

THE SIDEKICK

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letter from the editor



Sri Achanta
Executive Editor-in-Chief
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As a true apathetic toward nonfiction novels, memoirs have an unusual way of winning me over.

Each chapter, each new anecdote, recounts the ebbs and flows of an author's life, touching every subject from emotional pitfall to pure euphoria.

I find it amusing, however, that every page I turn and every struggle I read makes me feel like I'm forging an intimate connection with an author, someone who doesn't even know of my existence.

But that is what I appreciate about memoirs. I get to learn from an author's hardships as an observer who does not want to, nor has the means of getting involved.

That being said, if I was ever asked to write a memoir about my life, I'd politely decline. It feels like a haughty, pretentious way of presenting myself, especially as someone who has been blessed with a simple, drama-free life.

But in an alternative reality where I am forced to write my simple memoir, there would be three distinct chapters.

Somewhere towards the beginning of the book would be a chapter titled, "Rainbow," representing the array of colorful friendships I have discovered in an eleven-person friend group that I so dearly love.

Another chapter would be titled "Goodbye Oxford Comma," in reference to my three years as a part of *The Sidekick* family. There, I would spend pages on end thanking my upperclassmen, my fellow seniors, my junior staff and my young sophomores for forever embracing me in their warmth. And of course, I'd pay my homage to the best adviser, who I seem to now relate to more often than not, reminding me that I'm only getting older.

The part that hits the hardest in a memoir for me is always the end. There's a tinge of poignance as the author wraps up their final thoughts in a perfectly curated inspirational last sentence.

I've been thinking of this sentence for years, and it would lay perfectly at the end of my third and final chapter, dedicated to all of the brilliant little ways my family has navigated life.

Now I know that I have college and all of my future ahead of me, but no matter what, the final sentence of my last Letter from the editor, my last story on Coppell Student Media and my fictitious memoir would read:

Thank you to my family: my wonderful parents and beautiful older sister who are my reason for life.



The Sidekick executive editor-in-chief Sri Achanta shares her growing interest in memoirs. Achanta applauds the connections she feels toward authors through their writings. **Sameeha Syed**

Space to soar

District tuning into fine arts expansion



Coppell Band rehearses in its current practice rooms on April 10 in the band hall. To improve conditions for band, choir and dance classes, Coppell ISD is building a fine arts rehearsal building funded by the 2023 bond. **Neha Nathwani**

Neha Nathwani
Staff Writer
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When Coppell Colorguard sophomore Aryahi Ravi dances while tossing her flag during rehearsal, she can't help but wish for a larger practice space.

With Coppell High School fine arts programs increasing in size, cramped conditions raise safety concerns and logistical challenges.

From the 2023 \$321 million bond approved in May, a 46,593-square foot fine arts building will be built at CHS to address space concerns and provide for growing programs.

\$18,575,264 is allocated to the building, including \$928,763 for contingency. These allowances prevent taxpayer money being used if unforeseen changes arise.

To determine costs, the Coppell Bond Oversight Committee is considering spatial requirements necessary to adequately support fine arts programs.

"We first started not necessarily with budget but with square footage," fine arts director Gerry Miller said. "What we do is go 'All right, this is how many students need to be in the building' and we work with our architect to identify with how many students can fit in the building."

Band and choir programs will benefit from larger, acoustically designed spaces, while the dance programs, including the Lariettes, colorguard and cheer will have a shared dance gymnasium.

"Our band, choir and fine arts programs

have outgrown their space and we need to make sure that they have what they need," Coppell Bond Oversight Committee co-chair David Caviness said.

The cramped conditions not only impede on student creativity, but also raise safety concerns. Dancers currently utilize gymnasiums intended for basketball or volleyball, lacking proper dance floors, bars and mirrors. This issue also extends to band and choir, where students perform in confined spaces.

"We cannot host our concerts in one night," head band director Kimberly Shuttlesworth said. "We have to, and we try to, but we are breaking fire code when we do that because there's so many band kids"

The three programs have faced rapid growth throughout the years, bringing urgency for changes, with band currently having 460 students.

"If you've got a space that was designed for 180 students and you've got 380, you end up having to borrow from other facilities to make everyone fit," Miller said. "Our aim on this was to design a fine arts facility that mathematically took the numbers of students in band, choir and cheer, and build a space that would accommodate our present needs in 2024 as opposed to the year 2000."

To sufficiently address these issues, students and staff from these programs have been asked for aspects of the new building they felt were necessary.

"What's been really fun for us has been working through the process with all of

our fine arts teachers, telling us what we need with our storage rooms and practice rooms, then flowing forward to the architect," Miller said. "The faculty have been in this for a long time and have a good understanding of where they want things to be and how they want things to flow."

Sketches for the building have been crafted, and the next step involves laying down the foundation. It is projected that the facility will be ready for use by August 2025.

Once the fine arts building is complete, the current area will go into renovation to be converted to a Career and Technical Education space, offering more courses for students.

"It gives both the fine arts and CTE department room for to expand those programs and give them areas to allow our kids to apply what they're doing as opposed to cramping everybody in, not having enough space for our instruments, not having enough space for our robots and all the different things we're trying to put into play," Principal Laura Springer said.

With larger spaces for fine arts programs, students hope to see more functionality and room to enhance the quality of practices, cultivating more talent.

"If the area is bigger, then more people could be in each program and it wouldn't be cramped," Ravi said. "More people could join from the student body and also it would just be an easier way to function in that area as well."



F hall in Coppell High School is where the fine arts classes are located. To improve conditions for band, choir and dance classes, Coppell ISD is building a fine arts rehearsal building funded by the 2023 bond. **Neha Nathwani**

Porter stepping in as New Tech principal

Manasa Borra
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At the board workshop on April 8, Coppell High School associate principal Zane Porter was announced principal of New Tech High @ Coppell. He will replace Joseph Smith, who resigned, following the 2023-24 school year.

Porter's CHS peers credit him as being perfect for his new position because of his strong leadership skills and his well-rounded nature.

"He balances high expectations but also fun and joy and love of coming to work," assistant principal Jeremy Jordan said. "It's a tough thing to do as a leader, but he balances all of those things so well. I don't think you can find anybody better suited for that position."

However, administration was not always in the cards for Porter. His journey didn't begin in a classroom, but rather a UPS facility. Going into college, he felt dentistry was his calling, yet after graduating college, Porter took the opportunity to mentor new hires at UPS and teach his faith to attendees of his local church. Here he found his true passion.

"When I was 6-7 years into teaching, I told my administrator, I don't ever want to be an administrator," Porter said. "I said I want to be a teacher forever because I love teaching."

Yet his teaching journey guided him towards administration because of his talent for being able to lead and connect with his community. After Porter's fifth year of teaching at New Tech, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Midway through the year, assistant principal Chase Vaughn resigned, so Porter came to CHS to temporarily help for the rest of the year. He became a permanent member of the principal team in the following school year and was critical in helping CHS stay banded together.

"I was a part of a team that kept a rock of a community together," Porter said. "We look back at it today and say we navigated that storm. I think we're better for it even though we have to pick up some pieces."

His exemplary performance throughout difficult times and his empathy for people earned the respect of many CISD staff.

"He's really good at working with people of all different backgrounds



Coppell High School associate principal Zane Porter keeps mementos from his time teaching at New Tech High @ Coppell in his office at CHS. On April 8, Porter was named principal of NTH@C. **Manasa Borra**

and getting people to understand the why behind what we're doing," assistant principal Sorelle Kimball said. "He is really invested in education, learning is really big for him and helping kids to learn is really important to him and he wants to do what's best for kids."

In his new role, Porter hopes to diversify the CTE and fine arts programs at New Tech with new course selections. These courses would aim to cover different career curriculums that are less of a focus at CHS.

"New Tech has to constantly evolve because it's a school of choice," Porter said. "So now, it's just a chance to reinvent a little. We want to give those upcoming eighth graders something a little bit different because we want them to have choice and to know that if they go to New Tech, they will have some things that they might not see anywhere else"

Porter has been an associate principal at CHS for two years, but his background in education is deeply rooted. Porter started his journey teaching seventh grade language arts in North Carolina. After two years, he moved to the high school level to teach advanced English classes. It was here he first found a personal connection to Project-Based

Learning education.

"That's how I learn. I put in the effort when I see there's a purpose and a reason behind the learning and that's what Project-Based Learning does," Porter said. "Maybe you don't really like math or you don't really like science or you don't like social studies. But within there, hopefully we can create some buzz and meaning that you can attach to."

Seeking out a similar learning environment, he began teaching at New Tech in 2015. His appreciation for a hands-on learning environment grew as he saw his fellow peers model the successes and innovation of an alternative education process. Now, his mentality for effective education strongly aligns with the career preparation goals of New Tech.

"Learning deeper is going to carry over to the next thing you need to learn," Porter said. "We don't know the cool jobs that are gonna be available in 20 years. So if we only taught for jobs that we have now, we're living behind. We need to teach the skills for learners to be able to learn those new things along the way, not just fill a brain with knowledge because they were behind the eight ball."

NEWS

FLASH

News Flash is a series in which readers receive updates on local news that has happened between the issues.

A celestial encounter: CHS witnesses total solar eclipse



Coppell Student Media wins fifth consecutive NSPA Online Pacemaker Award



HOSA surpasses previous years with 9 international qualifiers



Class of 2024's top students celebrated at annual academic recognition banquet



Business Spectacle

Valentine Premier setting standard in community

Rhea Chowdhary and Vibha Viswanath
Video Editor and Staff Photographer
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Valentine Premier Construction is an exterior and interior renovation company that prides itself on its customer service and establishing trust amongst the community. This year, Kristi Valentine took over ownership of the company after the death of her husband John Valentine. Watch staff photographer Vibha Viswanath and video editor Rhea Chowdhary's video to learn more about Valentine's story.



Watch Rhea Chowdhary and Vibha Viswanath's video with Valentine Premier Construction



"One of the things I want to do is make sure we continue to offer the best customer service that we can, the best product and quality that we can and that we are good neighbors to everybody in this community," Valentine Premier Construction CEO Kristi Valentine said. Valentine's company transitioned from a roofing company to full construction in 2018. **Vibha Viswanath**

Bubbles and Beyond

Anandkumar, Minter's car detailing venture

Rhea Choudhary
Staff Writer
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Gleaming cars, their polished surfaces reflecting the Texas sun, rolling out of their driveways, each one a testament to the work of two teenage visionaries.

Among the bustling halls of CHS9, the two students Sam Minter and Rajiv Anandkumar have been exploring the realm of entrepreneurship with Bubbles and Beyond, their car-detailing business.

What started as a simple idea, merging Minter's entrepreneurial aspirations and Anandkumar's interest in business grew into a full-fledged business venture. Beginning in early January, Minter and Anandkumar worked hard to gather supplies, make business cards and flyers, learn more about the specifics of car detailing and advertise their services.

"The car-detailing process typically takes around two and a half to three hours, depending on the size and condition of the vehicle," Anandkumar said. "We start with an exterior wash using a pressure washer and foam cannon, followed by a thorough interior cleaning, including vacuuming, plastic cleaning and carpet extraction."

For Minter, the knack for wanting to be in charge of a business sprung from a desire to explore profitable opportunities while learning the ropes of entrepreneurship. Inspired by seeing his friend's successful lawn mowing business, and recalling hearing others' positive experiences with car detailers, he saw a unique opportunity to merge his interests.

"Rajiv reached out to me about starting this specific business, and I saw it as a great opportunity," Minter said. "I've had some experience with investing and wanted to dive deeper into it but lacked the necessary funds, so I saw this as the perfect chance to earn some extra cash."

Anandkumar, equally driven by the prospect of financial independence was quick to propose the idea to Minter, keeping Minter's interest for business in mind. With guidance from CHS9 business teacher David Janeski, the duo delved into the intricacies of investing and small business management.

"Anyone regardless of their age can benefit from entrepreneurship, because not only do you reap the benefits of getting an extra income, which is any business' primary goal, but you also learn invaluable 'soft' skills such as time management, self-discipline, leadership skills, customer service, financial literacy, conflict resolution and how to deal with success or failure," Janeski said. "I currently teach Sam and he has a very bright future; he shows an eagerness to learn and has the proper focus to succeed in anything he attempts."

Their road to success hasn't been without its challenges. Balancing schoolwork, extracurricular activities and their budding business has required meticulous planning. However, their commitment to building Bubbles and Beyond has paid off, with a steady stream of customers coming primarily through word of mouth and social media. Their dedication to quality and customer satisfaction has earned them a loyal following within the community.

"We knew it was going to be a lot of hard work because car-detailing has many steps and processes, especially to be done properly while charging customers, but we were ready to take on the challenge," Anandkumar said. "We did lots of research and from our initial experience, we found out that just getting that ball rolling is the hardest part and from there, since we were passionate about being successful through the business, we tried our best to schedule as many appointments in a reasonable amount of time."

As Bubbles and Beyond continues to expand its reach and influence, the duo remains steadfast in their commitment to delivering unparalleled service.

"If a student has the desire, motivation and drive to be an entrepreneur, they should take the risk and do it just like Sam and Rajiv did, because we learn more from our failures rather than

our successes and it's through our challenges that we explore our purpose and character," Janeski said. "Starting a business is a risk which can be scary. However, even if someone takes that risk and real-

izes they don't enjoy running a business, they can always be proud they tried; pivoting or persevering is the best life lesson I've learned from how much Bubbles and Beyond has grown."



CHS9 students Rajiv Anandkumar and Sam Minter founded their car detailing business Bubbles and Beyond in January. **Brody Sever**



CHS9 students Rajiv Anandkumar and Sam Minter clean up the exterior of a Mazda CX-5 SUV. Minter and Anandkumar founded their car detailing business Bubbles and Beyond in January. **Brody Sever**

Victory using theater to push his limits

Greeshma Marathu
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Under layers of blanket, families turn on the TV and prepare themselves for a night of entertainment. Staring back at them through the television set is CHS9 freshman Max Victory.

Victory is an avid actor, having been in a commercial, feature film (Rally Caps, playing Barry) and full-length movie (It's Christmas Again, playing Oliver). His first time premiering on TV was in an Urban Air Adventure Park commercial in 2019.

Inspired by captivating performances he witnessed on stage, Victory found himself drawn to the world of performing arts.

"I was inspired to start acting and perform theater when I saw other people live on stage," Victory said. "I saw Kara Lindsay on the Broadway musical 'Wicked' and that's when I truly connected to the art of theater."

As Victory deepened his involvement in theater, he fell in love with TV and film acting. Seeing his peers with similar passions as him ignited a drive for the arts.

"My interest in TV and film came from theater but then bridged over because I saw other kids on TV," Victory said. "'Stranger Things' was a big inspiration. I saw Millie Bobby Brown and wanted to be like those kids on a TV show and have that experience."

When Victory expressed his enthusiasm to enter the profession, his parents helped guide and assist his career along with his prep agency, DTV Studios. Victory landed an opportunity at an open casting call through The Clutts Agency, sparking his

on screen profession and helping establish a name for himself.

"The agency gave me some really good work, and helped me throughout my career, basically got me started and got my foot in the door for the industry," Victory said.

Victory enjoys acting as a way to experience the lives of others. He ventures beyond what he's familiar with, embracing different character personas through his passion.

"It's just wonderful to get to be something you're normally not in your daily life and know what a character goes through," Victory said. "You can learn so much from just your own experience with that character; theater is a way to learn for yourself throughout life."

Rather than caving into challenges, such as casted a role hard to physicalize, Victory uses struggles as an opportunity to grow. His willingness to fail allows him to experiment with new ideas confidently.

"He likes to take on challenges as an actor," Coppell High School theater teacher Lisa Stucker said. "He likes to take risks with his acting choices, even if it's something that doesn't work out the first or second or third time. It's hard when you are a teenager to take on the physicality of another person, but he does a really good job at that and he was really eager to take that on, knowing it would be difficult."

As Victory gains acting experience, he receives a variety of critiques. He always welcomes the

feedback and implements it to do better.

"I remember when we were running the show, Max messed up his entrance several times," junior Sean Pompey said. "But with all the comments and critiques that he was given, he faced it with a smile and he said 'my bad guys, I won't do it again' and he didn't."

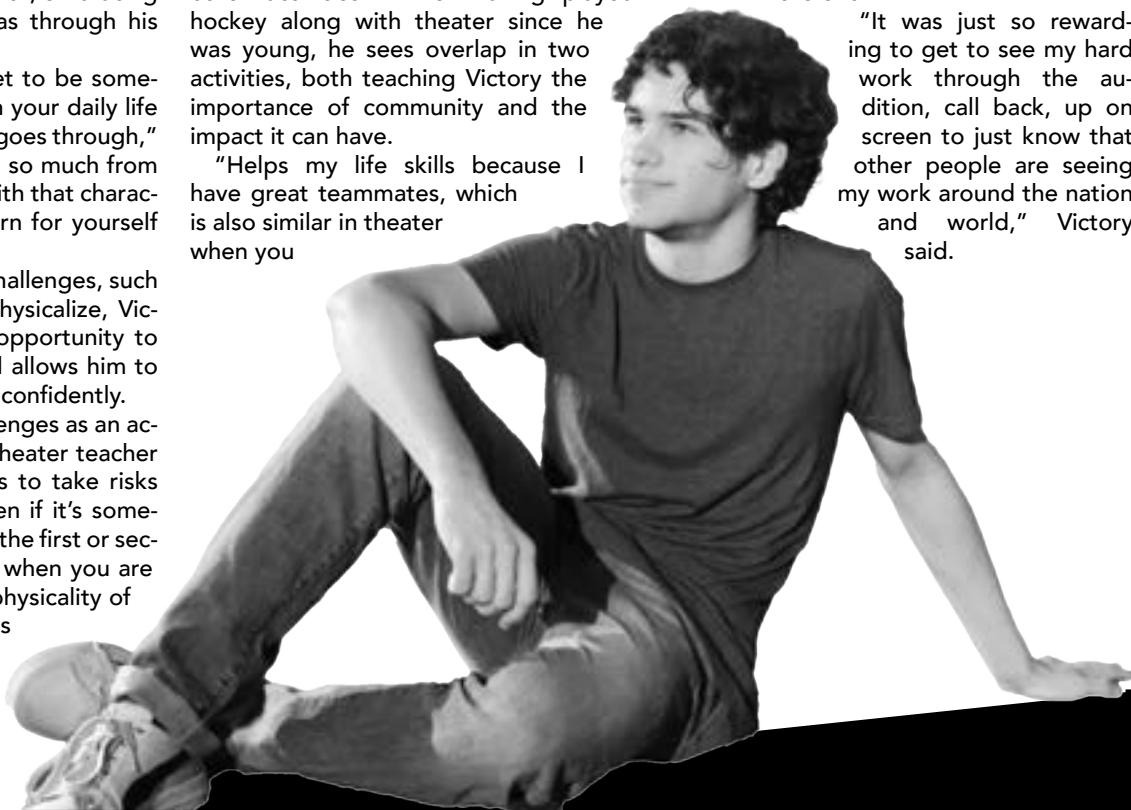
Theater fosters traits that he uses for other activities in life. Having played hockey along with theater since he was young, he sees overlap in two activities, both teaching Victory the importance of community and the impact it can have.

"Helps my life skills because I have great teammates, which is also similar in theater when you

have a play or musical," Victory said. "Those characters and actors are your supporting cast and create a big ensemble together, which is basically hockey. Also the endurance from hockey helps with theater, musicals, dancing and singing at the same time."

Acting offers Victory a sense of pride that his dedication and effort pay off at the end.

"It was just so rewarding to get to see my hard work through the audition, call back, up on screen to just know that other people are seeing my work around the nation and world," Victory said.



CHS9 student Max Victory has been acting professionally for six years in addition to participating in hockey and Coppell Choir. **Rhea Choudhary**

Senior column: From me to another you

Dear future Aliza Abidi,

On your first day of high school, you had planned to write a letter to yourself to open when you became a senior. At the time it seemed futile and humorous, so you procrastinated. Stuck in the slow stills of life, the thought of looking back four years later was foreign and seemingly unimaginable.

Now, I wish you had written that letter so that after these years, I could smile sentimentally at the growth you experienced through the laughter and tears of high school. Now a senior, I am writing to you for the first time, as you look back at this letter with a mixture of nostalgia and forgotten youth after graduating college.

In truth, I had never really imagined life after high school. Amidst the hammering academic and social pressures, college and its admissions seemed like a finish line. Past it was a new world that I had not stepped foot in, and did not bother worrying about.

I am at the edge of this unimagined world now. At the last stretch of the track, my breath has become uneven and my legs feel numb from hammering the gravel for what feels like infinity. I attempt to peer into the many more miles and races I will have to sprint, but as of now, the future is limited to foreign tracks to foreign destinations.

I hold on to the belief that you will carve out a path through my incomprehension of the future, and meet the goals and dreams that seem unreachable. We share a drive, a yearning towards stability in the form of change, to know and to be known. I know you have dug a path and molded yourself to be unafraid, to



High school is a time for students to find their identity and make irreplaceable memories. Coppell senior and The Sidekick editorial page editor Aliza Abidi reflects on how her time in the program has given her resilience and determination in preparation for her future.

Aliza Abidi

delve into the unknown, and exemplify the future of a leader, a thought that currently brings sweat to my palms.

I think of you and become more confident in closing this chapter of my life. I know our capabilities and I hope to continue finding positives in stressful situations and be molded by both the light and darkness of our growing experiences. I also hold faith that an undefined future will not derive from our aspirations.

I wonder what relationships you have found comfort in and what achievements have lit up your face as you navigate in-

dependence and adulthood. Although my breath hitches out of fear of an unfamiliar reflection of a future mirror, my heart racing at the vision of being a corporate employee, but I rest assured that your thirst for knowledge and persistence has guided you to a position of ease.

As you start yet another chapter of your life, I hope you look back with appreciation to each word and every meaning between the lines of your book. Although I am unsure of how to envision you, I know that regardless of what track

you are on, you will race through the finish line, just as I do now. I say both hello and goodbye, to you who is a future that I will exceed limits to create.

See you soon,
Aliza Abidi



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Engage yourself with community art

To me, a painting is not just a painting; when I gaze upon its expressive brush strokes, harmonious hues and intricate scenery, it evokes an emotional response.

The art tells me messages resonating with my experiences, and I admire the relentless dedication put into its creation.

However, I have seen these sentiments lessen among my peers. The allure of the visual arts as a viable career path and possible fine arts programs to pursue in high schools have decreased.

Artists who identify as creators are faced with a question defining their lives: Passion or profit?

Finding a financially stable job in visual arts is often a daunting challenge for artists. To thrive in the art industry is a challenging and selective process to go through, 85% of artists struggling to make a decent amount, or any money.

Because of this, there is often a stigma surrounding the visual arts as a career choice.

"Even my friends or artists judge me for wanting to pursue art," Coppell High School junior Larry Liu said. "They always ask me why I can't do it as a side hobby, or why I can't just go where the money is."

This discouragement can deter talented artists from pursuing their passions, curating conformity and stifling creativity and diversity within the artistic community.

With art being a still form of expression, people lack knowledge on how to engage with and support the art in their communities.

"The hard part about visual arts versus sports or performing arts is that visual arts are very passive, so there's not an entertainment factor or a social factor," AP Art History teacher Michelle Hauske said. "People don't know how to interact with visual arts because it's so still and people who don't make art or don't study art,

know how to engage in it."

Additionally, with rapid developments in artificial intelligence, AI becomes a threat to artists' livelihoods and careers. AI requires data and content to be imputed for it to generate new artworks. This content is often taken from readily available art, bringing issues of similar work being produced.

The ability to create artworks with little effort, almost instantly, devalues the thought behind brush strokes, heart behind storytelling and hours put into creative processes.

"The value that people have for the artistic process, genuine craftsmanship and the time and effort that goes into making art is decreasing, because consumers

would rather have a product that's easy to get than a product that was ethically made," digital artist Navya Singh said.

Undermining the human skills put into art can lead to the misconception that art is merely a mechanical process devoid of deeper meaning and diminishes the perceived value of the visual arts.

These notions further push stigmas around choosing art as a valid career choice and leave artists viewing artificial intelligence as a threat to their careers.

"I'm afraid that people are going to devalue artists and that art is going to be seen as more of a commodity to buy instead of a thing to appreciate just because art is intrinsically valuable," Liu said.

The value of art transcends monetary

measures, instilling social change and serving as a reflection of history.

On a personal level, art is a means of self-expression and introspection. It allows individuals to communicate complex emotions and experiences that transcend language, becoming universally understood. Without a deep appreciation for art, our community would be devoid of the emotional connections binding us together.

The solution doesn't lie in trying to fix these prevalent issues overnight, but rather, to make a collective effort to appreciate the role of art in our community.

For aspiring artists considering the prospects of passion versus profit, there are diverse career options available. Jobs such as graphic design, biomedical illustration, architecture or animation are options to pursue art aside traditional ways.

Schools implementing methods of engaging students and adequately funding art programs are positive steps. Initiatives like the National Art Honor Society making banners for school events, or showcasing student's artworks in CHS hallways exemplify the potential for schools to promote artistic talent.

Most importantly, fostering a culture of appreciation requires a willingness to recognize an artist's efforts. Stop to immerse yourself into the brush strokes, hues and stories of the next piece of art you come across, and ask yourself, what value did it bring to your life? What does it make you feel? These questions invite us to discover the inherent significance of visual arts.



Neha Nathwani
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In the past decade, less people have been considering fine arts as a valid career path. Staff writer Neha Nathwani explores the implications of a society that undervalues visual arts. **Sukirtha Muthiah**

2023-2024
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The Sidekick is the official student newspaper for Coppell High School. Its purpose is to inform, entertain and provide an educational resource for its readers. This newspaper is a public forum for student expression with staff members (with assistance from their adviser) making content decisions. The editorials and columns in this paper reflect the view of their writers.

The Sidekick is a member of Interscholastic League Press Conference (ILPC), National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA), Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) and Southern Interscholastic Press Association (SIPA).

The Sidekick welcomes all letters to the editor, but letters must be signed before consideration for publication. Send letters to cwofford@coppellisd.com or bring them by D115.

Advertisements are sold as full, 1/2 page, 1/4 page, 1/8 page sizes in black and white or color.

Correction: **Williams sprinting past decade-long track record (Volume 35 No. 5, p. 23).** In our previous issue, sophomore Sophia Williams was incorrectly said to have attended Coppell Middle School North when she attended Coppell Middle School East. The Sidekick regrets this error.

Staff Editorial

Summer stressors straining students



After 10 months of late night study sessions, juggling never-ending to-do lists and wrestling with demanding academic pressures, the sunny days of summer should seemingly serve as a relaxing break for high school students.

But, as it turns out, many times it is not.

Through the endless expectation of productivity and social outreach that students plan going into summer, they often fall into extremes of productivity. Whether it be spending the months binging on Netflix or rushing in and out of internships and workshops, a productive summer is one of balance.

Waking up on a hot summer day, extending should have a motive and goal in mind, one extending beyond academic or extracurricular validation.

For most students, summer seems to be the season for internships, dual credit courses and scholarly summer camps. Climbing the ladder of excellent grades, we begin to prepare for the responsibilities that build up over the year. As we are driven by a desire for academic success, students find themselves confined by social expectations surrounding what it means to be productive over a break.

These pressures to have the highest grades and most extracurriculars become a large contributor for stress and anxiety. When students are left to deal with these tensions, it affects their self-esteem, as they are stuck in cycles of trying to meet high expectations and comparing themselves to their academic peers.

At an academically competitive and motivated school such as Coppell High School, productivity is highly glorified. The idea of taking a break can seem unrewarding as it is treated with the belief that for time to be well-spent, it should be spent on educational activities.

This notion can make it demoralizing, or even shameful, to slow down.

However, without allocating time to de-stress, students become vulnerable to a lack of motivation, leaving them exhausted even after a break. Burnout can lead to fatigue, difficulty concentrating and decreased

cognitive functioning, all of which impair learning and retention.

Continuous cycles of burnout prevent students from taking the necessary rest needed to start the next school year energized, limiting students from reaching the goals they strive to achieve in the first place. Taking time to rejuvenate in the summer helps mentally prepare students to take on the next school year. Without doing so, students may be drained when school resumes due to a lack of rest.

Regardless, though school schedules during the school year, summer is often the only time for students to explore activities such as dual credit courses or internships, making it difficult to allocate time towards relaxation.

Through all our summer activities, let us not forget the reason why we are given these three vital months. While finding time for yourself can be difficult, it is important to take advantage of summer break as a time to unwind and de-stress.

The goal is not to do nothing in the summer, as it can also lead to apathy. Neither is the goal to come back to school in August feeling as drained as you left the school year in May.

Instead, implement a loose schedule and incorporate planned activities to keep you motivated, while also allowing yourself to take time to re-energize. This could look like allocating time towards your daily internship, while also ensuring you have time to indulge in summer activities such as pool days, sports games, concerts and riding roller coasters.

This balanced approach helps students gain a sense of stability and purpose, while also helping them achieve their educational goals without an exhaustive approach.

Finding a source of relaxation such as journaling, exercise or listening to music that may not provide you with another bullet point in your college applications, but can help you feel grounded.

Not everything has to serve an academic purpose. Indulging in activities that may have little perceived productive value, but are interesting, enjoyable or spark curiosity can aid in personal growth and self discovery.

When given time to try new hobbies, have a variety of leisurely activities that bring daily skills that can translate into your future career.

Summer serves as a valuable time for relaxation and self development, especially for seniors, who are spending their last moments before adulthood. Placing less pressure on themselves to look for academic opportunities enables seniors to gain direction before becoming burdened with adult responsibilities. At the end of the tunnel, this high school summer should be one for childhood memories, meeting friends and embracing being a teenager.

Like most academic pursuits, finding balance allows for personal growth in more than just quantitative achievements. Each new school year is a new chapter, but let us not forget to read between the lines of our passions.



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Senior Pullout 2024

PICTURING OUR SENIORS

P. 7-18



> P.8-9 MEDIA

Top tier

Honoring the media teams' seniors

> P.10-11 ACADEMICS

The 1 percent

Get to know the Top 10 graduates

> P.14-15 FINE ARTS

Practice makes perfect

Kim finding his tune with piano

> P.16-17 SPORTS

Words of wisdom

*Athletes' final thoughts
on their high school career*

The Sidekick
SENIOR ODES
The Sidekick staff members celebrate its seniors leaving the program.



Sameeha Syed

SAMEEHA'S PURE JOY IS SPRINKLED THROUGH THE MEMORIES I WILL LOOK BACK AT LOVINGLY. NO MATTER WHERE SHE GOES OR WHAT JOB SHE ENDS UP AT, SAMEEHA WILL CONTINUE TO SHIMMER AND SCATTER LIGHT ON EVERYONE'S LIVES. - **NRITHYA MAHESH**

AVANI'S RESILIENCE IS EVIDENT IN HER WORK. EVERY PAGE ONE AND CENTERSPREAD OF THE SIDEKICK VOLUME 35 IS A TESTAMENT TO HER DEDICATION. SHE POURS TREMENDOUS EFFORT AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL INTO EACH ISSUE, EXEMPLIFYING UNWAVERING DEDICATION. - **SAHASRA CHAKILAM**



Avani Munji



Sri Achanta

I HAVE SERIOUSLY NEVER MET ANYONE WHO IS AS STEADFAST AND HARDWORKING AS SRI. EVERYTHING SHE DOES IS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THOSE AROUND HER. THAT IS WHAT MAKES HER A GREAT LEADER AND A BETTER PERSON. - **SUKIRTHA MUTHIAH**



Anushree De

WHETHER WE'RE ON OUR DAILY WALKS TO LUNCH OR TALKING BEFORE CLASS, IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE ANUSHREE ENCOUNTERS CAN'T HELP BUT SMILE IN HER PRESENCE, INDICATIVE OF HER INDELIBLE MARK ON EVERYONE SHE MEETS. AND I AM HONORED TO BE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE. - **ANVITA BONDADA**

SEE, THERE'S THIS RADIANCE THAT CAPTURES YOU WHEN YOU LOOK AT AVA, BUT WHEN YOU TALK TO HER, IT ONLY GETS SO MUCH BETTER. NEVER HAVE I EVER TALKED TO SOMEONE SO INTELLIGENT AND FULL OF THE RIGHT WORDS. - **RHEA CHOWDHARY**



Ava Johnson



Aliza Abidi

ALIZA IS, MORE THAN ANYTHING, A GREAT FRIEND AND MENTOR. SHE CONSTANTLY SUPPORTS ME AND OTHER STAFF MEMBERS AND WILL ALWAYS BE THE FIRST PERSON TO OFFER A HELPING HAND AND GUIDANCE. - **KAYLA NGUYEN**



Jayden Chui

IF I ANNOY JAYDEN ENOUGH, HE'LL ALWAYS HELP ME WITH PAGE DESIGN, CALCULUS, PHYSICS, OR WHICH SNACK I SHOULD EAT FIRST DURING THE PERIOD. SO THANKS, J CHUI, FOR EVERY PIECE OF WARRANTED AND UNWARRANTED ADVICE YOU'VE EVER GIVEN ME. - **RHEA CHOWDHARY**

NOOR ISN'T AFRAID TO SPEAK HER MIND. EVERY SIDEKICK CLASS PERIOD WE SHARE TOGETHER. SHE MAKES THE ROOM HER OWN. NOOR TRULY IS A CHARACTER AND I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE WITH THE SAME TYPE OF CHARM SHE HAS. - **ELIZABETH DE SANTIAGO**



Noor Fatima



Anita Goodwin
program director

“My favorite memory was when we wanted to do a walk and talk segment at the football game, so we filmed all night.”

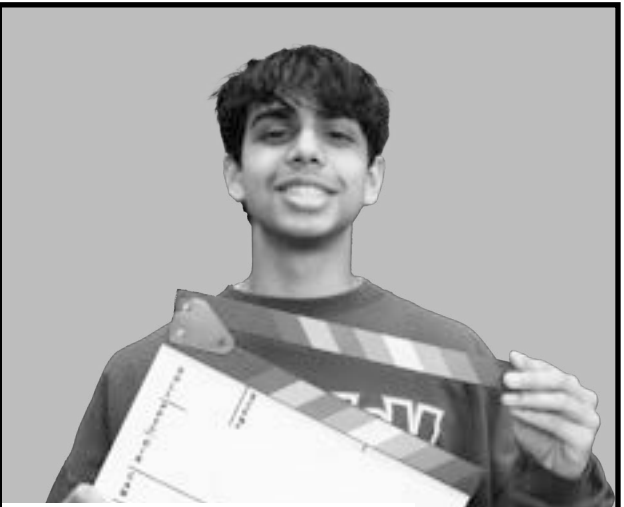


Issac Mercado
program director

“KCBY is a place where you can take your journalism passion to the next level with all our equipment and connections.”



KCBY-TV is the student-run broadcast program at Coppell High School that has been producing shows since 1995. The KCBY-TV seniors reflect on how their time in the program has provided them with an outlet to explore their passions and make valuable memories.



Archis Ukidwe
program director

“One of my favorite memories this year was after the Rangers won the World Series. We got film of the championship parade.”



Rachel Chang
senior producer

“KCBY was unlike any other class I’d ever taken because it’s just so hands-on. You get so much experience working in the field. ”



Samantha Handshy
senior producer

“KCBY definitely impacted every aspect of my life. I’ve gained confidence over the past three years.”



Seniors

Round-Up is the yearbook program at Coppell High School and has been capturing CHS memories since 1965. *Round-Up* seniors pay tribute to the program by appreciating the lifelong skills that they have learned and the stories they were able to tell through their work.



Samiksha Chemukula
editor-in-chief

“I enjoy meeting new people and getting to hear their stories and then being able to properly showcase that in the yearbook.”



Pooja Harinarthini
chronological managing editor

“The communication skills that I learned through yearbook and connecting with my staff will really help me in my future career.”



Kriti Meenakshi
people managing editor

“Yearbook is different in that even 10 years down the road, it will still have value because it’s something everyone looks back on.”



Samita Alagashetty
senior managing editor

“I wanted to be a part of something that contributes to the school, and yearbook was a great way for me to take pictures.”



Emma Radoncic
sports managing editor

“My core memories are late nights when we worked on pages and when we got to play hide and seek in the school at night.”



Meet the *Top* 10

The graduating class Top 10 was finalized based on their high school GPA. The Top 10 share their advice and thoughts on their high school experience.



01

Vishnu Marella

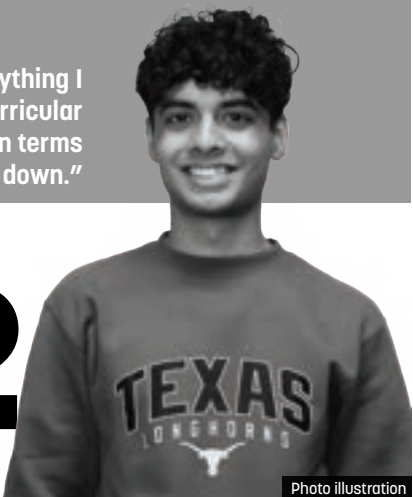
"What motivates me most is that I really do enjoy the subjects I take. I like everything I learn, which is what motivates me to study, do my homework and other extracurricular activities because I keep in mind the fact that I want to be a doctor. So thinking in terms of the long term, it really helps me overcome these challenges when I am feeling down."



03

Dhroov Pathare

"Success is not just about hard work, but it's also about smart work. It means setting goals and staying organized. Something that many people also overlook is how essential it is to build strong relationships with your peers and teachers, as they are the ones most likely by your side."



02

Photo illustration

Arya Agashe

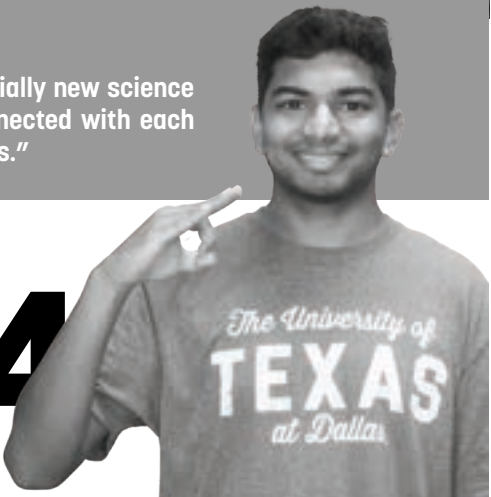
"I'm driven by the curiosity that I have to learn new concepts, especially new science topics or math topics, since science and math are kind of interconnected with each other. That's inspiring to me because it shows me how the world works."



05

Akhil Vellaturi

"An unexpected lesson I've learned in high school is how important it is to embrace failure and that you won't always be successful. Over time, I've realized that making mistakes is an inevitable part of growth and learning."



04

Sri Achanta

"You learn a lot from the people you interact with. Surround yourself with the right people and force yourself to talk to all different types of people. For me, that came through *The Sidekick* because I was able to talk to individuals who each have different interests, and I have been able to learn so much from them."



07

Ishaan Kashyap

"There's a lot of amazing people here, so you need to zone them out and focus on what you want to do, and make sure you're working towards your own goals because it does not matter what everyone else is doing. It is all about how you are planning to achieve what you want to achieve."



06

Anish Kalra

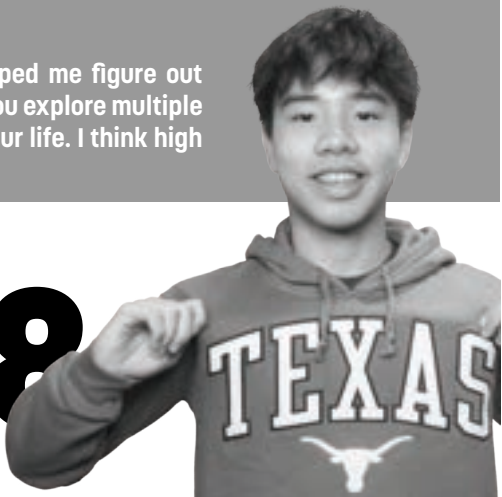
"I know high school has definitely helped me career-wise, and helped me figure out what I want to do. I came into high school and was very confused. If you explore multiple pathways, you're kind of refining what you end up wanting to do in your life. I think high school really taught me how to be a good person."



09

Charles Chen

"Everyone has their own strengths, so it is easy to underestimate other people. But everyone is smart in some way and nobody just does nothing in their spare time. I learned that you can find some sort of skill in everyone and you can bond with other people through those skills."



08

Aryan Bansal

"If you are thinking of joining a club or applying for a certain leadership position, just go for it. Even if it does not work out, you will learn a lot to where if you want to try something similar, you could have success. And oftentimes, you'll find that if you really are dedicated to doing something like that, something will work out."

Tanvi Nikam

"I always used to think that I would get my most satisfaction from having good grades, but I realized throughout high school that I actually am more proud of myself for my extracurricular activities, such as TSA and Eco Club, and that makes the high school experience much more worth it than just having good grades in school."



10

Schoolwork to stethoscopes

Alapatt invests in future working as nursing assistant

Marli Field
Staff Writer
@CHSCampusNews

Beeping monitors, rushing nurses and call lights - these were typical morning sights for a 9-year-old Coppell High School senior Harry Alapatt, who spent mornings at the hospital where his parents worked.

Growing up with both of his parents being nurses, Alapatt has always respected those working in the medical field.

"One thing my mom stresses a lot to me is that she finds satisfaction in taking care of people who cannot take care of

themselves, the job itself makes her happy," Alapatt said.

Alapatt is already following in his parents, Shajimon and Stella Alapatt's, footsteps - by working as a registered nursing assistant. While inspired by his parents' careers, Harry never felt pressured to pursue a job in the healthcare industry.

"There's a lot of kids whose parents try to force into these sorts of careers," Harry said. "But my parents urged me to explore my interests and see what I actually wanted."

After beginning to explore his options through CHS's CTE program, he realized

an already familiar pathway was still the one that felt like home: health science.

In classes like Medical Terminology and Principles of Health Science, Harry has been able to explore his interest in medicine. It is something his teachers, such as Pathophysiology teacher Ray Pool, have enjoyed watching him continue to grow and excel.

"Harry is kind of quiet in class, but the work that he produces is exceptional," Pool said. "He encourages his classmates to do better by setting an example, not necessarily through being forceful."

Expanding his knowledge in school was a huge part of what led to Harry's desire to want more experience outside of the classroom.

"[My courses] were a big thing that drove my desire to do this," Harry said. "I found it interesting how healthcare is so complex but also applicable to everything. It gives you a better understanding of the world around you".

Another way Harry explores medicine in high school was through HOSA, a student-led organization that allows members to explore medical professions. Senior Meenakshi Subha Vipin is currently an officer in HOSA, and has known Harry since their sophomore year.

"He's very thoughtful and good at paying attention to the details," Vipin said. "I think that's a really valuable quality to have, not only in school, but also in the healthcare setting that he works in."

Harry began his journey to certification when he was 16, enrolling in a six week course in March of his junior year that involved participating in on-line classes, as well as in-person

skills training at Legacy Career Institute in Carrollton. Through this, Harry was able to obtain his license to practice from the state of Texas, a huge accomplishment for an individual who, at the time, wasn't even legally allowed to vote.

But, he had another obstacle in his way to begin working - finding a facility willing to hire him.

"Most places only hire legal adults and require high school diplomas, two things I didn't have on my resume," Harry said.

A few months after beginning his job search, Harry was hired as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) at the Treemont Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Dallas, where he worked every weekend.

Through his work at Treemont, Harry hopes his experience as a CNA will help reach his goal of becoming a doctor. Harry will pursue medicine at Missouri Southern State University by getting his Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences.

"The opportunity to be a part of a healthcare team revitalized my desire to become a physician," Harry said. "Now that I have worked a job that is considered at a lower level clinically, I feel like I'll be able to appreciate all my team members as a doctor, and see their work through a different lens."

His close friend, senior Samiksha Chemukula, has seen the skills contributing to Harry's success as a CNA.

"Harry is very dedicated to his goals," Chemukula said. "If he has a task, he's going to put his utmost effort into it, whether it's our assignments in EMT class or obtaining his certification to become a CNA."

When asked if she thinks Harry will be able to achieve his future goals, Chemukula has no doubts.

"He is such a compassionate person, and so determined," Chemukula said. "I feel like his personality, along with the classes he's taken and his work as a nursing assistant, will help him become a successful and caring doctor."



Coppell High School senior Harry Alapatt was hired at Treemont Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center as a certified nursing assistant. Alapatt is pursuing a degree in Biomedical Sciences at Missouri Southern State University. **Anushree De**

Pencil to paper

Krishnan creating picturesque worlds through words

Anushree De
Features Editor
@anushree_night

An array of sweets are enclosed in a glass container in a local cafe. Children press their hands on the glass. Friends laugh about their days. Hidden away from the bustle is a girl.

She types away, lost in her own world. On her screen is the beginnings of a new poem.

"Start with a spot—a simple canvas—and carve it, make ridges with your fingertips until it swallows everything whole, a hollowed conclave made of blackened glitter dust..."

The writer, in question, is Coppell High School student Akshita Krishnan, then a sophomore.

Now a senior, Krishnan sits in the same spot as she crafts a new poem. Each of Krishnan's poems follow the same theme. Belonging.

"Akshita's style is like drinking a cup of tea," junior Audrey Wu said. "It's like sitting down at a table while it's raining outside with your favorite mug. It's a little chipped. It's a little broken, but you still love it. It feels like home. She creates that belonging."

This sense of belonging in poetry stems from Krishnan's initial lack of it. While she was born in India and lived there for 10 years, Krishnan struggled to connect to her identity. But through her grandfather's storytelling, Krishnan also became connected to her heritage.

"One of the first stories my grandfather

told me was from the Ramayana," Krishnan said. "It was where Hanuman, a monkey, broke into Ramayan's castle to talk to Sita. My grandfather is very imagery based, so he lets the setting take control of the story and guide it."

However, Krishnan would once again face the question of where home was as her father, Krishnan Sundaraman, received a job offer in the United States and moved to Marshall, Minn. in 2016.

Krishnan and her sister were the only two Indian students in school.

"My mom would make lunch for me every day," Krishnan said. "Whatever she made generally had an Indian twist to it. One time she packed me idli with podi, which is a spicy chowder that you put in idli. There was this girl who tried it, and she was so disrespectful. She said 'ewwww, that's so gross.'"

Sixteen months later, Krishnan moved to Edison, N.J. As Krishnan made memories with her newfound community, she was becoming comfortable with her surroundings for the first time.

Yet two years later, she moved to Coppell.

"I noticed early on how strong Akshita's voice is in her writing," said Matthew Bowden, sponsor of the Coppell Young Writers' Association. "When we would share journals every six weeks, she would read a journal out loud. There's a strength to her writing.

When she describes a feeling, you know what she is talking about."

Krishnan's poetry can be found in various literary magazines including *Eunoia Review*, *Bright Flash Literary Review* and the *Texposure Zine*. Krishnan will attend Smith College in Northampton, Mass. and

study economics and literature.

"Akshita is the kind of person who is not afraid to look at how things can be improved," AP English teacher Tracy Henson said. "She's got the skill set and personality that would make a big difference in the world."



Coppell High School senior Akshita Krishnan writes at Paris Baguette, a cafe in Coppell. Krishnan's writing has been published in Eunoia Review, Bright Flash Literary Review, Eucalyptus Lit and more. **Anushree De**

MOST LIKELY TO STYLE THEMSELVES FOR A RED CARPET EVENT



**LAURA LIAO
JAEDIN KHUC**

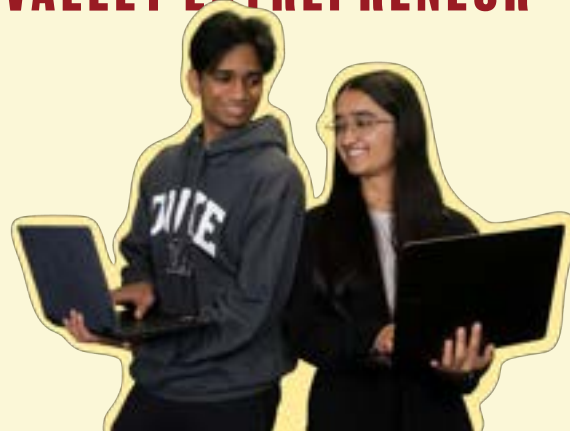
"Fashion is what gives me my skin," Laura Liao said. "By myself, I am myself, but then with my clothes on, I feel more me because it's very expressive. It's like a new skin."

Oversized jackets and baggy jeans mark Jaedin Khuc's fashion style. It's hard to think someone so stylish is colorblind. Khuc suffers from protanomaly, a color blindness that impacts reds and greens but affects most colors, but he doesn't let that limit him from expressing himself through clothing.

"I am a very organized and planned person," Anveshi Goyal said. "So when it comes to taking initiative, I always want to get things done just so I can get them on my calendar ready for me to check them off."

Along with the path of medicine, Dhroov Pathare plans to go into law to reform current inefficiencies in the medical system.

MOST LIKELY TO BE A SILICON VALLEY ENTREPRENEUR



**PRANEETH MUVVA
NAISHA JAIN**

Throughout middle school and high school, Naisha Jain has devoted her time to STEM-based clubs and organizations such as Girls Who Code, Technology Student Association (TSA) and various robotics clubs, strengthening her knowledge and interest in the field of computer science and electrical engineering.

"I think electrical engineering, even if I never go into it, is good for building problem-solving skills and helping grow the way you think," Praneeth Muvva said. Muvva will major in electrical and computer engineering at Duke University as a way to gain valuable skills to support his future ventures.

"I took a year break from band," Roma Jani said. "So I joined choir and it was really something that I fell in love with."

"I think it was just more like getting into my zone," Suhas Sura said. "I enjoyed the feeling of just locking in and sticking to that one thing that I was trying to do good at, and that's what really got me into singing."

MOST LIKELY TO SIGN A DEAL WITH NIKE



**ARHAN LAPSIWALA
SEDEM BUATSI**

For Max Scott, happiness comes in the little things, like waking up every morning. A friendly attitude comes naturally with that kind of positive mindset.

Chloe Kryzak is the embodiment of the sun. Her golden curls surround her smiling face like rays of warmth. It is natural for a grin to form almost instantly just by talking to her.



**MAX SCOTT
CHLOE KRYZAK**

MOST LIKELY TO BECOME A BILLIONAIRE



**ANVESHI GOYAL
DHROOV PATHARE**



MOST LIKELY TO PERFORM DURING A NFL HALFTIME SHOW

**ROMA JANI
SUHAS SURA**

MOST LIKELY TO MAKE YOUR DAY



THE BEST OF THE CLASS OF 2024

Coppell High School seniors nominated their fellow peers for different award categories. Here are the selected 24 seniors who shine underneath the spotlight for their respective categories.

Stories by Katie Park, Manasa Borra, Nrithya Mahesh, Nyah Rama, Sahasra Chakilam, Sukirtha Muthiah

ON THE red carpet

Adeesh Rathod has been entranced by the innovation and possibilities that architecture. "I like the creative aspect about architecture," Rathod said. "Architecture is unique to me, because it is whatever I imagine and it's not something that anyone else thought of."

Tanvi Nikam has found passion in the art of engineering as it allows her to make a difference. "Engineering has been a way for me to apply my passion for math, science and physics to solve real-world problems," Nikam said. "I enjoy getting the chance to use my creativity to create solutions that people can use in their own lives."

MOST LIKELY TO DESIGN THE NEXT WONDER OF THE WORLD



**ADEESH RATHOD
TANVI NIKAM**

As a Coppell High School Heritage Night host for 2 years, Arjun Krishnan has found his stride in delivering jokes both on and off the stage. He has a deep appreciation for the power of comedy.

Shreya Jadhav's vibrant sense of humor stems from her deep-rooted love for media. As a member of KCBY-TV, she has honed her video production skills and fostered meaningful connections.

MOST LIKELY TO HOST SNL



**ARJUN KRISHNAN
SHREYA JADHAV**

Kshetra Polavarapu has hoped to pursue a career in medicine since she was in middle school. Now, she has the chance to make those dreams a reality through her EMT course which allows her to gain experience through rotations at the local fire station. "I'm not completely sure yet, but I am thinking of something in emergency medicine, like an emergency physician," Polavarapu said.

To everyone who knows him, Prateek Malkoti's love for medicine is apparent in everything he does. "I wear scrubs every day or almost every day," Malkoti said. "A lot of my friends know that I take [Practicum in Health Science - Medical Assistant] and people in my class know that I love this stuff, and I talk about it. I also have a TikTok account that I blog on."

MOST LIKELY TO ADMINISTER CPR ON A PLANE



**KSHETRA POLAVARAPU
PRATEEK MALKOTI**

MOST LIKELY TO LEAD AN ACTIVIST MOVEMENT

**ANUSHREE DE
RISHI DASARI**



With an ardent passion for astronomy and time to spare during COVID-19 in her freshman year, Rishika Porandla crafted an out-of-the-world universe through her book.

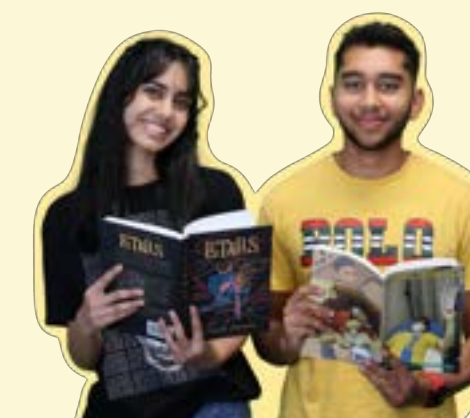
Spending four days in the cycle of waking up, writing and sleeping, Anunaya Pathak wrote a book about breaking his arm. He hopes his book will provide a sense of comfort to others.

"Leading a movement starts with one person," Anushree De said. "As long as you believe, you can make the differences that you want to make."

Debate allows people to argue for issues they believe will make a difference, and that is exactly why Rishi Dasari does it. "We look into a lot of social issues and I want to study political science," Dasari said. "I want to be a lawyer and through law, I want to be able to act on those social issues that we talk about."

MOST LIKELY TO WRITE A BOOK STUDIED IN IB ENGLISH

**RISHIKA PORANDLA
ANUNAYA PATHAK**



Olivia Willey started acting when she was 7, starring in theatrical productions as well as commercials and short films. Through acting, Willey uses her passion to spread awareness in various topics. "Being in an awareness film was really fun because I was able to be a voice, which is my favorite part of acting," Willey said.

"Every year, I always make an effort to participate in our school's annual musicals," Sid Gunasekaran said. "Acting in musicals is such a blast and has allowed me to build such an awesome community and meet my closest friends."



MOST LIKELY TO STAR IN A BLOCKBUSTER FILM
**OLIVIA WILLEY
SID GUNASEKARAN**



THE PIANO MAN

Photos courtesy Joshua Kim

Coppell High School senior Joshua Kim plays a series of warmup chords and progressions prior to playing a piece. Kim has been playing piano since age 10 and plans to major in piano at the University of Texas at Austin. *Rhea Chowdhary*

Kim composing notes in his own story with piano

Yug Talukdar
Staff Writer
@YugTalukdar

A piano sounds through a stage as its keys are traversed by Coppell High School senior Joshua Kim, filling the air with a harmonious symphony of notes.

Kim, by a pianist’s standards, started late. He initially attempted to play the guitar, but was led to the piano through the comments of his guitar teacher, who suggested he take it up.

Enchanted by its sound and the ability to play more complex pieces on it, Kim was drawn to the piano, and started playing consistently when he was 10.

“When I play the piano, especially at a performance, there is a certain time where I become extremely focused and everything around me flushes out,” Kim said. “I am left with just the piano and me.”

Piano enables Kim to get a sense of the

music he is playing and connect with the piece at an intricate level.

“One of the most enjoyable parts about the piano is when you get attached to the music and feel it for yourself, which is how you really express yourself with music,” Kim said.

Kim moved to Coppell during his sophomore year from Johns Creek, Ga, and has moved several times before, enabling him to be adaptable and continue playing well in all circumstances, adjusting to changing people and settings.

“He is a good kid, is sociable, and knows how to connect with people very quickly and easily,” Joshua’s older sister, Rachel Kim, said.

His ardor for piano has led Joshua to find a clear direction to head toward past high school: a future in music. He plans to major in piano at the University of Texas at Austin, a decision he made his junior year.

“It was around the time when we had to figure out what we had to major in, and I couldn’t really find anything that intrigued me academically,” Joshua said. “None of that sounded like something that was interesting enough to major in pursuit of a career.”

Previously, Joshua had been uncertain about what he would do after high school, which had sown concern into his parents. The appearance of a drive to achieve and a passion to follow a path made them feel reassured.

“In junior year, he felt a kind of confidence about what he thought and was interested in pursuing his dreams of being a pianist,” Joshua’s mother, Soo Kim said. “From that moment he started changing positively.”

To others, Joshua is not only a very skilled pianist, but he also represents someone who is tenacious with their

dreams.

He has pushed forward in his effort to major in piano, even if it is something that very few of his peers are doing.

“One of the things that Joshua felt when applying to colleges was a sense of loneliness because he felt he did not know others who planned on solely majoring in music,” Rachel said, “But when everyone is focused on being so profitable and making enough money to be comfortable, we lose sight of what is really important that can help you develop as a person.”

As a whole, Joshua hopes to use piano to give himself a life that fulfills him, and keeps himself constantly intrigued and growing as a person.

“I think not only has it helped me with music, but it has taught me to commit myself to something,” Joshua said. “Piano is the only thing that I have committed myself to this much in my life.”



Coppell High School senior Joshua Kim plays a series of warmup chords and progressions prior to playing a piece. Kim has been playing piano since age 10 and plans to major in piano at the University of Texas at Austin. *Rhea Chowdhary*

Coincidence to crescendo

Hosalli finding harmony through Madrigals

Niharika Tallapaka
Staff Writer
@CHSCampusNews

Discovering a passion for something that would eventually create years of memories and experiences isn't the easiest thing. Passions and finding your own talents can take years and some people don't ever discover them.

Raghav Hosalli's interest in choir isn't the normal "going to audition," and "loving music," path. Their lack of interest in anything choir related ended coincidentally changing the trajectory of their life, resulting in something they would never forget.

"I joined choir in the fifth grade when my elementary school teacher convinced me to join the honor choir for fifth and sixth grade," Hosalli said. "At the time I was barely considering it and over time I fell in love with it."

Joining CHS choir changed the trajectory of Hosalli's choir passion. Their sense of community within all the choirs is full of support whether it be with choir or academics.

The busy schedules between being in multiple choirs and keeping your grades up isn't always an easy thing to do, but Hosalli manages.

"If you ever find yourself missing out on time to study or missing a class, chances are that a lot of the other choir members are in those classes with you. Working together with them to keep our grades up honestly helps us," Hosalli said.

The relationships between other members and directors have been a major support system for not only Hosalli, but also many other choir members. Celebrating festivals and going to competitions alongside each other has made countless memories for everyone involved.

"I've participated in every UIL Competition since sixth grade and All-State Choirs, as well as the Madrigal Festival," Hosalli said. "Each and every one is unique in its own way, but it's a great opportunity to work with your choir to a common goal

and work on repetition and perfection."

Competition season is especially important as well as difficult. At times, the members' passion can be difficult to keep up with and push through.

"It can be a little bit draining," Hosalli said. "But the end result is so rewarding for all collectively that it's definitely worth the hard work we've put into it."

Not only is Raghav a talented singer, but their involvement in and outside of choir has been evident. They held the position of social chair in CHS Choir and is also the co-president of the Coppel Gay Straight Alliance (GSA).

Creating a bond with not only fellow students, but also directors and peers has left a mark on Hosalli's experiences throughout high school.

"Raghav is extremely talented and his passion for classical music is very appar-

ent, he works hard and supports the choir so much. Madrigals as a whole are the best out of choir and each individual requires more effort," senior Madrigal Hannah Taba said.

Their impact of holding a position in choir has also aided in making the choir better and they have left a lasting impact for years to come.

"Raghav has contributed a lot to the choir and building the community," senior Coppel Choir president Roma Jani said "Being in the Madrigals together doesn't even feel like work, we are all friends."

Raghav's success reaches more than just the help from their fellow choir members. Directors and teachers have made a lasting impact on their four years at CHS.

"The directors will always maintain a personal relationship with us especially with a smaller ensemble like Madrigals and they

keep us feeling and sounding our best," Hosalli said. "Getting to know teachers as well helps with knowing them and their teaching methods, but just knowing them on a personal level."

Their choir journey doesn't end here. Raghav plans on pursuing more singing into the future at the Purdue University Treble Bass Choir.

"I'm already working on my audition for a choir program in college and it's definitely something I'll be continuing," Hosalli said.

Hosalli's coincidental talents have discovered a new realm of a new community of people creating memories wherever they go.

"Stick with whatever you do, it can be draining at times, but it will provide you with a community and memories that will last you a lifetime," Hosalli said.



Coppel senior Raghav Hosalli has spent the past seven years involved in Coppel choir. As their senior year begins to end, Hosalli has left an impact on the students and directors within the program. Ainsley Dwyer

Bliobenes brings dreams to life through webcomic

Noor Fatima
Staff Designer
@CHSCampusNews

Coppel High School senior Scarlett Bliobenes appears from the outside to be a reserved figure as she finds every minute she can to draw on the Procreate app between assignments and during mornings before her art class.

Take a closer look though and you find that through her pen, she's piecing together a comic with its origins in her realm of dreams by basing the plot on a dream she had before she started on the project.

Train of Whispers on Webtoon is Bliobenes's webcomic about the protagonist, Maeve, as she tries to find her way back home after waking up in a strange realm, accompanied by a strange man.

Bliobenes's love for stories has been apparent from her youth. Checking out as many books from the library as she could starting in elementary school.

"I remember our teachers used to always get on to her about reading during les-

sons," Yaalinee Prabhu said. "She was the first one to start reading chapter books, and almost finished reading the entire library at our elementary school."

When she was in sixth grade at Coppel Middle School North, Bliobenes began to develop her skills in the visual arts when she found an interest in character design. She taught herself to draw until eighth

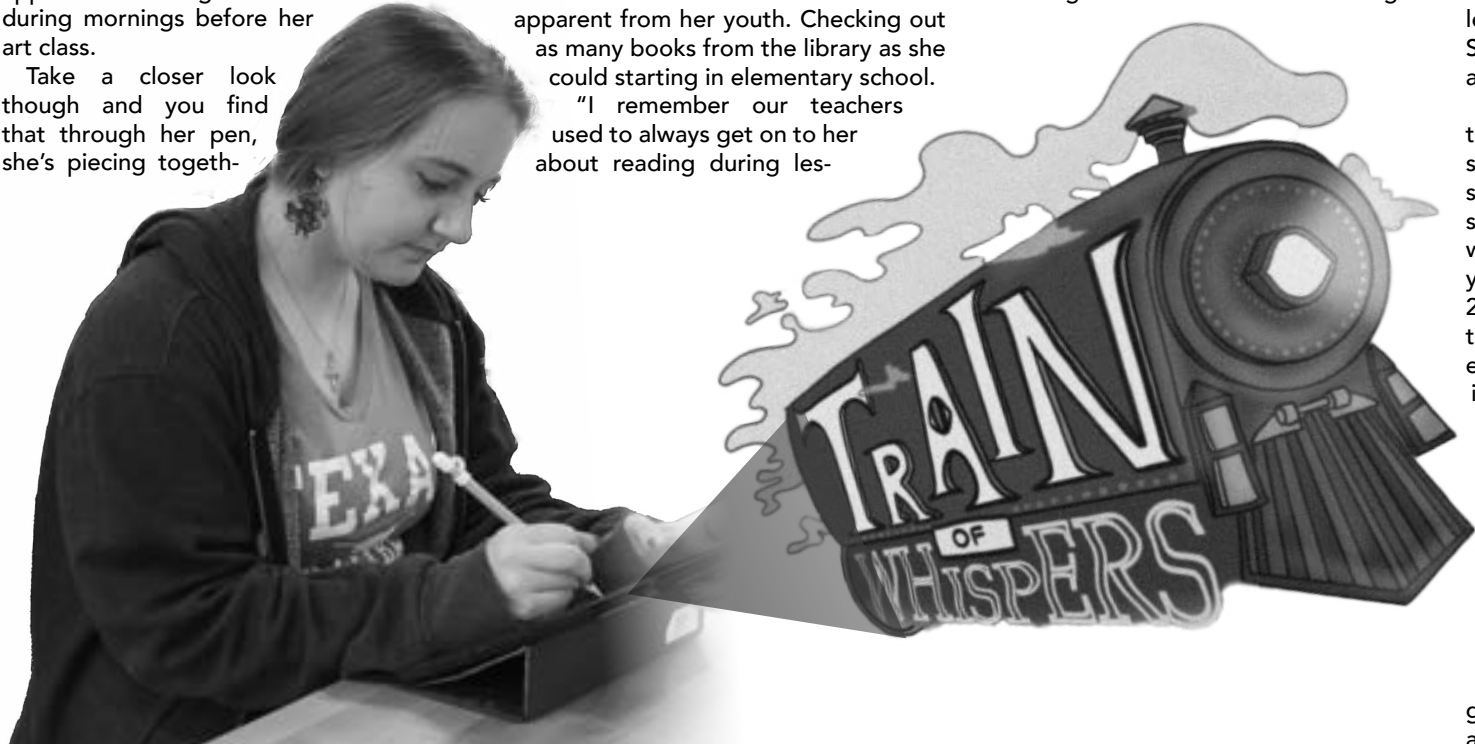
grade where she took her first art class.

"The art teachers and I joke that we don't really need to do anything with Scarlett because she is so personally motivated and driven and has come to us with that drive" Coppel High School AP/IV Art teacher Michelle Hauske said. "She has come into the these higher level courses with a skillset and knowledge that she has learned from her own personal practice. She's so personally driven that she goes and she learns on her own."

Over time the characters she created took on a life of their own as her love for stories merged with her character design skills. She found herself with the necessary skills to make her comic and began working on Train of Whispers in her junior year, publishing the first episode in July 2023, and continues her commitment to the project on a steady basis, finding every moment she can to continue drawing it.

"That feeling where you're finally able to recreate what you've been thinking of, and you're looking at the finished product and it's so cool to look at because it's a tangible result of your imagination," Bliobenes said. "I love the rush that I get from that. Especially a project as big as this, is something that I've been thinking about for a long time."

Bliobenes plans to study advertising and graphic design at the University of Texas at Austin. She said Train of Whispers and future projects will remain a passion project until she finds stability in comic books.



Coppel High School senior Scarlett Bliobenes works on webcomic Train of Whispers during the morning before school in E105. Bliobenes has been working on her webcomic since Junior year. Photo illustration by Noor Fatima and Scarlett Bliobenes

Playing it all back

SENIOR ATHLETES LOOK BACK ON THEIR HIGH SCHOOL CAREER

BASKETBALL



**& ANTONIO ROMO
ELLA SPILLER**

“Basketball always gave me something to look forward to, especially during the school weeks, always trying to get to the next step.”

- Antonio Romo

“I just liked being around the girls, knowing this was my last basketball experience, I just enjoyed it and played stress free.”

- Ella Spiller

SOFTBALL



MALLORY MOORE

“Softball taught me leadership. I learned a lot of leadership through Coppell softball. I became a better leader and learned that it’s important to lead by example.”

- Mallory Moore

FOOTBALL & VOLLEYBALL



**& BARON TIPTON
KATE MACDONALD**

“Coach Wiley, when he came here two years ago, he turned our program around. With preparing for games, being in the gym, offseason, all of it has prepared me for the next level, and I want to thank him for that.”

- Baron Tipton

“Being team captain this past year, I’ve definitely learned a lot about responsibilities and how to effectively lead a team.”

- Kate MacDonald

GOLF

“Golf taught me to always have a learning and growth mindset. It’s just super important to always make every tournament a learning opportunity and to always try to take something away from that.”

- Max Scott



MAX SCOTT

“My favorite tennis memory is traveling with the team and spending time with my friends, siblings, and teammates.”

- Arjun Nijasure

TENNIS

“My favorite tennis memory is going on trips with my tennis team for tournaments because it’s fun spending time with my teammates.”

- Allyson Keng



**& ARJUN NIJASURE
ALLYSON KENG**

SOCCER



SADIE OZYMV

“Soccer taught me to have confidence because from where I was my freshman year to now, I definitely have a lot of more confidence. Even though I learned confidence and being creative in soccer, it really helps me off the field too.”

- Sadie Ozymy

“I wouldn’t be doing cross country if I didn’t go to Coppell. The coaches, the teammates, everything happened the way it happened and I’m glad it did.”

- Henry Henze

“Track taught me that being consistent and giving it your all is helpful, not only in a sport but also in school and in your everyday life.”

- Jeana Scheurich

CROSS COUNTRY

& HENRY HENZE
JEANA SCHEURICH

SWIM & DIVE

& NALINI AGNIHOTRI
KARTIK MATHUR

“Swimming taught me that progress isn’t linear. There were times when I was contemplating whether I want to continue swimming. But you have to remind yourself, maybe not this season, but the next season you can still have a good season.”

- Nalini Agnihotri

“I like how swim is a family outside of my real family. I made a lot of good friends in swim that I’ll have for the rest of my life.”

- Kartik Mathur

TRACK & FIELD

& AIDAN MCFARLANE
EMMA WILLIAMS

“Track taught me to not give up and work hard, and that with hard work, you’ll eventually reach your goals.”

- Emma Williams

“Patience is the biggest thing I’ve learned because track is a sport where you can’t expect progress every single meet or practice. You really have to trust the process and sit back and trust your work.”

- Aidan McFarlane

WRESTLING



AVA PAYNE

“My favorite memory from wrestling is winning a Santa Slam, because it’s a home tournament, so everybody wants to win it. It’s something I’ve always wanted to win since from freshman year, and I finally did it.”

- Ava Payne



Teacher of the Issue

Finnegan programming computer science-minded students

Sabah UddinStaff Writer
@sabah_uddin

As an inquisitive child that loved taking apart things and playing with their components, Coppell High School computer science teacher Michael Finnegan found computers highly intriguing in a decade with neither Internet or personal computers.

"In seventh grade, I got a job as a paper runner and my dad matched me dollar for dollar, buying my first computer," Finnegan said. "There were a limited number of programs to buy, oftentimes I had to write my own. Once I reached high school, we did have a computer science class, but it was very easy for me. I thought computers were fascinating."

After growing up in his home state of Oklahoma and graduating from Oklahoma State University with a bachelor's degree in Management Science and Computer Systems and a masters in Business Administration and Management from University of Central Oklahoma, Finnegan made the move to Texas in search of greater opportunities. After a brief time working as a claims adjuster for Liberty Mutual, he committed to the field of computer science and accepted a position at Microsoft.

Experiencing explosive growth through the nineties, Finnegan was among the first 50 people to join Microsoft's new Dallas product support facility in 1990. "I worked long hours at Microsoft where I would wake up to my kids asleep and return from work and sometimes they would already be asleep," Finnegan said. "It got to a point where, being with a company that went through such explosive growth, they were very generous with their retirement pay packages and stock. After about 10 years, I was able to retire or stay with the company."

If he stayed with Microsoft, Finnegan would likely have had to relocate to Microsoft's corporate headquarters in Redmond, Washington. Not wanting to be any farther from family in Texas and Oklahoma, Finnegan chose to leave the company.

"Sometimes I think about whether I should have stayed or left," Finnegan said. "But again, I traded that to spend more time with my family. I'm glad I got to do that."

Combining his found passions in teaching as a corporate trainer and in working with young people as a youth director at his church, Finnegan set out for new opportunities. He found the perfect match in substitute teaching at CHS. However, unlike other substitute teachers, Finnegan's unique background in computer science proved highly beneficial.

"I'd often substitute for the two computer science teachers here and they let me truly teach," Finnegan said. "I remember walking around the room and asking students if they needed any help and they'd say no because they didn't think I knew anything. They'd always be surprised if I point out something faulty in their code."

As those teachers retired, CHS hired Finnegan, along with current CTE director Josh Howard, to teach computer science. Since then, the program has expanded with Finnegan now teaching both AP Computer Science A and Computer Science III, the most advanced computer science courses CHS offers.

"In high school teaching, you always are friendly with your students and it's very laid back," Finnegan said. "They work on the assignments, I help them and I love seeing their ideas. I like to see them struggle and finally break through to figure out the problem."

As a student in his computer science III class, CHS senior Nalini Agnihotri ac-

quired her understanding of the computer science field to Finnegan's encouragement and advice.

"I was failing a lot of tests last year because I struggled with the AP content," Agnihotri said. "And so I was like, 'Hey Mr Finnegan, before I take this test, can I come in for tutoring?' He said 'absolutely.' I asked to come in as early as possible, he came at 7 a.m., I got tutored, and got a 100 on the test."

Finnegan's approach to teaching focuses on long-term learning and setting up a foundation for a future career in computer science.

"For some people, it's a big jump," Finnegan said. "It's not about memorization. It's sort of like here's the tools: a hammer, a saw and a screwdriver. This is how they work, now build a house. If I show them how to build a house, they only know how to build a house, not anything else. So I just teach them the tools, but then they have to figure out how to apply them."

In addition to tutoring and going the extra mile for current students, he also keeps in touch with past students who are currently in college or the workforce.

"He's like, 'if you ever need help, you can just ask me to meet anywhere and I'll help you with an assignment or email it to me, and I'll take a look at it,'" Agnihotri said. "I think that's so amazing because he's going above and beyond what a teacher does."

Finnegan has gone out of his way not just to help current and former students, but other teachers as well. As a recent hire and first-time teacher, computer science I and II teacher Isabel Gregorek worked under Finnegan in the 2022-2023 school as a long-term substitute.

"It was comforting to know I could reach out to him with any questions, whether on the administrative side or handling things in the classroom," Gregorek said.

As a continuous learner, Finnegan has attended computer science classes at community college and constantly seeks the best platforms to teach curriculum to students, even assisting Gregorek in studying for her computer science teacher certification exam.



Coppell High School computer science teacher Michael Finnegan helps CHS senior Neha Gandikota with a coding assignment. Finnegan has found computers highly intriguing from a young age, growing up in a decade without personal computers or access to the internet. **Rhea Choudhary**

"Rather than just telling me the answer, he would take time to explain it," Gregorek said. "If we were both stumped on a problem, he would find the answer instead of giving up, which says a lot about his teaching style. He wants his students to truly follow through with their work when confused, not blow through it."

"Finnegan will do anything and go out of his way to help a teacher. If we have a problem with certain concepts, he helps us go over them," AP Computer Science Principles teacher Michael McCabe said. "He goes above and beyond what anyone would expect from a teacher, and does it without letting anyone know."

Finnegan also integrates fun activities into class when needed. From telling stories of presenting in-front of Bill Gates during his Microsoft days to bringing in virtual reality rhythm game Beat Saber for kids to play, this time provides a mental break and reward from the challenging class.

"It's like a spark when students find something that they enjoy. I love when that happens," Finnegan said. "That's my

greatest hope, that they come away with a greater appreciation for the course or the subject. Although I know that's not always the case, I try to spark that in people."

After seven years of teaching and countless years in the technology industry, Finnegan can spot potential and aims to bring it to the spotlight.

"We have a couple of kids who have won competitions because he saw the potential in them," McCabe said. "He becomes a mentor, asking them deliberate questions about their future and computer science, showing them interest because he's been there. He's been in the computer science game, in that industry. He knows what it takes to be successful."

As a teacher who cares little about accolades, Finnegan would prefer people not know his name, rather his kids receive the attention.

"If you haven't got the chance to know him, he's not a loud teacher. He won't make a scene, but he quietly observes and helps everyone around him whether they ask or not," McCabe said. "He's a behind-the-scenes leader if you will."



Coppell High School computer science teacher Michael Finnegan decorates his classroom with a cardboard cutout of Microsoft founder Bill Gates. Finnegan is in his seventh year of teaching at CHS, and is an inspiration to many. **Rhea Choudhary**

Endless summer awaits for veteran teacher Casey

Namir Awan
Staff Photographer
@namir_awan

9/11, the addition of the D Hall on campus, the great blizzard of 2010 and Sonic Road being built. Thirty-year Coppell High School AP United States teacher and veteran Kevin Casey has seen it all.

From the day he entered CHS, to the day he caught a student with a live duck in his coat pocket, to running the National Honor Society and all the conversations in between, Casey is the perfect person to associate with CHS.

"Coppell High School is a strange and wonderful place and I have been lucky enough to work here for 28 years," Casey said. "This is the job I always wanted to do. Working with young people and focusing on American history has been a great career."

Casey's impact on the school has been extensive. Being with CHS for 28 years of his 30 years teaching, Casey has become one of the leaders of the building.

"He holds the line, the standard," CHS Principal Laura Springer said. "One of the things that I admire about him the most is his directness and ability not to waver when a student is coming to him asking about why they weren't induct-

ed into NHS and holds the integrity and honor in the building."

According to Springer, he is leaving behind some hard shoes to fill regarding AP United States History and NHS.

"I know I have to step up as a mentor now that Mr. Casey is retiring," CHS AP United States History teacher Joshua Chanin said. "The way he ran the Society and made sure everyone was kept to a certain standard is what I loved about him."

His impact teaching not only students, but teachers as well was very important. "He taught me so much regarding how to handle students like when they are crying," Chanin said. "When we would talk about school, the conversation would often drift to sports, politics and history in general."

Casey was here in 1996 when the student population was less than 2,000 for all four grade levels at CHS. In comparison, the current student population is closing in on 3,000 for three grade levels.

"The way Coppell has grown is truly astounding to me," Casey said. "New families, students, the community growing and the opportunity to teach more and more students is what I love and what I am passionate about."

Running retirement begins in June. Casey is ready to finally hang up his hat.

"I am looking forward to an endless summer this summer," Casey said. "I know it will feel funny when school begins in August, and I go on vacation instead of coming to CHS. I'm ready to take a fall vacation," Casey said.

Aside from traveling, Casey is not sure what his plans will be.

"My wife Angie Casey retired a few years ago, so she has plans to keep me busy," Casey said. "I know I will need a schedule to get things done around the house, and I know I can't just play golf each day."

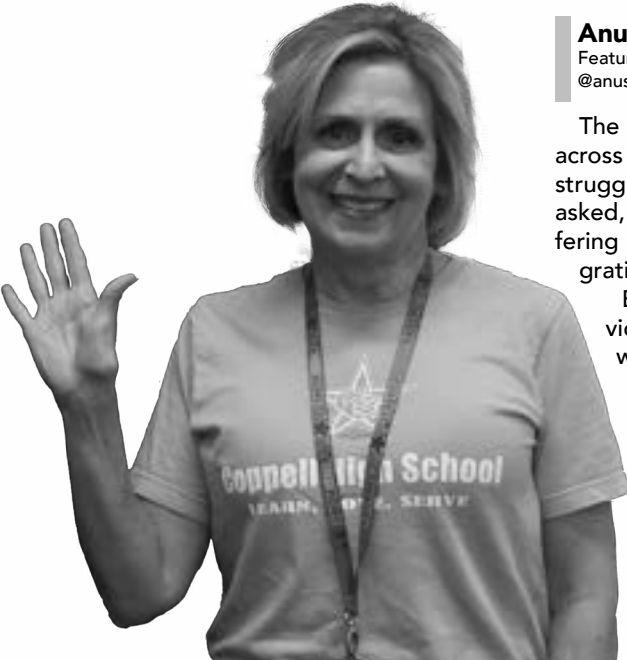
Besides golf and helping around the house, he is looking forward to yard work and wrangling his grandchildren who live in Irving.

As far as school goes, the name Kevin Casey will be a classic for decades to come.



AP United States History teacher and 30-year teaching veteran Kevin Casey is retiring. Casey plans to golf, garden and travel with his wife. **Namir Awan**

Wagner retaining community from classroom to kin



Coppell High School teacher Linda Wagner has taught special education for 22 years. Wagner is retiring this year. **Anushree De**

Anushree De
Features Editor
@anushree_night

The young Linda Wagner glances across the classroom, noticing a student struggling with a question. Without being asked, she makes her way to them, offering her hand. The student stares with gratitude, and Wagner smiles in return.

Even at a young age, Wagner's service mindset has been inherent to who she is.

As Wagner entered high school, she took her passion for volunteering and turned it into a babysitting business. Wagner helped children navigate their homework, but simultaneously navigated her own passions.

"One of the families I babysat for had a child with disabilities," Wagner said. "That gave me a lot of inspiration to be a special education teacher."

Entering the University of Texas

at Austin, it was an easy choice for Wagner to pursue education. For the past 35 years, that is exactly what special education teacher Wagner has continued to do. Wagner has taught in six schools and four school districts (Northside ISD, Dallas ISD, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD and Coppell ISD).

Throughout the course of her career, Wagner has taught a variety of ages and now teaches in resource as an education professional providing small group instruction to students with special needs.

"I think back to my little kids starting to talk who were not verbal yet," Wagner said. "I also run into students who tell me the things they struggled with in high school are not hindering them anymore. They are in the work world. They are excited to tell me about it."

Over the course of the 22 years Wagner has spent in Coppell, she has contributed to change. Her persistent kindness and apparent passion is evident in all her endeavors.

"The speech therapist and I started a program years ago here called Cowboy Cafe," Wagner said. "I noticed a lot of my students would come to me during lunch because they had nobody to eat with. We started Cowboy Cafe and brought typical peers to have conversations with. We used lunchtime as a way to teach social skills to students on the autism spectrum."

The idea soon spread to other campuses.

As Wagner prepares to retire, Wagner and her husband plan to travel, visit their grandchildren who live in Houston and Washington D.C. and assist Wagner's parents. Yet, her kindness and enthusiasm for service is as strong as ever.

"There will be more time for church work and volunteering," Wagner said. "I'll probably do some tutoring, and I'm sure my volunteer work will center around students. Relationships with students are first, and it's very hard to make progress with students if you don't have a personal relationship."

Jurca transitions to new beginning with volunteering

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Walking into Coppell High School room D109, the first thing you will see is special education teacher Linda Jurca spreading an infectious smile to all of the students in the room.

Jurca has preserved this smile for over two decades at CHS.

Jurca is retiring after the 2023-24 school year, with 22 years of teaching special education. After teaching at Lamar Middle School in Irving for 10 years, she started teaching at CHS where children attended.

"It is a great place and while it's academically rigorous, it's also a safe place for kids," Jurca said.

Jurca opted to teach special education because of her experience in the field after teaching it in middle schools and her fervor for helping high school students prepare for the future.

"I just love working with teenagers of all sorts," Jurca said. "I think it is really

gratifying to get to know everyone individually and see how they grow through high school."

Jurca attests the comforting environment at CHS to a newfound patience and compassion that she has developed over the years teaching special education.

"Over the past few years, I have seen a lot more students struggle with depression and anxiety," Jurca said. "I think I have learned a lot as far as how to support kids who are struggling with emotional issues and not just the academics."

Jurca also developed the confidence to take risks when teaching. As time went on, she adapted to the changing environment of high school education, and adjusted her curriculum to match.

"I have gotten better with changing lesson plans to accommodate students in learning the material or helping them grasp the content," Jurca said.

After retiring, Jurca plans on traveling to places such as the Caribbean and to volunteer in the community.



Coppell High School teacher Linda Jurca has taught special education for 22 years. Jurca is retiring this year, as she plans to volunteer and travel the world. **Rhea Choudhary**

Vijay switching cadences from classical Carnatic to choir



Coppell High School junior Varsha Vijay has served as the Coppell Choir secretary for the past two years and is a member of A Capella Mixed Choir. Vijay is in her seventh year of choir and further pursues her passions by being a part of the Dallas Symphony Children’s Chorus. **Minori Kunte**

Rhea Choudhary
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Walking out of her choir audition, among the chaos and chatter of other students’ voices, Coppell High School junior Varsha Vijay sighs with the weight lifted off her shoulders, thinking, “I gave it my all.”

Vijay’s voyage into the realm of music began long before her high school days. Enveloped in the intricate melodies of Carnatic music, a form of classical music originating from Southern India, Varsha and her twin brother Surya Vijay’s roots in Carnatic music laid a robust foundation for her vocal talents.

“I first started singing because my parents wanted me to have a connection to my culture, which they originally tried to have happen by enrolling us in Bharatanatyam [a form of South Indian classical dance] but my brother and I just weren’t able to do it,” Varsha said. “I really wanted to make my parents proud through music because of how happy they were to see both my brother and I try our best at succeeding in it.”

Her journey took a turn when she added choir as an elective in fifth grade at Valley Ranch Elementary School, interested in the prospect of a new musical avenue.

Transitioning into sixth grade at Coppell Middle School East, the Vijay twins were both continuing music through the band program, however, Varsha’s love for choir grew deeper with her ultimately choosing vocal arts over band percussion.

“I realized that my path was set in stone - I simply had a love for singing, and music was my calling,” Vijay said. “My motivation behind originally auditioning for choir at CHS was to make my family proud because when I did my freshman year solo, it was an opportunity I didn’t want to regret, to be up there singing by myself, especially as a way to show that I’m capable, confident and happy singing.”

By the time she entered Coppell High School, Vijay’s commitment to choir was steadfast, depicted through her involvement in varsity mixed and treble choirs. Starting in 2022, Vijay has been a part of the prestigious Dallas Symphony Children’s Chorus, which has given her the privilege of performing at the Meyerson Symphony Center numerous times.

As the secretary of the Coppell choir program for the past two years, Vijay has been essential in nurturing the ensemble’s collaborative spirit, along with having many valuable mentors to help her.

“Overall, I love Varsha’s personality and

honestly, she is probably the sweetest underclassman I know,” senior choir historian Divya Ghanta said. “Whenever she sees me, she always has a smile and gives me a hug. Just seeing her makes my day better because I know that she is someone I can laugh and have a good time with.”

Despite her introverted nature, Vijay’s leadership style is defined by having strong compassion, sincerity and service to others.

“I remember being so proud of how Varsha handled herself with how far she got into the [Texas Music Educators Association] audition process, around a year ago, especially because of how nervous she was beforehand,” Ghanta said. “Varsha takes a lot of responsibility for herself, however, she is always humble as a leader. She goes above and beyond in completing her duties without having to be the loudest person in the room or not caring whether she gets credited for it.”

Each week, Vijay practices singing around six to seven hours per week, through her choir period, weekly morning rehearsals, bi-weekly officer meetings and by spending one hour in her own time sight reading and running through various monthly singing assignments.

“What makes Varsha so special is how she puts her 100 percent effort into each rehearsal,” Coppell Choir director Bona Coogler said. “Other choir members and us, as directors, are inspired to work harder and pick up the energy she gives off as we see Varsha come into the choir room with a smile on her face and a great attitude; I don’t even have to worry about what song she is working on because she is always working diligently.”

Vijay’s involvement within the school extends beyond the walls of the choir room, as she is currently the National Honor Society vice president, has been re-elected to be the presi-

dent of NHS and is a newly inducted Red Jacket for the upcoming 2024-25 school year.

“To me, leadership is not about asserting your dominance or trying to be known for what you do. Instead, it is being passionate and genuinely caring for the people within the organization you are serving,” Vijay said. “Being a leader is showing that you’re capable, not to boast, but to set a foundation to ensure every voice gets acknowledged.”

In the upcoming 2024-25 school year, Vijay will remain an officer in the choir program and hopes to become a Madrigal to end her senior year strong.

“Varsha has shown so much personal growth within choir, not only through her singing, which I’ve heard improve over the years, starting from the time of her TMEA auditions last year, but she has become more confident as a person,” Ghanta said. “It’s been amazing to see her find her place in our choir family, and personally, Varsha really is such a light in my life and the same goes for many others as well.”



Coppell High School junior Varsha Vijay has been the Coppell Choir secretary and a part of the Dallas Symphony Children’s Chorus for the past two years. Vijay has been in choir for seven years and is a Red Jacket for the 2024-25 school year. **Minori Kunte**



SK

The Talk

E V Kennard, Nyah Rama and Wendy Le

The Talk: The Faces Headed for Space

Apr 22 - The Talk

Save on Spotify

12:28



TACOS

TORTAS

Ainsley Dwyer and Wendy Le

Food Review: Dulce Taqueria

Apr 19 - @CoppellStudentMedia

Watch on YouTube

4:34



Fuerte finds strength in family and powerlifting

Manasa Borra
Staff Designer
@CHSCampusNews

Donning a black trash bag and drenched in sweat, Coppell High School junior Jaqueline Fuerte, affectionately known as Jackie, steps up to be weighed in for her regional powerlifting competition.

Fuerte's teammates know that her unusual fashion choice was because, just moments ago, she had just finished a grueling session of running laps in the scorching heat, striving to shed as much water weight as possible to meet her 114-pound mark for the competition.

Fuerte's name, meaning strong in Spanish, is a fitting testament to not only her physical prowess but also her mental fortitude. Her extraordinary dedication has propelled Fuerte to secure the 114-pound state champion title at the Texas High School Women's Powerlifting Association meet in Frisco.

"I was really proud of her when she won first place because girls powerlifting is not that big of a sport at Coppell," junior powerlifter Chandana Pagadala said. "The first year we went to regionals people didn't even know what Coppell was, but now, we're starting our legacy."

In the weight room, Fuerte's strength is evident in her unwavering commitment and demanding routine. She trains with her peers during class and, on top of that, dedicates an average of 10-12 hours to the gym every week, a feat greatly respected

by her fellow powerlifters.

"When it comes to working out, you do not want to mess with her," junior powerlifter Madison Gross said. "She's dedicated to getting in every single rep to make her stronger, day in and day out."

One of the unique aspects of Fuerte's journey is her parents' unwavering dedication to powerlifting. Her parents and older brother have all pursued lifting.

While others enjoyed lazing around during the COVID pandemic, she followed her family's example and started hitting the racks. Fuerte's connection to powerlifting is deeply rooted in a friendly familial rivalry and a strong sense of support from her parents, Juan Garcia and Yeany Garcia, and her brother, CHS junior David Lopez.

"My brother definitely pushes me," Fuerte said. "Especially because we usually try to compete with each other, even though his numbers are a lot bigger than mine. My mom, dad, brother and I all understand each other better because of powerlifting."

Family has continued to be a pivotal aspect of Fuerte's life, even at the gym. Her father serves as her personal trainer and creates specialized workout plans for her. Almost every day, her entire family accompanies her to the gym, each working on their own routines but united in grit.

"My dad always pushes me and tells me I can do it," Fuerte said. "My family helps a lot as a support system through the bad days because I know other people are going through the same thing."

Her family's support reflects directly on her interactions with the rest of the powerlifting team. During training, she acts as a natural leader and mentor to her teammates, always willing to help them to improve.

"If we had an official team captain, it would definitely be her," Pagadala said. "She cares about everybody around her. Everyone comes to her asking 'What should I eat before meets?' or 'What should I do to cut weight?' and she's always been there for the team."

Fuerte draws inspiration from a diverse

range of female powerlifters. She looks up to Jessica Buettner, a former Olympic gold medalist, for her sports achievements. She also admires powerlifting influencers Killjoy and Joy Sistina, who she sees as strong female influences in the online powerlifting community.

"Sometimes I get compared to guys who lift, or I get the statement 'That's pretty good for a girl,'" Fuerte said. "But I see other women looking so strong and powerful. It makes me happy to think that could be me if I train hard."



Coppell junior powerlifter Jackie Fuerte powerlifts 245 pounds in the Coppell High School Field House weight room. Fuerte won the 114-pound division state title at the THSWPA state powerlifting meet in Frisco on March 15. **Manasa Borra**

Spikes on, Maldima sets new records in 100-meter dash

Wendy Le
Podcast Producer
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In the empty silence before each track meet, Coppell High School junior Matthew Maldima stares blankly into the ground and envisions how his races might turn out. Or rather, him winning.

Followed by slow breaths, he says a prayer and steps onto the start line. Block start and drive phase; these words drown his thoughts as he gets onto the blocks.

Stepping onto the Denton Braswell track of Ray Braswell High School on April 12, Maldima was determined to make the comeback of not qualifying for state the prior year due to his overworked shin.

As the gunshot pierces the air, his feet swing back and forth, eyes locked on the finish line.

Despite the swift speed he's moving at, he feels the opposite.

By the end of the sprint, he broke Coppell's record with a 10.29 race in the 100-meter and 20.89 200-meter at the 2024 5-6A/6-6A Area Championships. The 10.29 puts him as No. 2 in the nation.

"I didn't even think I was running that fast," Maldima said. "The goal to running fast in track is just to stay relaxed. And that's one thing that I've been working on this season, is just staying relaxed and not tense up."

However, this is not his first time being on the national list, nor breaking the record.

Originally playing soccer, Maldima was always about speed.

But when track & field entered the picture, his speed wasn't enough.

It is also about the technicalities.

"I had to keep in mind that Matthew was coming to me from a soccer background and not track," track and field coach Eric Hill said. "I had to make sure he understood

the nuances of track: the preparation, the warm up, block starts and acceleration."

As Maldima's high school track career progresses, he's consistently broken the school record with his staggering time in the 100-meter races. First in freshman year, with 10.40 and 10.36 sophomore year, which landed him on the Top 25 in the nation list.

"When I first saw my name on the list, I thought 'I did that,'" Maldima said. "It was just a really good feeling the very first time. Then, eventually, it became more natural to me. It became the standard and I realized this is where I want to be at all times."

The summer following freshman year, he participated in the AAU Junior Olympics after qualifying for the regionals meet. However, due to his poor preparation and overwhelming conditions of the camp, the results were not in his favor.

But last summer, when Maldima received the opportunity to take part in the 2023 Nike Outdoor Nationals, he knew this was his redemption chance.

Stepping onto University of Oregon's Hayward Field, the same venue that has hosted world championships and Olympic Trials, Maldima was flooded with emotions.

"Hayward Field is one of the most prestigious tracks in the world so actually being there and looking at everything, it was just so surreal," Maldima said.

The next day, Maldima ran the 100-meter and 200-meter which landed him second place with the time of 10.74 and 22.11. This qualified him for the finals in the 100-meter Championship and 200-meter Emerging Elite.

Maldima finished the championship in fifth

place for the 100-meter dash with 10.54, earning him the 2023 Nike Outdoors All-American title.

"He's running with some of the fastest kids in the country," Hill said. "We went up all the way to Oregon and he was still able to finish top. It just told me that he belonged."

When traveling to any event, whether it's 10 miles or more than 1,000 miles away, there's always one person that can be spotted in the crowd: Matthew's dad Michael Maldima.

"It's very rare that I've missed a meet," Mr. Maldima said. "Just knowing that there's somebody apart from your schoolmates coming and also looking out for you, I know that Matthew would want to see those videos and assess how he did and how to improve and all that stuff. So it's my little contribution."

It is the support of his family, friends and coaches that's helped him get to where he is today.

"Coach Hill will push us every single day and wants the best for each and every single one of us," friend and teammate Coppell senior Ayron Sneed said. "He can find little techniques to get us to where we want to be. Aiden McFarland, he's one of the top hurdlers in the nation, too, so he's really a mentor to Matthew. All the track kids also push each other by competing every day."

In his free time, Matthew likes to pick up his Canon EOS Rebel T7 DSLR camera and capture shots of car shows. It can be found at @matthew_shot_it on Instagram.

As his journey continues, he hopes to balance his aspirations for business to follow in the footsteps of his aunt and uncle and pursue track at a collegiate level.

Coppell junior Matthew Maldima broke Coppell High School's 100-meter and 200-meter run record on April 12 at the 2024 5-6A/6-6A Area Championships, setting a school record of 10.29 and 20.89. Maldima currently holds the second-best wind-legal time in the nation and advanced to state in the 4x100, 100-meter and 200-meter races. **Wendy Le**

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