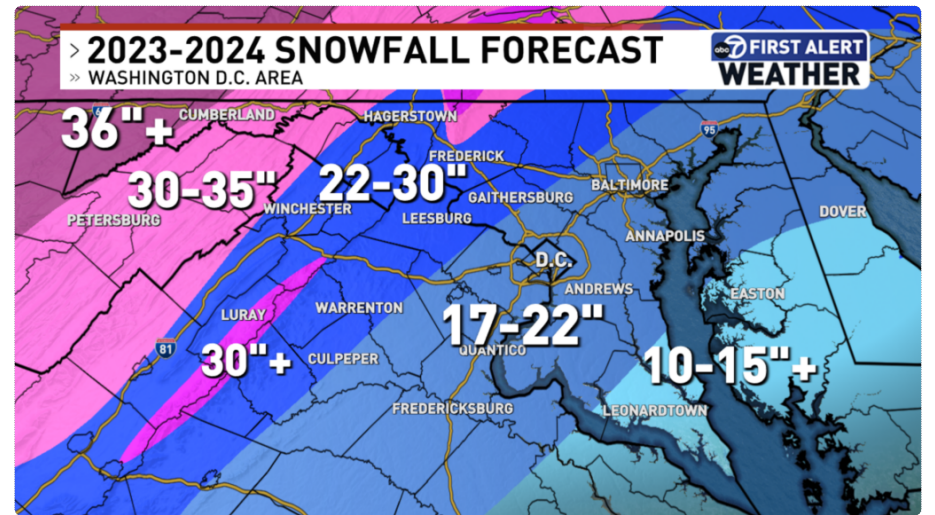
The main cause for the snowy outlook is the ongoing El Niño. According to the National Oceanic and

Administration (NOAA), it is the climate pattern characterized by warmer than normal ocean waters in the tropical Pacific. (In the 1600s, South American fishermen first noticed periods of unusually warm weather in the Pacific Ocean. They called this period El Niño de Navidad, or 'little boy of Nativity' in Spanish, because El Niño typically peaks around December.)

A stronger El Niño episode doesn't guarantee more snow, but stronger El Niño episodes have brought warmer than average temperatures but also high precipitation in the DC/Baltimore area.

"There's no bigger weight that is put into this forecast for this winter season than El Niño. And right now, it's looking like we're going to have not just an El Niño here, but a strong El Niño that is going to continue into early spring," said Johnson.

Last winter, however, was extremely rare. The temperatures were warmer than normal, with it going up to 60 degrees for several days throughout January and February.



2023-2024 snowfall forecast

IMAGE BY ABC7 NEWS

It was predicted that the DMV would get 9 to 18 inches of snowfall, but it got less than an inch.

However, on Monday, December 11, the MCPS community woke up to a surprise—snow! All schools in the county delayed opening for two hours due to overnight snowfall, with up to 2.5" reported in Damascus.

"I was really surprised about the snow, to be honest. It made me happy and really made my day," said freshman Roham Roshan.

How do individuals at QO feel about the snow outlook, and how would they spend a snow day? Senior Isabella Rodgaard said she's glad that there is a

chance for it to snow this year than what meteorologists predicted last year. "I'd be really happy if we got a big snow storm, because I could really use the time to sleep in right now," said Rodgaard. Sophomore Aaron Lee said if it snowed, he would stay in or go ice skating. Freshman Aliya Argubie and sophomore Akinsa Fernando both said they'd be happy if Maryland received snow this year, and they would spend a snow day by sleeping in and relaxing.

If there were to be a big snow storm, security guard Daniel Isom said he would make sure his family and others were okay. "I would volunteer at local police stations or fire stations to try to help and assist with rescues," said Isom.

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Senior Staff Writers: Kate Belman, Motaz Deify, Sophie Fawkner, Lily Kaplan, Olivia Maytin, Patrina Pun

Staff Writers: Nadia Aung, Maggie Brady, Dylan Flaim, David Guevara, Maddie King, Noah Kravitz, Christian Lee, Sophia Lee, Brooke Lyons, Priti Madhavan, Kayla Pilloff, Molly Rubman, Elisha Senga, Ambriella Yagaka

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Staff Advisor: Ms. Megan Cooley-Klein

## CONTACT US

Quince Orchard High School  
15800 Quince Orchard Road,  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Phone: (301) 740-8600

Website: qohsjournalism.wordpress.com

Email: QOHSproowler@gmail.com

Twitter & Instagram: @qohs\_prowler

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The Prowler gladly accepts comments, concerns, and letters to the editor. Letters may be emailed to QOHSproowler@gmail.com, mailed c/o The Prowler to the school address above, or dropped off directly to Ms. Cooley-Klein in Room 234. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

## ABOUT

The Prowler is published six times a year by the students of Quince Orchard High School, and it has been continuously published since the school opened in the fall of 1988. To become a staff member, students should take Journalism A & B with Ms. Cooley-Klein, then fill out an application to join the Prowler staff for the following year.

# OpenAI CEO's exile sparks confusion in tech world

BY CHRISTIAN LEE  
Staff Writer

On November 17, OpenAI's board of directors ousted co-founder and chief executive Sam Altman from his job, stating they "no longer ha[d] confidence in his ability to continue leading OpenAI" — what followed was a massive exodus coordinated by hundreds of OpenAI employees who rallied behind Altman. Although it was never officially revealed why he was fired, some speculate that moral clashings over commercial growth and the advancement of AI were the leading reasons.

In 2005, after two years of studying computer science at Stanford University, Altman dropped out in pursuit of a mobile app that allowed users to share their geolocation, called Loopt. It was the first batch of eight companies at the Y Combinator (YC) — a major accelerator of technology startups that only enabled Altman's growth to fame. Over the years, he amassed enough influence to be chosen by YC founder Paul Graham to succeed him as president in 2014. A year later, he co-founded OpenAI with the goal of establishing a nonprofit research lab dedicated to building AI transparently and safely.

AI, or artificial intelligence, is a highly autonomous computing system designed to mimic broad human-level cognitive abilities — it uses reinforcement learning from human feedback to learn multiple tasks such as writing essays, solving math problems, and replicating language translation.

In 2019, Altman was appointed by directors at Silicon Valley to be president of OpenAI, which would no longer operate as a nonprofit organization. He had plans to turn the company into a hybrid of a for-profit and a nonprofit in order to take larger sums of money for the

advancement of AI — he eventually created a "capped-profit" entity that accepted millions of dollars from investors like Microsoft, which was vital to the creation of ChatGPT in 2019. However, this "capped-profit" entity was governed by a nonprofit, which was controlled by a board of directors who held immense power over the company's changes. This board structure was put in place to keep the original ethos of the company since OpenAI's researchers were concerned about the harm it would have on society.

Despite this restriction, OpenAI's use began outrunning mitigation measures. Ilya Sutskever—OpenAI's chief scientist, co-founder, and board member—seemed to grow increasingly cautious about AI safety and how it would affect the future. On multiple occasions, according to employees close to Altman, Sutskever clashed with Altman over balancing safety concerns with commercial growth. Later on, a board meeting was held with Sutskever regretfully informing Altman that he was fired on behalf of the board of directors, according to Greg Brockman, the chairman of the board and president of OpenAI. Brockman was also told he would maintain rule at OpenAI, but would no longer remain chairman of the board since he sided with Altman on the matter.

"Mr. Altman's departure follows a deliberative review process by the board, which concluded that he was not consistently candid in his communications with the board, hindering its ability to exercise its responsibilities," OpenAI said in a statement.

Around the same time, Brockman, along with three senior researchers, quit their jobs. These collective departures sparked outrage among OpenAI employees; OpenAI's biggest investors, including

Microsoft, also rallied behind them. Microsoft even announced that they would hire Altman and Brockman to lead a new AI research unit, and that preparations for a lab were already underway.

Following this announcement, OpenAI hired ex-Twitch CEO Emmett Shear as Altman's interim replacement. The board originally stated OpenAI technology chief Mira Murati would assume that role, but she soon joined the parade of employees supporting Altman.

On Monday, November 20, more than 500 out of 770 employees signed a letter calling for the resignation of the company's board and the reinstatement of Altman as CEO. The employees threatened to quit their jobs if their demands were not met — included among the signees was Sutskever, who expressed personal remorse for his role in firing Altman.

"I deeply regret my participation in the board's actions," Sutskever posted on X (Twitter). "I never intended to harm OpenAI. I love everything we've built together and I will do everything I can to reunite the company."

Pressured by employees and investors, OpenAI eventually invited Altman back, but stuck to its decision in removing him as CEO. Then, on November 29, OpenAI officially reinstated Altman as CEO of the company.

Although his return to the company has restored a needed tranquility to many OpenAI employees, a question still remains — how can OpenAI assure its ability to self-govern, and how will AI be kept safe in the future?





# Rosalynn Carter: her life and legacy

BY MAGGIE BRADY  
Staff Writer

Rosalynn Carter, former first lady of the United States, passed away on November 19 at the age of 97 years old.

Carter worked tirelessly through her husband Jimmy Carter's presidency, serving from 1977 to 1981, as a leading advocate for mental health, caregiving, early childhood immunization and human rights. "Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter worked for more than five decades to improve the quality of life for people around the world," according to a statement from The Carter Center.

The Carters founded The Carter Center, a non-profit, nongovernmental organization, in 1982 in partnership with Emory University. The center consists of a variety of peace and health programs aimed to wage peace, fight disease, and give hope.

The Carter Center has been involved in helping over 70 countries by "resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; [and] improving mental health care," according to The Carter Center on their website.

Carter herself was extremely passionate about mental health advocacy and led The Carter

Center's mental health program. The program works to promote awareness about mental health, inform public policy, achieve equity for mental health care comparable to other health care, and reduce stigma against those with mental illnesses.

"We have to get the word out that mental illnesses can be diagnosed and treated, and almost everyone suffering from mental illness can live meaningful lives in their communities," said Carter in a quote featured on the website.

The former first lady established the Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism in 1996 and the program has since awarded over 220 journalists from across the world the highly-competitive fellowship.

Carter founded this program in order to "give journalists the resources they need to report on mental health... to help dismantle through storytelling the stigma that millions of people face every day," according to the Carter Center's website.

During her husband's presidency, Carter served as active honorary chair of the President's Commission on Mental Health. Her work helped bring about the passage of the Mental Health Systems Act of 1980, which "reaffirmed the priority for community mental health services," according to the National Library of Medicine. Carter's advocacy led not only to national



Rosalynn Carter and her husband Jimmy Carter

change, but to global change as well. The center works closely with Liberia and has helped to train over 300 credentialed mental health clinicians who work across the country.

Carter's urge to help extended beyond mental health with the founding of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers (RCI) in 1987. "At a time when more and more Americans are called on to give care, it is critically important that we do all we can to support caregivers," said Carter.

After over 35 years, the institute continues to assist 53 million family caregivers. RCI provides support for dementia and military caregivers, among many others. The programs are designed to

"promote your health, strength, and resilience, and can help you be better prepared for when caregiving gets tough," according to RCI's website.

Carter was recognized for her work in 2001 when she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. She was praised for her life-long dedication to the concerns of women and children, the poor, and the mentally ill.

Carter's legacy will live on through the many programs and initiatives she promoted throughout her life. As for how she wants to be remembered, she once said, "I would like for people to think that I took advantage of the opportunities I had and did the best I could."

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# Shifting gears for good: Local nonprofit provides free bikes for kids

BY KAYLA PILLOFF  
Staff Writer

"Once you learn how to ride a bike, you never forget": This is a quote that holds true to almost all. And thanks to local nonprofit Kids On Bikes, children in Montgomery County have the ability to not only learn the skill but have their very own bike at no cost.

The organization was started by QO alumnus Robb Hampton three years ago during the pandemic. Hampton—who graduated from Quince Orchard in 1993 and whose daughter is currently a QO freshman—has had a longstanding relationship with biking, whether through being a bike messenger or racer. He says his mission is "every kid gets a bike no matter what... regardless of grades or work."

Like many others, Hampton was unfortunately let go from his job due to the pandemic. However, he knew he "wanted to do something with bikes because I've always loved [them]," he said.

The spark for the organization also happened during the pandemic, when many kids would go to their schools to get food for their family as a part of the Free and Reduced Meal plan. After getting contacted by the Ridgeview Parents Teachers Student Association, and hearing about students "relying on school for food, I was like, 'Yeah, man, let's make some connections.'" This was what got the

gears going for Kids on Bikes.

Hampton reached out to the community through local Facebook groups and, as he put it, "went around town gathering bikes, putting them in my garage, fixing them and then distributing them to kids directly."

*"Every kid gets a bike no matter what... regardless of grades or work."*

- Robb Hampton

As many know, the pandemic was a tough time for both children and parents alike. These free bikes provided students a way to get to the meal distribution sites, and was proven to be extremely rewarding for both Hampton and the community.

Hampton had something, and within the first couple of months he had given away hundreds of bikes, as well as got featured on the news. "People were excited," Hampton said. He officially started Kids on Bikes that October of 2020.

One of Hampton's favorite memories he recounts is when he had given around 100 bikes to a community. Around a year later, he visited the same neighborhood for a bike safety program and, he said, "80% of the kids that got a bike came



Head of nonprofit Robb Hampton poses with bikes that he donated to Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

back." The joy of seeing all the kids with the bikes he had repaired made him "so glad... they still have the bikes and they're not in a gut somewhere."

Fast forward three years, his passion benefits hundreds of children in the local community, who get to experience the joy of cruising in their neighborhood, or biking to their friend's house. In the midst of changing times with technology and new gadgets, the simple art of biking is here to stay.

While he has no official current

count, Hampton says he has distributed at least 500 bikes in the last three years.

Any QO students interested in volunteer work can also help be a part of the process, through getting bikes, helping to repair them, and giving them to Hampton to distribute. If you have bikes you are willing to donate or are interested in earning SSL hours, you can contact Robb Hampton at [kidsonbicycles@gmail.com](mailto:kidsonbicycles@gmail.com).

## KEEPING UP WITH THE KOUGARS

BY PATRINA PUN  
Senior Staff Writer

Welcome back, Cougars! Featured here is our column highlighting important events and the inside scoop at QO, so that you can Keep Up With the Kougars!

### TEACHER OF THE MONTH:

Have you ever taken AP Government or AP Comparative Government? If so, you may be familiar with social studies teacher Karen Jones! Not only is she a beloved teacher here at Quince Orchard High School, but she is also a tennis champion.

Jones was first introduced to the sport in 2019 through volleyball. She had played volleyball all her life and even took it beyond the collegiate level and to her adult life. Her volleyball friends were the ones who initially introduced Jones to tennis, and, from then on, she began to play in the USTA leagues without formal instruction or experience.

She quickly fell in love with the nature of the sport: the fast pace at which it is played and the importance of teamwork it signifies. As of just last year, she played on a North Virginia team that made it to the USTA National Championship and placed fifth place.

In order to make it back to the championship this year, Jones' team specifically entered into a different league to compete down in Virginia Beach, as they had lost in the Northern Virginia league. However, her team demonstrated tenacity



and resilience as they eventually placed 3rd in the nation. Ms. Jones claims, "There were so many tough/competitive matches that could have gone either way, and my teammates were amazing," said Jones. "They told us there were over 1,500 teams in the nation that competed at the 7.0 mixed level, so [third place was] quite an honor."

Throughout her tennis career, Jones has been on various tennis teams and has become good friends with the other players as she is "frequently traveling with these teams." She claims tennis has

helped her "physically in terms of exercise and conditioning," in both tennis and on the court on defense for volleyball.

Jones even plays with fellow social studies teacher Jennifer Yangon a women's tennis team. Though they did not make it to Nationals, they did win their regional tournament and went to Richmond to compete in Sectionals.

With their impressive record, it seems like Quince Orchard's tennis teams better watch out for QO's history department!

### WINTER CONCERT:

This past month, QO's winter concerts were held on December 12-14, in which QO's band, chorus, and orchestra demonstrated their instrumental skills to the public.

Andrew Feinstein, a senior at Quince Orchard High School who is also a part of the school's chorus and band, said the Winter Spectacular was extremely successful. Though it was a very busy week, Feinstein highlighted the performances at the middle schools and elementary schools, saying "everyone seemed to have really enjoyed it."

Since he was young, Feinstein has always taken a liking to instruments. He started with the trumpet before transitioning to his signature French Horn in sixth grade. He is now QO's marching band conductor, which has been a major goal of his. He claims being one has "helped me substantially in understanding what it is like to be a conductor and a music teacher."

If you would like to be featured in our next issue of Keeping Up with the Kougars, please reach out to us through our email at [QOHSproowler@gmail.com](mailto:QOHSproowler@gmail.com)!





# How do QO students prefer to study?

BY CHASE PASEKOFF  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Picture this: a math test, an English essay, a science lab, a Spanish presentation, and a history project — all assigned for the same day. Immediately, your brain goes into “game plan” mode, as you develop a schedule for how you will complete the necessary steps to adequately prepare for each subject. Whether it’s studying in silence in the comfort of your bedroom, or taking a different approach to the dreaded task of studying, QO students have several options that they can take advantage of to make their studying atmosphere more personally desirable.

While some students have to search high and low to find a study space, QO students have an easily accessible study facility at their fingertips. With a quick walk across the street, students can go to the Quince Orchard branch of the Montgomery County Public Libraries. “I study best at the [QO] library,” said sophomore Shia Ringold. “It’s nice to have a quiet environment other than my bedroom, and I’ve found that having a separate study space has helped me to be more productive and engaged in my work.”

Junior Hannah Takada Jacobson shared a similar sentiment when discussing where she can maximize the amount of schoolwork she can accomplish. “I feel most productive when I study at the QO library,” said

Takada Jacobson.

Getting schoolwork done at a local library isn’t the only way students in our community may choose to study. Imagine a latte resting next to you while the sounds of soft instrumental music surround you. The natural sunlight peeking through as you sit comfortably next to a window. Again, with a simple walk across the street, QO students are greeted with another convenient study location: the Potomac Valley Starbucks. The relaxed ambiance of studying at a local coffee shop is typically regarded as an ideal location because of its picturesque environment and inviting aura. Sophomore Karolina Kellogg believes that working at a local coffee shop like Starbucks is beneficial because “you can grab a snack or drink to get you started and casually be able to work in a nicer environment for studying.”

An additional benefit that studying at a restaurant or a library can provide is the ability to collaborate with friends and classmates on assignments. “I enjoy studying with a friend or two because I feel so much more supported,” said Ringold. “If I don’t understand a concept, I can ask for clarification.” Having a friend to accompany you can also help keep you on task. “It is nice to have someone there because then you feel pressured actually to get work done,” said Ringold.

On the other hand, some students may prefer to study independently as opposed to in a



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group. “I prefer to study alone, that way I’m able to... play music and go at my own pace because some people absorb information longer than others do,” Kellogg said.

Studying solo may be the ideal choice if having friends present could distract you from completing the desired amount of work you intend to finish. Indeed, a common downside to not studying alone is the presence of noise and other potentially disruptive elements of a group. “I find I’m most productive when I’m studying in a very quiet place... It’s best for me because I feel like I can help myself to breathe through the hard stuff and allow my thoughts to slowly catch on,” said Kellogg.

Overall, the options for QO students to personalize their study routines are plentiful. Hopefully,

with more insight as to what the pros and cons may be of studying at these several different locations, QO students will be able to enter into 2024 with a solid study plan in place the next time 4 teachers assign a test for the same day.



# SAD: The forgotten burden of winter

BY BROOKE LYONS  
*Staff Writer*

When you think of winter, what do you think of? Some people may answer that it’s the warm, fuzzy atmosphere and many joyful holidays that make this season recognizable. Another answer to this question would be certain cold-weather activities like ice skating, skiing and even sitting cozily by the fire.

However, one answer that is greatly underrepresented would be seasonal depression.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of mood disorder that usually occurs in late fall and early winter. (Although it’s capable of appearing in the spring and summer seasons, it’s less common then.)

Signs and symptoms of SAD are feelings of sadness, disordered eating, fatigue, and many more. According to the American Psychiatric Association, a biochemical imbalance in the brain may cause this disorder as fewer daylight hours during the winter are available. The misalignment of someone’s circadian rhythm, or their body’s biological clock, may also be to blame for this.

Those who are most affected by SAD would be women and young people ages 18-30. According to the Columbia Counseling Center, 1.7-5.7% of nine to 19-year-olds may have Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Despite factual information surrounding this condition, there is still a lot of misinformation spread. One of the many misconceptions is that if one didn’t have symptoms of SAD as a child, they must be faking it. This is a myth, as many people start seeing symptoms in their early twenties, according to Mind.

Another misconception about Seasonal Affective Disorder is that low energy affects everyone, and

those affected should just snap out of it easily.

In some respects, it is true that during the darker and colder times of the year, people may have lower energy levels. What isn’t normal is the extent of those feelings, and how they affect lives, relationships, and work. Seasonal Affective Disorder can be just as bad as, if not worse, than year-round depression, according to The Recovery Village.

If you notice you or someone else may be suffering, there are ways to be medically diagnosed with SAD. The most common options include a thorough psychological examination of a history of illness in the family, thoughts, feelings, lifestyle and more. A short physical exam may happen as well to look for any signs of SAD. In some cases, Seasonal Affective Disorder may be caused by an underlying physical problem such as an inactive lifestyle or heart problem.

There are proven ways to lessen SAD. This could include getting at least an hour of exercise a day, or having a journal to record thoughts and feelings. Other options would be getting with others and getting plenty of outdoor Vitamin D. Vitamin D is usually gained from outdoor sun exposure and diet, and by getting more of that chemical formula, you get more serotonin, according to Centura Health.

However, if you struggle to get enough Vitamin D from sunlight, a box of artificial light can imitate that, stimulating the brain chemicals of happiness into thinking you’re getting natural sunlight.

Usually, the effects of light therapy happen over weeks. Keep in mind, though, UV should be at a lower level to prevent cancer and damage to cells.

Seasonal Affective Disorder should be treated like any other form of mental illness, since it’s not just a short-term sadness but a long-term struggle.



smiley die - sad | Leo Reynolds | Flickr



Eagles Get SAD Too - The George-Anne Media Group

# Scenes of the Season

In a poll containing five of the most iconic holiday movies, over 100 QO students voted for their favorite.

By SOPHIA LEE & MOLLY RUBMAN

## 5. A Christmas Story

*A Christmas Story (1983)* is a fun family film about Ralphie Parker and his family celebrating the Christmas season. Although it seems like a typical holiday movie, the storyline becomes very complicated. The movie starts with nine-year-old Ralphie, like many young boys at the time, wanting a BB gun, which everyone tells him is too dangerous and that it will “shoot your eye out!” As the movie progresses, you see Ralphie and his little brother Randy face bullies, have drama at school, confront family conflict, and overall encounter chaos. All in all, it is safe to say the family went through many ups and downs as they tried to navigate through the busy holiday season. This is the movie that—even 40 years later—is on the TV all day long during Christmas week. So cozy up with a warm fire, hot chocolate, and loved ones to enjoy this loveable masterpiece, playing on Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, and various channels on television!

## 4. The Nightmare Before Christmas

*The Nightmare Before Christmas*, made in 1993, comes from the creative mind of Tim Burton. This stop-motion claymation film follows the adventures of Halloweentown’s pumpkin king, Jack Skellington, as he wanders off into Christmas Town in hopes of changing his boring routine of scaring people in the real world. After seeing all the bright colors and joy Christmas Town brings, he kidnaps Santa Claus and tries to take control, but soon things start to turn around—and not for the better. This movie has a 95% on Rotten Tomatoes and is a fun twist on a usual Christmas movie. So if you are looking to spice it up this year for a more dark Christmas comedy, this movie is perfect for you! You can find it on Disney+, Vudu, Amazon Prime Video, and Apple TV.

## 3. How the Grinch Stole Christmas

A Dr. Seuss tale straight out of Whoville has been playing by our fireplaces for many holiday seasons. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000)* features the notorious green Grinch, played by Jim Carrey, in his quest to ruin Christmas for the town of Whoville. Even as the Grinch tries to wreck the holiday by stealing presents and snatching decorations, a heartfelt message arises: the town learns that Christmas isn’t a materialistic holiday; it’s a time to be with one another. And instead of being so grouchy all the time, even the Grinch is able to transform and learn to love. This film can be enjoyed by the whole family and is vital in allowing children to understand the true importance of Christmas. Check out Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, and several other platforms to purchase or stream this must-watch!

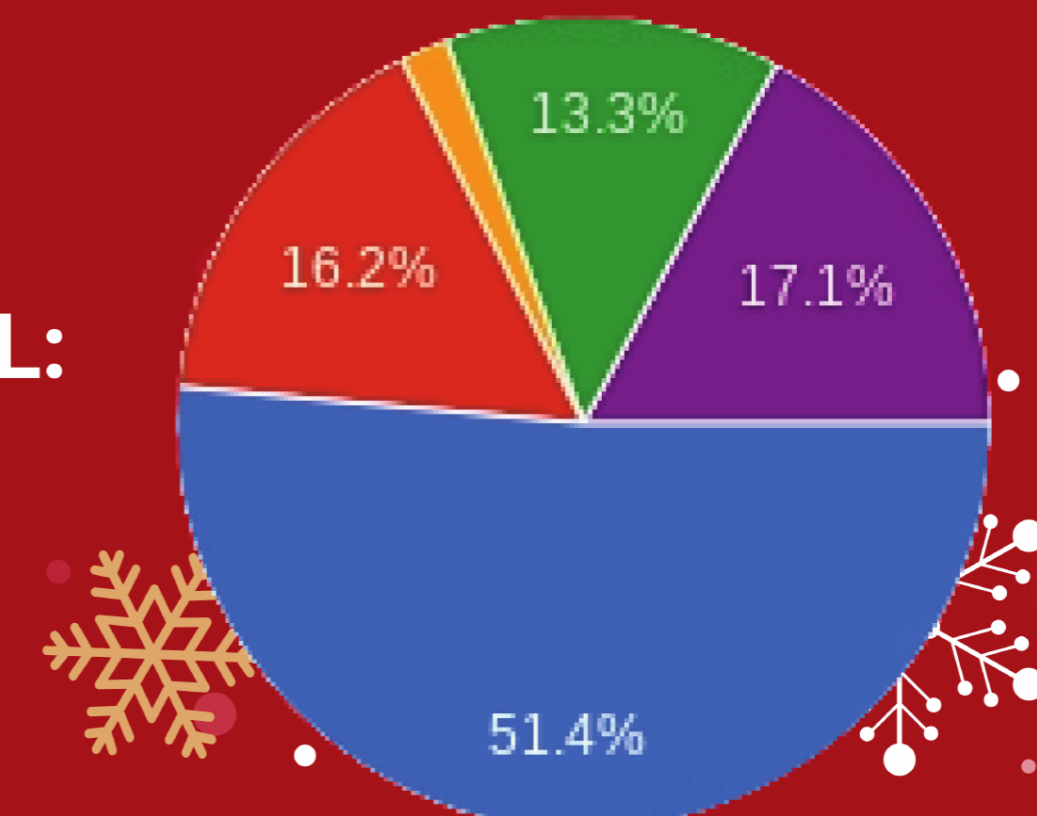
## 2. Elf

The 2003 Christmas classic, *Elf*, features Buddy the Elf, played by the iconic Will Ferrell, a human raised by elves who ventures from the North Pole to the real world. After Santa shows Buddy a snow globe of New York City, he explains that Buddy’s real dad works at the Empire State Building and is on the “naughty list.” In hopes of saving his father, Buddy travels to New York City, even though his dad is unaware of his existence. When he arrives, Buddy causes mayhem and finds himself struggling to adjust to the real world, but as he spends more time with his dad and family, they grow to love him, and Buddy spreads the Christmas spirit throughout New York. This popular movie is played every Christmas and never fails to make a crowd laugh. This year, find it for purchase on Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, Vudu, and Max!

## 1. Home Alone

Taking first place as QO students’ favorite holiday movie is the 1990 film *Home Alone*. This Christmas classic stars a young boy named Kevin, played by Macaulay Culkin, who was mistakenly left behind when his entire family rushed to the airport for a holiday vacation in Paris. The film is pure comedy, as Kevin makes a mess around his house with no supervision to stop him and even uses witty tactics to stop a pair of burglars trying to break into his home. Despite the 30-year-old release, *Home Alone* remains a top choice feel-good movie for the whole family during the holiday season. *Home Alone* can be viewed across several platforms including Disney+, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video—or you can probably find it playing while flipping through channels this December!

QO POLL:





# Congo and the price of consumerism

BY ELISHA SENGA  
Staff Writer

During the holidays, getting a new phone or car for Christmas seems innocent, but what about the terrors children undergo in Congo to make your new phone/car technology work?

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) holds 80% of the world's coltan. Coltan, or cobalt, is crucial for technological advances in companies such as Tesla, BMW, Microsoft, and Apple. The use of Cobalt is "ensuring high power density and longer life span in batteries," according to the Cobalt Institute. Apple and other phone companies continue to advance every year. Cobalt is why companies can continue making new phones and updates. For example, the new iPhone 15 features a new camera and fast charging.

The high demand for phone longevity increases the cobalt mining. Without cobalt, most technology would not be able to function properly.

Even though the DRC government does not benefit from the mining of coltan, many of those who mine for it are working in bad conditions. Over 6 million people have died mining coltan, and every hour, at least 50 women are sexually assaulted.

The country Rwanda, which is geographically west of Congo, works with these companies to force over 40,000 to 60,000 child slaves to mine coltan according to Issafrica.com.

The DRC government does not benefit from the mining of coltan, and many of those who mine for it are in bad conditions. Coltan is highly toxic, and it has been the reason for many birth defects in children. Exposure to cobalt can affect the eyes, skin, lungs, and heart, or even cause cancer.

Even worse, Congolese climate consists of heavy rain and humidity at 80%, so coltan mining also affects wildlife and destroys ecosystems as mentioned in theconversion.com.

Many Congolese since the 1980s have left Congo to have a better life in America. The resistance of coltan mining has led to war in West and East Congo where innocent people are bombed and shot every day in the hands of Rwandese. The life of a child miner is brutal and are taken advantage of daily. Children "smuggle coltan to illegal buyers in the Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda borders," according to The Institute of Security Studies, an African nonprofit organization. The children are mistreated and beaten when their work does not meet expectations. The children are also separated from their families and with no money, the families have a hard time buying their children freedom.

Faustin Kantanga is a Congolese civil leader who spreads awareness



Congolese child breaking down rocks to find coltan for local or illegal buyers

against coltan mining. Katanga says children are "vulnerable to child traffickers and recruitment by armed groups." To combat this issue, the Congolese have signed commitments such as CEEC and DRC mining codes to penalize child labor and regulate national regulations and supply chain standards. However, infrequent sabotages have been committed by illegal buyers and government officials who have run child laborers, causing the mining and trading to be weak because implementation isn't followed—therefore, DRC does not

benefit from the material.

Due to the rebels against implantation to fight against child labor, the DRC government is moving to a different approach to aid children to be sent to school. If children can afford to pay for school due to donations, the children will not be exposed to the dangers of coltan and its industry. More reports on the mining and investigations to take down secret child labor violators are another step being made to fix this problem.

*Even though the DRC government does not benefit from the mining of coltan, many of those who mine for it are working in bad conditions.*

## After school routine: Teacher edition

BY SOPHIE FAWKNER and KATE BELMAN  
Senior Staff Writers

Do you ever wonder what your teachers do after the bell rings at 2:30 PM?

Once school is out for the day, most students stop thinking about lessons and schoolwork until they get home. But that isn't the same for teachers.

Based on numerous conversations with QO teachers, the creation of lesson plans do not stray far from their minds, even while they are balancing their own lives.

For instance, special education and PE teacher Julie Lyst—who has been working at Quince Orchard for five years, and has 13 years of experience in Montgomery County—has an impressive schedule.

Lyst is now a co-teacher for biology, a coach for basketball and soccer, a health and PE teacher, and a special education teacher. After a long day of educating,

Lyst claims, "After school, I go to basketball practice till five or until everyone leaves.

I then go home to play with my dogs and hang out with my wife before going to bed."

Not only does Lyst end her day by spending time with her family and helping others, but she also makes sure to take some time to do the things she loves.

"I sometimes bring my stuff to basketball practice to play and do things with my team," she says.

While her weekdays mainly revolve around school-related activities, Lyst does set aside some much needed time for fun home activities on the weekends..

She states, "I like to do DIY projects at home."

Bryan Mack, an Honors Modern World History and Honors U.S. History teacher, has been at QO for the last four years.

Before that, he taught at Ridgeview Middle School for four years and Neelsville Middle School for two years.

Mack has been an influential teacher and mentor for so many for the last decade, yet still makes sure to prioritize some time for himself to relax after school.

This includes exercising, going on walks, grilling on the deck, watching and reading sports, and spending time with his wife during his free time.

But, just like any profession, stress is a part of the job.

Luckily, Mack has been able to find many different ways to handle his stress.

He explains that the "gym is likely the biggest stress reliever I have."

While Mack explains, "the wear and tear on my knees and shoulders have resulted in me being unable to handle the weight lifting and running workouts of my 20s and 30s," he is still making best use of his situation.

Despite not being able to take part in such high intensity workouts anymore, Mack still enjoys the lower intensity combination of less weight and more repetitions.

Mack leaves this piece of advice to his students: "I tell all of my student-athletes to enjoy being young, because Father Time is undefeated and will one day cross their paths."

## VIEWPOINT

# The Rise of iPad Kids

BY AMBRIELLA YAGAKA  
Staff Writer

The phrase "iPad Kid" has unfortunately become popular in 2023. This phrase refers to a child who gets all entertainment from an iPad or any type of technology, no matter the occasion. They are often portrayed sitting in awkward positions with their screens extremely close to their face. And, they have no public etiquette as they watch their videos at high volumes. The phrase was popularized on TikTok in early 2021 and has become more relevant as something to define Gen Alpha.

But the collective joke about young people's addiction to their devices is starting to show concerning results in brain development among these children in school. People are worried about what will happen when they become the next generation of adults. My peers and I in Gen Z, especially, notice concerns in the massive amount of screen time Gen Alpha is given on their devices nowadays. It's obvious that the future holds more digital-forward advances, which could be — in the case of iPad kids' recent academic performance — for the worse.

Allowing children to have iPads all day because they are "bored" takes away from their ability to pay attention to small things, do simple tasks, and develop social skills with kids their age. Not only does it distract them from their surroundings, but it takes time away from the child and their parents, which is necessary for them to learn skills that can only be picked up from a caregiver.

To explain how drastic the effects of being raised with a device in hand 24/7, studies from The Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development cohort study discovered that each one-hour increase in media exposure at two years old shows a 7% unit decrease in participation in class and a 6% unit decrease in math proficiency in fourth grade.

These habits mainly start due to parents wanting to keep their children occupied or calm. However, this plan backfires as their child becomes more attached to their device and acts out whenever it is taken away from them. For the sake of peace, the parents give in, allowing their children to learn that they can get whatever they want by throwing a fit. Those small forms of discipline are necessary for children to understand their rights and wrongs; otherwise, they will have behavioral issues that will drag into their school and regular life. Teachers have often noted that students' behavioral issues have become a big concern in classrooms.

Without limited screen time, children may eventually behave well in public only if they have their iPads with them wherever they go. It doesn't matter where they are, they are granted permission to watch YouTube rather than experience life. Commonly, many find this scene quite annoying. One recent incident witnessed by QO junior Kyla Hart is a good example of how exposure to iPads causes behavioral issues: "One time I was at a restaurant with a mother and her son sitting beside me, and the son started crying so loud. The mom tried to calm him down, but she just ended up giving him an iPad, so he would be happy," said Hart.



## TikTok Shop: Buy or Bye?

BY MADDIE KING  
Staff Writer

It seems that TikTok is always adding new features to make it the true “one-stop shop” of apps. Whether the app is connecting thousands of people, recently installing different “pages” catered to a variety of niche topics such as STEM, or creating an algorithm that is nearly impossible to replicate, it is easy to say that TikTok has become the app of choice for many young people today. In September, TikTok rolled out a new e-commerce platform to US users after a year of trials called TikTok Shop.

According to the company’s website, “TikTok Shopping is the suite of solutions, features, and tools that give businesses the opportunity to tap into the power of commerce on TikTok.” This may seem that any user can set up their own shop, but that is not the case. Users must have a business account and over 10,000 followers, according to *Shopify*, the e-commerce platform TikTok uses to operate their virtual storefronts.

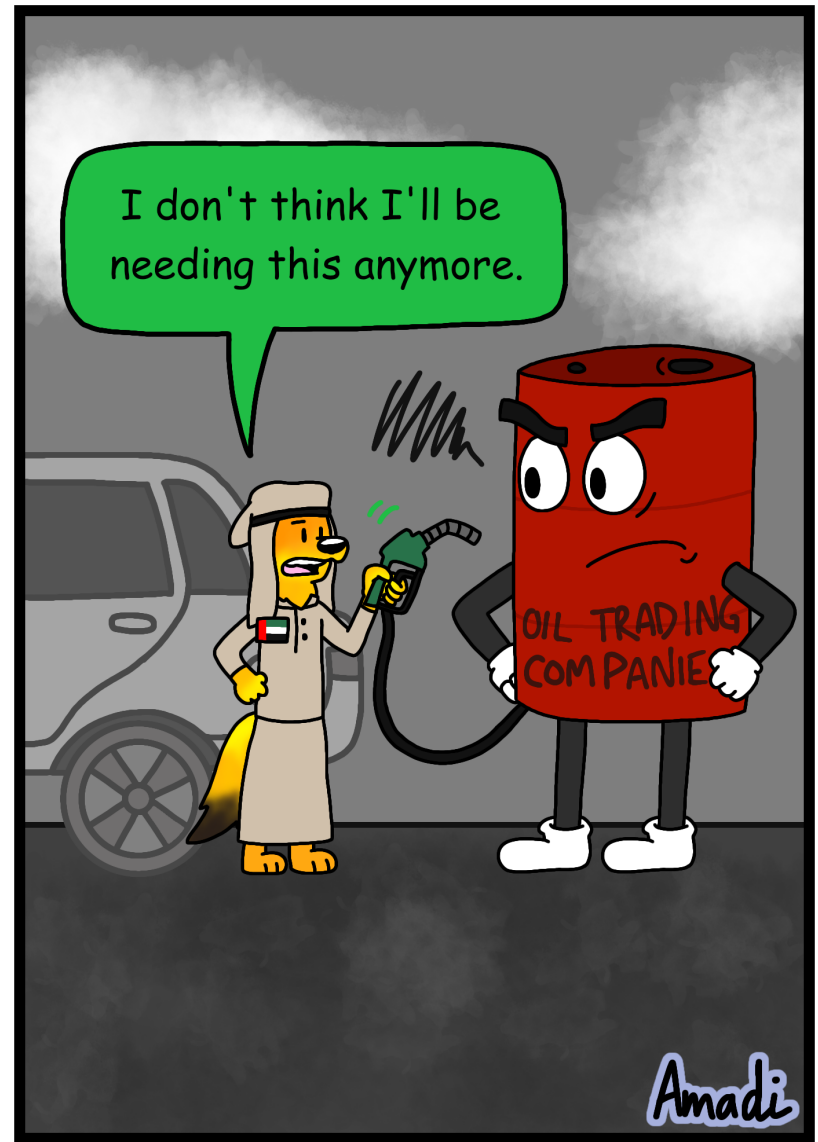
With their shockingly low prices and constant sales, it’s easy to see why users are either skeptical or excited about this new, affordable feature. Both sentiments may prove to be valid, however. Reputable user @ehxdell, a beauty and lifestyle influencer who “keeps it real,” has multiple videos explaining how she has received

either a fake product or nothing at all after ordering from TikTok Shop. For example, she placed an order in late October for what she thought was a viral Stanley Cup, priced at \$19.99 instead of \$45 had she bought it from Amazon, but did not get her package until December 1, according to her page. She explains in a video with over 358,000 views that the water bottle she received in the mail was a “dupe,” and not a great one. The logo was completely different from the trademark bear, and the color was not the one she had ordered.

On the other hand, thousands of users, including senior Lucy Polsky, have ordered items and they arrived exactly how they were supposed to. “It got to me in literally four days,” Polsky said. She explained how the clothes she ordered came in great condition and supported ordering from the TikTok Shop because of how easy it is to place an order.

In October, the TikTok Shop was taken down in Indonesia after the country “banned commerce on social media platforms to protect local business owners,” according to the *New York Times*. While this is the official statement the Indonesian government has put out, users across the globe have come up with other theories as to why this shop closed its virtual doors.

Since the platform is so new, it’s difficult to tell whether the TikTok Shop is safe and secure, or if it will even be around for long.



CARTOON BY AMADI PINKNEY

*The world's governments officially agreed to begin transitioning away from fossil fuels, in a deal announced December 13 at COP28, an annual international climate summit, held this year in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The deal is not legally binding, but it marks the first time in history that such a commitment has been included in the final agreement for COP summits, according to Sky News.*

## The Illusion of Aesthetics: The 'Clean Girl'

BY MAMS JAGHA  
Editor-in-Chief

The seemingly effortless depiction of the clean girl aesthetic, and its authenticity compared to the curated content social media pushes, catches many women’s eyes. But it goes far deeper than dewy skin and neutral clothing; let’s explore why.

For those who don’t know, the ‘clean girl’ aesthetic adopts a minimal makeup look: dewy skin, flushed lips, little to no makeup products, and a “minimalistic” style. The aesthetic seems to appeal to women who are looking for something basic yet chic. The common characteristics of this aesthetic are slicked-back hair, gold jewelry, mostly white-to-neutral clothing, and even clear skin. Although it is never bad to want to stay healthy and minimalistic, the mirage that this aesthetic produces is exactly the opposite.

Many who oppose this trend state that to participate in this style is to dress for consumerism and the approval of others also involved in the trend, and not because they have a genuine interest in fashion and design.

Another critique of the clean girl aesthetic is its appropriation of cultures. Many women of color across social media platforms have led discussions on how the style has drawn its design from the customs of other cultures including Latinx, Black, and South Asian cultures.

Latinx and Black women have been wearing gold hoop earrings and slick buns for decades, but the difference is that they have been called words like “ghetto” for it, while others have been called stylish. South Asian women have been oiling their hair and using turmeric skin products, but again they have been called “smelly” while others doing

the same have been called “cool.”

Yes, investing in skincare and clothing to advance and better your health and style is not inherently bad. But we should not ignore how this style inadvertently states that those who are not participating in this trend are “dirty.”

The inspiration and advertisements for this aesthetic mostly feature women who all look the same, and this can lead many young girls who do not look like that to form a negative self-image and leave them with constant self-loathing.

Trends in themselves are extremely draining and leave many who try to follow them in a hamster wheel, thinking it will lead them to the “In” group but, in reality, just has them running in circles.

Be yourself. You’re allowed to like trends and even parts of trends without taking all of it and making it a part of your self-identity, even though that is what social media makes it seem like we have to do. The ‘clean girl aesthetic’ is another example of how people can lose themselves while trying to find themselves. We have to remember that these trends aren’t *who* we are, but a small part of what makes up who we can be.



PEXELS

## Todos Juntos (All Together)

Latin dance team performs in annual competition, gains new sponsor

BY DAVID GUEVARA  
Staff Writer

Latin dancing, a popular and well-known form of dance with many styles used for expression and being a crucial part in the Latino culture, finding a home in the QO community through the after-school club called Juntos. The team is formed of students of all grades who have successfully auditioned, and members actively participate in various dance competitions and performances, performing different styles such as salsa and bachata. One of the biggest events for Juntos is Montgomery County’s annual Baila4Life competition, where the team recently made an appearance.

Hosted on November 20, Baila4Life brought together dance teams from different high schools across MCPS. The teams had the challenging task of creating and perfecting their choreography for the competition, with some additional pressure that came on new members to quickly integrate their skills with the team. The stakes were high for all participating schools, as they aimed not only for placement and trophies but also for the pride that comes with making a significant statement in the competition.

Senior Elijah Tehran, a member of Juntos, shared insights into the team’s mindset leading up to the competition: “We [the team] were feeling nervous; we didn’t finish our choreography until two days before the competition.” But when asked what was different about this Juntos team compared to the ones in the past, senior captain Camilo Gutierrez said, “I really saw the team...

have the fire and motivation to win this year, unlike previous years.” Gutierrez also described his personal mindset going into the competition: “I had no nerves walking into it, because I knew that I wanted to put on a show, and I knew if I was nervous, I wouldn’t have been able to give it my best.”

During the preparation for the competition, the team also experienced a recent change in sponsors, with security guard Maria Lampkin, who joined the QO community last year, stepping in for math teacher Tanya Mohan, who sponsored the team for ten years. Lampkin will now co-sponsor with Spanish teacher Charlene Gonzalez who has sponsored the team for 15 years. When asked what interested her about Juntos here at QO, she said, “Hispanic culture is so beautiful, and we have to represent all of our countries and represent all of the students that are here.” In her experience so far as a new sponsor, Lampkin said she wanted to help provide structure for the students to be successful. “There were a lot of things that I saw that they needed, so that’s why I want to potentially become someone they can look up to,” she said.

Despite the last-minute preparations and changes Juntos had to overcome, they delivered a passionate and captivating performance at Baila4Life. Placing 2nd in the cha cha category. The competition not only provided a platform for individual talent but also fostered togetherness among the team members, creating a memorable experience for all involved.





# Athlete of the Month

BY OLIVIAMAYTIN  
Senior Staff Writer

## SWIM AND DIVE - SENIOR DIVER TAYLOR RENZI

Renzi has been diving since freshman year. According to her coach, "she has worked hard year after year to learn different dives and amazes me each year. As dive captain, I can always count on her to lead and support the other divers!"

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. I like hanging out with my friends and I love traveling. I also like playing tennis and pickleball.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. I balance being a student-athlete by making sure I prioritize doing homework ahead of time on days when I don't have practice. I also have to make sure I am more productive during sports seasons and stay organized about my schoolwork.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. I started on the swim team my freshman year, then started diving my sophomore year. I had a tumbling background, and my sister had done diving so I wanted to try it.

### Q. How did you spend your time this fall preparing for this season?

A. I swam over the summer for my neighborhood swim team, which helped me stay in shape. I also worked on balance and flexibility to help me dive.

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. My goals for the team are to help the newer divers master enough dives to compete in meets. I also want to support and cheer on each diver and swimmer to make sure they feel confident at meets.

## SWIM AND DIVE - JUNIOR SWIMMER TRENT METTLER

Mettler is one of the boy junior captains this season. According to his coach, "he brings an element of spirit to the team that cannot be matched. Trent is not a club swimmer and puts in the work from day one to make the cuts he needs, as well as swim on the fast relays!"

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. Spending time with friends and family.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. I try to balance sports and school by focusing in the classroom and getting all my work done, so I can dedicate myself to getting better as an athlete after school.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. I started swimming at the age of three. Both my parents were Division I swimmers, so I have sort of grown up in a swimming family.

### Q. How did you spend your time this fall preparing for this season?

A. I prepared by lifting and hitting the gym.

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. My goal for the team is to honestly just have fun.

## GIRLS BASKETBALL - SENIOR KASEY RAPPAPORT

Coach Bobby Bishop chose Kasey Rappaport, who is a senior captain, three-year varsity starter, and leading scorer. She is a great rebounder, awesome with the ball in her hands, and she has helped win many games in her career.

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. I love to hang out with my family and friends outside of sports. I enjoy being with my cousins and making memories every day. I am very interested in physical therapy and would love to explore it in the future.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. Being a student-athlete takes a lot of time management. I try to make sure to have all my work done before practice so I have no stress on my mind. Making sure you get proper rest at night is also a big key to success.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. I started playing basketball ever since I could walk. My brothers always played sports and would throw balls at me since I was a little kid. I fell in love with basketball and never stopped playing from then on.

### Q. How did you spend your time this fall preparing for this season?

A. I was doing rehab for my shoulder surgery every day and working out with the team to prepare for this season.

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. One main goal for the team is to win a county or state championship—also to keep a winning streak throughout the season.

## BOYS BASKETBALL - SENIOR ADJATAY (DJ) ABEGESAH

Boys varsity coach James Minturn chose Abegesah for Athlete of the Month. He is a senior captain on the team who sets an example every day with his effort and attitude. Abegesah led the team in 3 PT FG% last year and is very good at getting to the basket. He is a great rebounder and often will guard the other team's best player. He does some of everything.

### Q. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of sports?

A. Outside of basketball, I like to go to the gym, watch Netflix, and eat.

### Q. How do you balance being a student-athlete?

A. I balance being a student-athlete by doing all my work in school and before practice. After practice, I wind down since I am exhausted.

### Q. When did you start playing this sport and why did you start?

A. I started playing basketball as soon as I could play on a team. I have always loved basketball, and I see it as an outlet for my emotions rather than just a sport.

### Q. How did you spend your time this fall preparing for this season?

A. I spent my time in the fall playing football. The explosive moments of football and basketball are similar. Football workouts have put me in great shape before the basketball season.

### Q. What are some of the goals you have for the team?

A. Some goals I have for the team are to have a positive record, stay consistent with our intensity, and beat Northwest!

# Girls Basketball

BY NOAH KRAVITZ  
Staff Writer

It's been a long time coming, and it's finally here! With both new faces on the team to veteran leaders, Coach Bobby Bishop is ready to embark on a new journey with his team.

Last year, the Cougars made it as far as the 4A Region Semifinals game, where they came up short against Clarksburg. However, the Cougars finished with a 16-8 record, including playoff games.

But there is no question that Coach Bishop is looking for improvement and growth everywhere on this team.

"We just have to do a better job being consistent on defense and rebounding; that's the two key things right there," he said. "If you play good defense, you will be able to keep yourself in games, and if you rebound the ball consistently, you'll win games."

This will be his first year in some time without his guard Jennifer Juhring '23, who committed to Salisbury University last year. The starter last season combined for 12 points, 6 rebounds, and around 3 assists per game. She climbed the way through every game for the team, according to Bishop, showing perseverance in every way possible throughout every opportunity thrown at her.

She was arguably one of the team's best players throughout her tenure here as a Quince Orchard Cougar. So there's no question that finding her replacement would be tough, but Bishop is determined to give many quality players a chance to play.

One of those quality players is none other than senior Kasey Rappaport, for whom Bishop has lots of high hopes this year.

"I think she'll have a better year certainly,"

Despite having a great season last year, Rappaport had a significant shoulder injury, which led to surgery on her labrum.

"She was playing with a shoulder that was popping in and out all year, but was still able to shoot very well."

Particularly last season, it wasn't just Juhring who did all the work. It's important to give credit to Rappaport, who went through a difficult time with this injury, while still being able to put on a show with 3-pointers here and there. She will for sure be QO's catch and shooter this year.

Team captains also include seniors Kelly Adams, Sara Miller, and Alexis Payton.

In terms of this season, Coach Bishop is primarily relying on the younger girls to "catch on early," as he explained it. Being consistent in the defensive and rebounding areas are significant keys to winning games.

The Cougars opened their season on Tuesday, December 5 at the Dome against Damascus. They lost by a score of 39-27. Cougars attempted to make a comeback in the second half after being down 11 points, but the outcome didn't go the Cougars' way.

After the opening game against Damascus, their next 3 games would all be away games.

This would prove to be a crucial stretch for the Cougars if they want to get some wins here and there.

These next 3 contests resulted in a comfortable 13 point victory against Blake high school, a tough loss to Poolesville, and then a nice bounceback winning performance versus Springbrook high school.

This would prove to be a crucial stretch heading into their next game at home against Churchill, where QO came out on top 37-29.

# Keepin' Up With DC Sports

BY NOAH KRAVITZ & MOTAZ DEIFY  
Staff Writer & Senior Staff Writer

## Commanders

There have been plenty of hopes for improvement for the Washington Commanders, yet also many downs that have hurt their chances to make it to the playoffs. They currently have a record of 4-10 and remain the 4th seed in the NFC East, a conference that includes the Philadelphia Eagles, New York Giants and the Dallas Cowboys.

Only in his second season in the NFL, quarterback Sam Howell is amongst the top QBs with the most passing yards in the 2023 season, with more than 3500 yards.

On Thanksgiving Day, the Commanders lost in a huge upset against the Cowboys with a score of 45-10. Those three consecutive losses resulted in the termination of defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio and defensive backs coach Brent Viselmeier. As of December 17, the Commanders' loss against the Rams knocked them out of the playoffs.

## Capitals

The boys on ice are hoping to knock on the doors of their first Stanley Cup Championship game since 2018. Since October, they've been working hard game after game, starting with their first match against the Pittsburgh Penguins. Although they've faced an upset of 4-0, the Capitals were able to bounce back with a win of 3-2 against the Calgary Flames.

As of December 18, the Capitals stand in 5th place in the Metropolitan Division, peaking right behind the New York Rangers and Philadelphia Flyers.

This season, left wing Alex Ovechkin leads in statistics with a total of 5 goals and 11 assists, and 827 goals and 674 assists in his entire career

since playing his first season with them in 2005. Defenseman John Carlson is tied with similar amount of points as Ovechkin (1 goal and 14 assists).

## Nationals

It has been anything but winning for the Nationals for the last 5 years. However, there is hope around the city that the team is turning toward the right direction, building around young players including shortstop C.J. Abrams, outfielder Lane Thomas, catcher Keibert Ruiz, and many more—as well as players in the minor leagues such as outfielder James Wood and infielder Brady House.

More notably, many in the world of baseball feel optimistic about the Nationals' latest first round pick Dylan Crews who was drafted 2nd overall out of LSU. We very well might see him debut in the upcoming 2024 season for the Washington Nationals.

## Wizards

It hasn't been a memorable season for the Wizards so far. They sit at the bottom of the Eastern Conference with just 4 wins to show for their efforts. The Wizards are in big need of some optimism.

Back in the offseason, the Wizards decided to tear everything down, beginning with multiple changes in the front office. General manager Tommy Shephard was relieved of his duties—then they brought in Will Dawkins as general manager and Michael Winger as President of Basketball Operations. This proved to be crucial to finally begin a rebuild.

These front office replacements then led to the trades of veterans Bradley Beal and Kristaps Porzingis.

For the foreseeable future, this team will consist of young players with bright futures, and aging veteran players.



# Season Updates

## Boys Basketball

BY MOTAZ DEIFY  
Senior Staff Writer

The Cougars are looking forward to picking up the pieces after falling to Urbana in the region quarterfinals last season.

Since the start of the season on November 15, the team has been working hard to stay consistent with how everyday is approached make sure to get better. The team also wants to “stay emotionally positive and keep our heads up when we’re down,” says junior Gavin Haroon.

On December 5, the Cougars set the stage with a 54-40 win against Damascus—who made an appearance in the state championship last year. Players who contributed to the win include senior Christian While, and juniors Josiah Teasley and Kevin Bukula. During the game, Teasley scored 18 points and made 8 rebounds, while Bukula scored 15 points, and made 3 steals and 3 assists.

Head coach Mac Minturn, who coached basketball for 11 years, believed the team “played well defensively” against Damascus, but claims there is some room for improvement from there.

Since last season, a historic turning point, Minturn has coached the QO team after former math teacher Paul Foringer stepped down from his coaching position of over 30 years.

This season, Minturn has “brought everybody together,” Haroon said. “Going into this year we all know each other and the chemistry is a lot better.”

While describes last year’s team as “a young team [because] we only had three seniors.” Since many players are returning from last year, he believes the bond between teammates is getting stronger and “everything is kind of falling into place right where we want it to be,” he said.

The team chemistry has definitely reflected on the performances of those athletes on the court, such as “being on the same page, communicating through screens, knowing where to be on offense and knowing each other’s roles,” said While.

Hunting for more triumph as such, the boys hosted Blake in their Friday night home opener on December 8. However, they fell short to them 75-68, but were able to bounce back with a win against Poolsville, 65-51, the following game.

Due to COVID, a few players were forced to sit out in the QO v. Springbrook game played on December 13, but were still able to manage through difficult circumstances.

With a 2-3 record as of December 18, this is the beginning as they seek to advance far into the post-season.

## Wrestling

BY LILY KAPLAN  
Senior Staff Writer

As the weather gets colder, winter athletes are working harder, and the wrestling team has been working hard to make sure this season is their best one yet.

The wrestling community at QO is large, with close to 60 members on the varsity and JV teams combined. It’s also a young group: out of all of these people, there are only three seniors.

The team started out their season with a tournament, held at North Hagerstown High School, where they participated in nine matches.

On December 13, the team had a challenging match against Tuscarora High School in Frederick. They suffered a tough loss, with a disadvantage due to some members of the team being sick. However, “we’re looking to get everyone healthy and back on track,” said coach Ryan Dimmick. “We have a lot of kids with experience. A lot of kids have worked really hard to prepare for the season.”

“However, “we’re looking to get everyone healthy and back on track,” said coach Ryan Dimmick

“We have a lot of kids with experience. A lot of kids have worked really hard to prepare for the season.”

We would have done better if more of our teammates weren’t sick,” said freshman Aubry Spadoni, agreeing with Dimmick. During this match, Spadoni made Quince Orchard history by being the first female wrestler to start on varsity, while being a freshman.

Over the course of the summer, the team worked hard to be the best they could be for this season. “We have been training since March,” says Dimmick. “We did workouts before school, three days a week, so the wrestlers would get here at 6:15.”

The team didn’t stop at summer training; during the fall season, “we’d meet up once or twice a week, and we would lift and go for a run,” says Dimmick.

Their season isn’t quite over yet. Come support the team on January 3, as they face Walter Johnson at home.



@QO.WRESTLING

## Indoor Track

BY DYLAN FLAIM  
Staff Writer

When we think of the sport track and field, we typically think of an outdoor track. But in the winter, indoor track takes over. However, there’s a twist. Since QO doesn’t have an indoor track on school grounds, all the practices take place outside on the outdoor track. Not only do all the practices take place outdoors, but some of the meets do as well.

Senior Alexander Price, one student on the team this year, is a triple threat: he runs cross country in the fall, indoor track in the winter, and outdoor track in the spring. You’d think Price would get sick of running, but he has loved running his whole life. “I don’t really get sick of running,” he says.

“Occasionally I’ll have an off day where I feel tired, but, besides that, I love running.” -Alex Price



QO-ATHLETICS

Head coach and social studies teacher Seann Pelkey is a triple threat as well. He coaches cross country, outdoor track, and indoor track. When asked whether he prefers to coach cross country or track, Pelkey picked track because, he says, “you need a variety of athletes with different abilities, whereas cross country, everyone is running the same event.”

Senior Aidan Pirnat is a talented sprinter, and while speed is of course key for sprinting, Pirnat says that form matters, too. “It is just as important to have perfect form to maximize output,” he says.

One interesting wrinkle that Pelkey added is that, this season, the Prince George’s Sports and Learning Complex, where QO typically has all of their meets, is undergoing renovations. This means that QO will have a very unique schedule this season.

In the meantime, Quince Orchard’s runners will work just as hard to achieve their goals and dreams while battling the grueling cold.

## Swim & Dive

BY PRITI MADHAVAN  
Staff Writer

The QO Swim and Dive team has begun their season in full force, and they are ready to go.

Sophomore Ellie Pantezzi, an enthusiastic team member and the #6 diver in Maryland, radiates positivity about the team’s dynamic atmosphere. “We try [to] have a lot of spirit and always cheer each other on,” she says, emphasizing the team’s unwavering commitment to positivity and camaraderie.

Sophomore Ariana Katz brings attention to the rush of fresh talent, a crucial element in filling the void left by stellar swimmers from the previous year. Mentioning names like freshmen Gabby Morin and Colton Mettler, Katz highlighted the team’s reliance on these rising stars in facing tough competition in the coming meets.

Sophomore Lily Straus, reflecting on the team’s journey to Division 1 last year, acknowledges the anticipated challenges. Despite a setback at their first meet against Churchill, Straus and the rest of the team remain hopeful, expressing a

collective determination to return stronger for upcoming meets. The resilience of QOSD is a prevailing theme.

Sophomore Stephanie Marks unveils the close-knit nature of the team, noting the family-like experience derived from strong bonds between teammates. “I’ve come to realize that not only do I actually like swimming, I also really like racing. I love racing for a team and building friendships with my teammates, working together to score as many points as possible, and bonding together at practices or dinners,” Marks says. This unity serves as a crutch and motivator for the team as they navigate the intricacies of this season.

These four girls’ insight into the meets unveils a captivating story of fun and determination. Straus, Marks, Katz, and Pantezzi all agree that this season will be one for the books, and they are on the edge of their seats watching it unfold. As the season continues, the team’s journey progresses, promising more tales of triumphs, energy, and lifetime bonds.



INSTAGRAM @QOSWIM\_DIVE

# All-State and All-County Cougars go above and beyond around the field and court

BY MADELEINE BURKE and LILY KAPLAN  
*Editor-In-Chief and Senior Staff Writer*

The fall athletes of Quince Orchard had an amazing season. The girls soccer team secured nothing but wins during their regular season. The girls volleyball, field hockey, and boys soccer teams secured mostly wins as well. These wins come from the entire team working together, but some of the players stand out and made the All-County and All-State teams.

Making the All-County or All-State teams as a high school athlete is a big honor. The people selected for these teams bring great value to their home team at school.

The field hockey team ended the regular season with a record of 7-3. In the playoffs, the team made it to the region semi-finals. Their winning record reflected their hard work and effort practicing during and before the season.

Two field hockey players stood out for their work and made 2nd team All-County: junior Hannah Wagner and senior Lila Moncak. Congratulations to them!

The girls soccer team, while finishing undefeated throughout their regular season, fell short against Whitman High School on October 31.

A few members of the girls soccer team were recognized and selected to be a part of an All-State team.

The All-State team recognizes athletes from the whole state of Maryland, whereas the All-County teams recognize girls throughout Montgomery County Public Schools.

QO boys soccer had one heck of a season this past fall. They finished off the season with an impressive record of 9-2-1, and much of the credit can be given to senior Prince Michael Kemani.

Kemani was awarded First Team All-State, naming him one of the best soccer players in the state of Maryland. But it wasn't luck that got him this award. If you watched one of the team's games this past season, you definitely noticed Kemani and his hard work on the field.

"On the field I covered a lot of space, which made it difficult for the opposing team," Kemani said when discussing his impact this season.

Kemani credits helping him get this accomplishment to past coaches, including QO JV boys soccer coach Sean Keiller. But he especially acknowledges the varsity coach, Bruno Tejo, for "believing in me after I lost confidence post-surgery."

Kemani made a huge impact on the season and the team that will last for seasons to come.

Eden Tardy is only a sophomore, but she has already made her mark on QO girls volleyball. With an impressive start on varsity her freshman year, she is already a leader on the court as an underclassmen through her efforts during each game.

She was awarded All-County Honorable Mention this past season.

Due to her consistency while on the court, Tardy helped the team go 7-7 during their regular season, and then win two playoff games. Tardy is one of the players on the team that can take credit for these wins because she is someone that can score in tough situations.

Tardy pays tribute to her parents for getting her to the place she is now due to "signing me up for countless clinics and tryouts." Everyone on the team is very supportive, too: even after the season ended, she still was able to celebrate with them. Tardy says overall she is "honored to be on a list of such talented athletes."

She still has two more seasons left with the team, and they are sure to be unforgettable ones.

PLAYER	SPORT	HONOR
Annie Faraone	Soccer	1st Team All-State
Ellie Hodge	Soccer	1st Team All-State
Prince Michael Kemani	Soccer	1st Team All-State
Simone Mazzarino	Soccer	1st Team All-State
Spencer Davis	Soccer	All-State Honorable Mention
Lila Moncak	Field Hockey	2nd Team All-County
Hannah Wagner	Field Hockey	2nd Team All-County
Eden Tardy	Volleyball	All-County Honorable Mention
Elly Vanlandingham	Volleyball	All-County Honorable Mention

*Note: The All-County and All-State teams for football were not announced in time for publication of this issue.*

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