



NEWS page 2
Read about how severe global warming affected the world in 2023



FEATURES pages 6-7
Read about three takes on Valentine's Day!



SPORTS page 12
Read about the QO students predictions on the 2024 Super Bowl

Volume 36, Issue 4

THE

February 9, 2024

THE PROWLER

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

Dr. McKnight steps down as MCPS superintendent amid controversy

BY CHRISTIAN LEE
Staff Writer

Due to controversy, Dr. Monifa McKnight has stepped down as MCPS Superintendent as of February 2.

On January 22, McKnight released a statement concerning the Montgomery County Board of Education's desire to remove her from her role as superintendent. In her statement, she noted that "The Board has never written, documented, or communicated any concern about [her] performance, and through the evaluation process has consistently affirmed that [she has] met expectations," leading her to believe that her intended removal was based on something unrelated to her performance. She continued to state her willingness to "defend [her] reputation and [her] decades-long commitment to the students and families of MCPS."

Just hours later, the Board of Education released a statement in response to McKnight, claiming that their reasoning concerned "a personnel matter" that was "in alignment with laws related to personnel matters," and provided no further information.

Montgomery County Inspector General Megan Davey Limarzi then announced the release of a new Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report, which detailed numerous deficiencies in MCPS's complaint handling and investigation processes

as they relate to employee misconduct. The report found that MCPS did not have a comprehensive protocol for addressing the evaluation, tracking, and disposition (or transferring) of complaints — additionally, MCPS's Department of Compliance and Investigations (DCI) neither followed correct criteria when handling complaints, nor did they have comprehensive policies for conducting and documenting investigations. The OIG report proposed numerous solutions, such as implementing comprehensive policies regarding the processing of complaints, and assessing DCI staffing and training needs under stricter oversight.

At the center of these investigations was Dr. Joel Beidleman, who served as the principal of Farquhar Middle School despite being reported to MCPS eighteen times over the last decade for alleged sexual harassment, workplace bullying, and employee misconduct in other schools. On June 27, MCPS promoted him to be the new principal at Paint Branch High School, placing him on "extended leave" a few months later—only after The Washington Post sent MCPS questions relating to an investigative article about complaints surrounding Beidleman's misconduct.

MCPS spokesperson Chris Cram announced that Beidleman stopped receiving a salary as of December 18 and was no longer an employee of MCPS as of January 24. Personnel

privacy laws prohibited him from providing any more information.

The same day as the OIG report's release, Montgomery County Council President Andrew Friedson, Vice President and Audit Committee Chair Kate Stewart, and Education and Culture Committee Chair Will Jawando expressed their gratitude for the report and announced that the Audit and Education and Culture Committee would meet jointly on February 8 to conduct an oversight hearing of the report. (This meeting will take place before publication but after this article is sent to print.)

McKnight also shared her gratitude for the Montgomery County Inspector General and stated she had been working with her team over the last several months to implement dozens of corrective actions that were in alignment with the report. She shared updates on that work through an MCPS Action Plan Update, both in October 2023 and January 2024. The most recent report in January outlined numerous updates including the enhanced monitoring and resolution of complaints, investigative tracking software, leadership changes and staff expansion in the DCI, and eligibility requirements in promotion processes.

On January 25, the Montgomery County Education Association (MECA), MCPS's teachers' union expressed their disappointment with what they characterize as ongoing corruption in

MCPS leadership: "Today's release of the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) report on MCPS complaint processing makes clear that the superintendent and other top executives, either due to incompetence or willful avoidance of duty, allowed credible allegations of sexual harassment and bullying to go unaddressed... [The Board] should appoint leaders who will work to address the challenges we face in our work each day, such as staffing shortages in special education and other crucial areas, unfilled substitute teaching positions and related unpaid class coverage, and concerns over a lack of covid leave."

Many have speculated that McKnight was at least partly responsible for Beidleman's promotion, given evidence of their decade-long friendship (as reported in MoCo360) and McKnight's delayed reaction against the allegations. However, there is evidence of others' involvement as well.

The DCI coordinator who authored a report on Beidleman that cleared him of misconduct allegations, Khalid Walker, claims that DCI director Michael Simmons ordered him to change his initial findings.

The rest of this developing story can be found on the Prowler website at qohsjournalism.wordpress.com.

JN.1 becomes dominant subvariant of COVID-19

BY PATRINA PUN
Senior Staff Writer

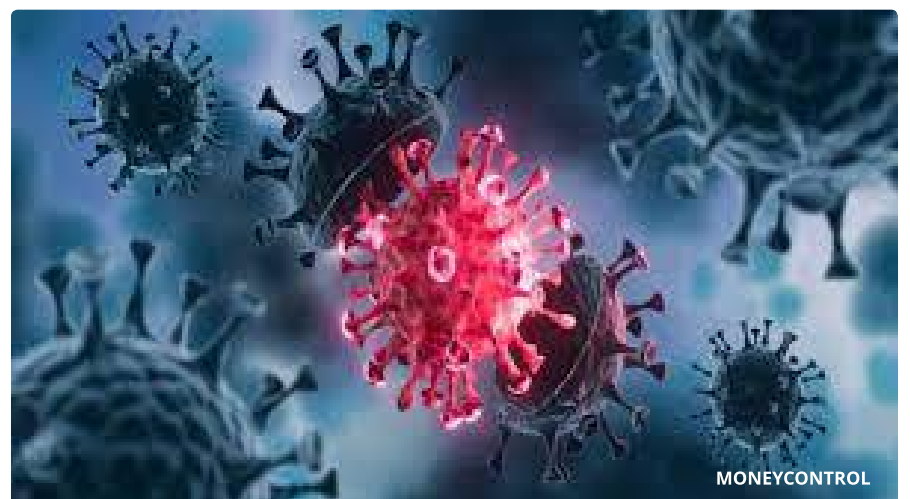
As we progress farther into the winter season, we as humans fall more prone to catching COVID-19. According to Atlantic Health, though the disease circulates all year long, it specifically picks up in the fall and winter due to the cold air compromising your nose to germs. Additionally, the frigid air forces people to gather in areas that are often indoor and heated which helps viruses spread. A combination of the lack of air circulation and the mutating virus that has proven to be continuously evolving has left many sick at home.

However, the only worry should not be focused solely on COVID-19, but on its latest variant, JN.1. According to CNN, the variant evolved from Pirola, a descendent of Omicron, and it has an additional spike protein mutation that particularly worries scientists, as the spike protein is the key to infecting a cell. The COVID-19 vaccine trains the body to reinforce the lock for the cell, yet when a new spike protein enters the picture that the vaccine is unaware of, it increases the chances of the variant getting past the body's

defenses. So far, JN.1 has so greatly mutated over this past summer that scientists fear that it has strong potential to escape the protection of the COVID-19 vaccines. Several countries in Europe, including Denmark, Spain, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, have experienced exponential growth regarding the variant.

The United States, according to the Washington Post, has seen better days without this variant. JN.1 has caused nearly half of the United States coronavirus infections during the holiday season. On December 19, the World Health Organization declared JN.1 a variant of interest due to its "rapidly increasing spread" from 3 percent of COVID cases to 27.1 percent in just over a month.

On a more positive note, according to Yale Medicine, it is difficult to tell whether or not JN.1 is responsible for every Covid case, with other factors impacting the increase in infections such as the cold weather. Yet, it will never hurt to prepare for the worst. Vaccines are available to protect against these infections including the updated flu and Covid shots for anyone 6 months and older. New RSV vaccines are given to vulnerable populations,



including two vaccination choices for adults 60 and older. There is even a monoclonal antibody for infants and toddlers as well as a vaccination for pregnant women that provides antibodies to protect their newborns.

On top of vaccinations, it is also crucial to steer clear of people who are sick, to strategically mask amongst people in confined spaces, hand-wash, and stay aware of COVID-19 transmission levels in your area.





2023: The hottest year recorded in our world's history

BY ISADORA KAUFMAN

Editor-in-Chief

Flowers blooming in Antarctica, snowstorms appearing rarely in Maryland, record-setting temperatures, and other climate changes are all evidence of the impact global warming is having on the Earth. In fact, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), 2023 was the planet's warmest year on record.

The NOAA warns that these record global temperatures are just the beginning of "extreme weather events becoming more frequent and severe." Some noticeable climate anomalies across the United States include the record-breaking California wildfires that "burned more than 45.7 million acres" and the Maui wildfire, which the NOAA describes as the "deadliest wildfire in the U.S. in over a century."

Both of these tragic events caused long-term damage on the climate, quality of air, and the surrounding communities. The Earth Conservatory at NASA states the California wildfires burned an equivalent amount of land to the size of the state of North Dakota. These wildfires, caused by increasing temperatures, also exacerbated the level of carbon

emitted into the atmosphere, creating a vicious cycle where climate change contributes to increasing wildfires and the wildfires worsen the level of global warming.

The Maui wildfire, meanwhile, caused 115 fatalities, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and affected "more than 800 business establishments with about 7,000 employees," according to the government of Hawaii.

Across the globe, the effects of climate change are evident not only in the changes of temperature, but the effects on ecosystems and species. According to the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, 70% of species are in danger of extinction due to habitat loss and biological invasions. The list of endangered animals include many of the animals we grew up drawing, excitedly going to the zoo to see, and watching movies about, including the Mountain Gorillas and Black Rhinos, of which there are about 1,000 and 7,000 left in the world, respectively.

In our state of Maryland, the warmer winters are creating an environmental issue known as "false spring," explained by the University of Maryland Extension as a warming winter followed by a "hard freeze" in March where

flowers and plants begin to bloom, and then are killed by the sudden drop in temperature. UMD states that this hard freeze causes farmers' crops to be destroyed and an overall loss in agricultural production for the state. In addition, "the combination of the longer summers and warmer winters increase the risk of Lyme disease in the Mid-Atlantic" because the warmer conditions allow for black-legged ticks to live longer, and the warmer temperatures provide more food for animals like deer that spread ticks.

Deutsche Welle, a German news organization shared a statement from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) secretary Petteri Taalas stated the severity of the issue: "Greenhouse gas levels are record high. Global temperatures are record high. Sea level rise is record high. Antarctic sea ice is record low. It's a deafening cacophony of broken records." WMO also explained how the effects are too severe to have any chance of returning to the climate we had in the 20th century, but now the goal has become to limit the damage for the "coming centuries."

So after reading these devastating statistics, the question

on your mind may be "What are we doing to stop this?"

In the United States, the Biden administration has been making progress with the Inflation Reduction Act, a climate change initiative passed in 2022. According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), "the law invests hundreds of billions of dollars in clean energy, electric vehicles, environmental justice and more." Seeing the effects of this act will take a while, as the legislation requires extensive policy making and the launching of programs. One of the goals of the act is to cut total greenhouse gasses by at least 50% by 2030; the WRI says that this goal is predicted to be achieved.

If you are wondering what you can do to help reduce the effects of climate change, some recommendations individuals can do is to first using online sources to learn about why it's happening, the effects of climate change, and small ways one can help like following more eco-friendly practices. Also remember to be considerate that being able to make eco-friendly decisions is a financial privilege, not available to many who do not have the financial means to do so as sustainable practices, while good for the environment, can be less efficient time-wise and costly.

PROWLER STAFF

Editors-in-Chief: Madeleine Burke, Mams Jagha, Isadora Kaufman, Chase Pasekoff

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

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

Copy Editors: Samridhi Prasad, Kat Yefanova

Social Media & Web Team: Olivia Maytin (*director*), Kate Belman, Maggie Brady, Sophie Fawkner, Dylan Flaim, Lily Kaplan, Maddie King, Priti Madhavan, Elisha Senga

Business & Distribution Team: Motaz Deify (*manager*), David Guevara

Staff Advisor: Ms. Megan Cooley-Klein

CONTACT US

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

Phone: (301) 740-8600

Website: qohsjournalism.wordpress.com

Email: QOHSprowler@gmail.com

Twitter & Instagram: @qohs_prowler

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

ABOUT

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

Canada Goose: The jacket that has become a target

BY KAYLA PILLOFF
Staff Writer

With temperatures dropping and winds increasing, those living in the DMV are no strangers to the cold. This season has felt particularly frigid, and having a winter jacket on hand is almost a necessity. But what if that jacket ends up being a target for violence?

Canada Goose is a Canadian company that specializes in winter outerwear. Their winter jackets have become a staple for those looking to splurge. The jacket is easy to spot, with its distinctive red, white and blue patch on the arm sleeve. The price of the jacket tends to range from around \$850 to over \$1,000.

In DC, there have been multiple accounts of robberies due to victims wearing these jackets.

According to ABCNews7, on January 28 at 1:30 PM, a victim claimed, "three unknown men allegedly assaulted him to the point he lost consciousness." They then proceeded to steal his Canada Goose Jacket.

Similarly, on December 18 a cyclist from American University was biking when a white car approached him. The car had two members, one who opened the door and blocked the biker from moving. The other member of the car then pulled out a gun and allegedly said, "Give me the coat, or I'm going to kill you."

This issue has been occurring all over DC, but most prominently in Northwest DC. These assailants often attack in broad daylight, and are reportedly bold and aggressive with victims.

According to Fox5DC, police have recommended buying AirTags for the jacket as a safety measure and a way to track them if they ever do get stolen. Despite this, these incidents have left many citizens feeling scared while walking in their Canada Goose coats. As per MacDailyNews, Meera Hajarnis an American University student mentions, "It is something I have to think about, just putting my jacket on,"

However, these crimes did not just begin in 2023: similar incidents date back as early as 2019. More specifically, DC universities like George Washington University (GW) and Howard University have been targets for these robberies. GW released a campus alert in February of 2023 stating: "These jackets are very expensive, and our community members should be mindful while wearing them, even in very public spaces. As always, be mindful of your surroundings."

King Holmes, a junior at QO, is a longtime owner of a Canada Goose saying, "I've had the jacket since I was 9. I've grown into it since then," he said. He describes being totally unaware of the robberies, but explained how he has "no reason to be scared."



Canada Goose Jackets with signature patch

Wearers of Canada Goose jackets are not the only individuals being targeted, with a different Canadian brand named Moose Knuckles being another target for these robberies.

Overall, DC has had an ongoing struggle with robberies outside of just jackets, including cars, phones, and wallets.

According to NBC Washington, as of December 2023 there had been a "68% increase in robberies compared to this time last year, according to data from the Metropolitan Police Department."





Cramping deadlines and avoiding a federal shutdown

BY NADIA AUNG
Staff Writer

The US Congress passed a bill on January 18 that would prevent a partial government shutdown the following weekend and keep federal funds flowing through March 1 and 8.

According to NBC News, the Democratic-led Senate voted 77-18 on final passage after considering a few amendments and the Republican-led House soon followed suit, passing it by a vote of 314-108.

On Friday, January 19, Biden signed the short-term spending bill, averting a partial government shutdown until early March.

What is a government shutdown? What is the difference between full and partial shutdowns? A government shutdown happens when Congress fails to pass appropriation bills to fund government programs and operations. This falls under the Anti Deficiency Act: federal agencies cannot spend or obligate any money without approval from Congress. When Congress doesn't pass the 12 annual appropriation bills, federal agencies are forced to suspend all non-essential functions until Congress takes action. A partial government shutdown is when Congress passes some, but not all 12, appropriation bills, and only agencies without appropriations have to shut down.

This marks the third stopgap bill since last September as the divided Congress struggles to agree on government spending bills.

House speaker Mike Johnson (R) continues to face pressure from House conservatives who want him to abandon a bipartisan agreement that sets an overall spending level for full-year bills at \$1.66 trillion. Some conservatives believe that this is too much money, but moderate Republicans and Democrats say Congress should abide by that deal and avoid legislative dysfunction during an election year.

"An end to governance by omnibus, meaningful policy wins, and better stewardship of American tax dollars." - Mike Johnson



PHOTO BY TED EYTAN

In a statement, Johnson said that the short-term spending bill "is required to complete what House Republicans are working hard to achieve: an end to achieve: an end to governance by omnibus, meaningful policy wins, and better stewardship of American tax dollars."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D) and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives Hakeem Jeffries (D) both said in a statement, "we have made clear to Speaker Mike Johnson that Democrats will not support including poison pill policy changes in any of the twelve appropriations bills put before the Congress."

As of right now, we will have to see what Congress has in plan until March 1 and March 8, which are the two new deadlines for temporary government funding.



The Prowler thanks our patrons for their generous support!

LIFETIME PATRONS

Faith & Jeff Adler
Pradeep & Neera Agarwal
Dr. & Mrs. David Austein
The Belblidia Family
Joelly & Peter Belman
The Benton Family
Ms. Barbara Blum
Uncle Charlie's Backyard BBQ
A. Benedict
Liam Brown
The Burton Family
The Burnham Family
Harry & Susan Chan
The Chehreghani Family
The Chu Family
Janice Long Coe
Terri & Ira Cohen
Joseph Conte
Michelle & Scott Cornblatt
Noel Danto
The D'Cruz Family
Philip Derfler & Linda Tollefson
Julie Dintamin
The Dyball Family
ElePress, Christine Wilson,
& Lauren DeVito
Diane & Dave Faulkner
The Fawley Family
The Feingold Family
The Fierstein Family
Fran & Ken Finkelstein

Jamie & Barry Freedman
Donna & Chris Furnas
Bryn Gaertner
Gallant Financial Planning, Inc.
Nanette & David Gilles
The Golan Family
The Goldstein Family
The Goorevich Family
Terri & Fred Gordon
Anne Graber
Randy & Becky Hall
The Hapil Family
Robin Hieder
The Horan Family
The Humphreys Family
The Hwang Family
Gerry & Sheila Jackson
The Kaczmarek Family
Susan Katz
The Kauffman Family
Tara & Jerry Kavadias
John & Nancy Kelly
Carol Kempner
The Kennedy Family
The Kim Family
The Kotok Family
Heather Kramer
Kate Kronthal
Tim & Kathy Kurkjian
The Lake Family
The Lee Family

Laurie & Jim Lewandowski
Karen Lindstrom
The Loeb Family
Karen Loggia
The Manners Family
The Mancuso Family
Edward & Elaine McArdle
John McArdle
The McKamy Family
The Mehra Family
Evelyn & Gary Michel
The Mills Family
The Milwit Family
The Mnatzakanian Family
Brian Monk & Janice Monk
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Monk
Bobbie & Neel Motiwala
MTUTRT Family Foundation
In Honor of the New York Yankees
Elisa Niemtzow
The Nyland Family
Alex Okun
The Parker Family
The Pasekoff Family
Nina Paul
In Honor of the Pittsburgh Penguins
Dieter & Janet Poetschke
Charlie & Jeanne Polcsa
The Price Family
The Purdy Family
Anne & Bob Quinn

Laura Rister
Jamie Rosenthal
The Rudnic Family
The Schneibolk Family
Mindy Stoler
The Strimple Family
Patricia Shaffer
Nancy & Mike Shank
Diane & John Schmid
The Schrufer Family
Carla Tevault
The Veckman Family
The Weinstein Family
The Wilson Family
Mark & Donna Williams
Sue & Jay Wingate
Carole Working

2023-24 YEARLY PATRONS

Margie Boese
The Brady Family
Citizens for George Gluck
Anita Klein
The Kravitz Family
Alex Sisco

Want to see your name on this page?

Become a patron of The Prowler
by following the instructions
below. Thank you for
supporting student journalism!

HOW TO BECOME A PATRON OF THE PROWLER

Send the following information to QOHSproowler@gmail.com. Then, mail your donation (cash or check) to Quince Orchard High School c/o The Prowler, or drop it off in the Main Office. Please make checks payable to Quince Orchard High School.

- Patron Name(s) for mailing distribution
- Patron Name(s) as it will appear in the paper
- Mailing Address, City, State & ZIP Code
- Telephone Number
- Email Address
- Donation Amount: Yearly Patron (\$40), Lifetime Patron (\$150), or Other (any \$ amount)

Primary elections kick off across states

BY MAGGIE BRADY
Staff Writer

The 2024 presidential election season has officially begun, with potential nominees making their way across the country, hoping to gain support in the primary elections.

Their first stop was in Iowa where the Republican caucus was held on Monday, January 15. New Hampshire followed closely behind, holding their primary election on January 23.

The rest of the states will be holding their own primary elections through the beginning of June.

Candidates have been preparing for months for the chance to win their party's presidential nomination. While the Democratic Party nomination is all but guaranteed to incumbent Joe Biden, the Republican nomination is up for grabs.

The most prominent Republican candidates heading into the primary season were former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, and former president Donald Trump.

Haley was elected as governor of South Carolina in 2010, becoming the first minority female governor and the youngest governor in the country at the time.

During her time as governor, Haley signed the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act and the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act which outlawed abortion at twenty weeks. According to Haley's website, she is "one of the most pro-life governors

in America."

Despite her conservative views, she supported the prosecutions of January 6 rioters and suggested Trump should be held responsible. Now, Trump is her biggest adversary when it comes to gaining the Republican nomination.

**"To win the party nomination, a GOP candidate needs a majority of available delegates to vote for them at the Republican National Convention in July."
-NPR**

Florida governor Ron DeSantis seemed most likely to take down Trump going into the primary elections. His pro-life views and signing of the "Don't Say Gay" bill made him a popular candidate among Republican voters. According to DeSantis' website, "no leader has accomplished more for his state than Governor DeSantis."

At the beginning of the election

season, it was unclear if former president Trump would be allowed to run. Despite his two impeachments and four indictments, Trump is the current favorite to win out of the Republican candidates.

However, it won't be as easy for Trump as it was in 2016, with both Colorado and Maine removing Trump from their Republican primary ballots. According to CNN, this decision was based on the 14th Amendment, "which says public officials who have 'engaged in insurrection' are disqualified from ever serving again."

Several other states including Minnesota, Michigan, Oregon, and Arizona attempted to remove Trump from their ballots. However, these lawsuits were quickly dropped.

Even with these setbacks, Trump sailed to an easy victory in Iowa. He received a whopping 51% of votes, gaining 20 delegates. In second place was DeSantis with 21.2% of votes, gaining 9 delegates. Not far behind was Haley, winning 19.1% of votes, gaining 8 delegates.

According to NPR, "to win the party nomination, a GOP candidate needs a majority of available delegates to vote for them at the Republican National Convention in July." This year, candidates must receive 1,215 delegates to receive the Republican nomination.

Shortly after the Iowa caucus, DeSantis announced that he would be ending his campaign, then placed his full support behind Trump. In a video on X, DeSantis stated: "[Trump] has

my endorsement because we can't go back to the old Republican guard of yesteryear, a repackaged form of warmed-over corporatism that NIKK Haley represents."

His announcement came just two days before the New Hampshire primary election. Trump still received a majority of votes, gaining 12 delegates. However, Haley's support saw a major improvement from Iowa. She received 43.2% of votes, gaining 9 delegates.

With 48 states still to hold primary elections, Trump is currently leading with 32 delegates to Haley's 17.

According to NPR, "about 36% of delegates will be decided on March 5, or Super Tuesday, and about 70% of Republican delegates will be allocated by the end of March."

Maryland will hold its primary election on Tuesday, May 14. Maryland residents 18 and older can visit elections.maryland.gov for more information on how to register to vote.



KEEPING UP WITH THE KOUGARS

BY PATRINA PUN
Senior Staff Writer

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

Student Of The Month:

Both a singer and a student here at Quince Orchard High School, senior Ava Turley balances the best of both worlds. Having only recently kickstarted her singing career in 2023, Turley derives most of her inspiration from emotional points in her life she wishes to express. I asked her a few questions regarding her passion for music and how she balances it with school.

Q: How did you know that you wanted to pursue music?

A: "It was never really a decision because writing is just my thing. There's nothing else that brings me the same level of satisfaction and pride as when I finish and release a song."

Q: How has music impacted your life?

A: "My entire motivation for getting up in the morning changed. I love how never-ending music is: how there's always another song to write, another track to produce, another album to release. Writing music has helped me gain a better perspective on difficult experiences I went through, [like] while writing 'Only Fools'. Nothing else on this planet could make me grateful for heartbreak or failed friendships, but

writing a really good song about it makes it all worth it."

Q: What are your inspirations for your songs? What has been your favorite song to record?

A: "My first album, 'Only Fools,' was written about an emotional time in my life when I went through a heartbreak. 'Nine Lives' was a song written as a memorial to a close family friend who passed away last fall. It was the first song that I didn't write for myself, but rather for everyone grieving and hurting like I was. 'Remix of You' is a sassy track that pokes a bit of fun. It has been the most ambitious track so far and was quite a challenge to produce. Lastly, 'Steal Ur Boyfriend' was the most fun to record because of my ability to be sassy and spunky in the song."

Q: How has your interest in theatre influenced your passion for music?

A: "I am an actress first and foremost. I have been able to take the emotion I have on stage and put it into my writing and solo performances. Also, one of my goals is to write a musical."

Q: How has balancing your interests with school been life?

A: "I am in multiple music classes, so school is hardly even a step away from my passion. There are nights when I have to choose between my AP Lit homework and recording a song, but I usually set aside a portion of my time to get my schoolwork done."

Turley concisely manages her time around schoolwork, singing, and theatre. Though it can get difficult at times, Turley's passion for music proves to be stronger than any obstacles that may come her way as she turns any

negative emotion into a positive experience.



PHOTO BY AVA TURLEY

MCPS VIRTUAL LEARNING DAY: CODE PURPLE

The inclement weather has recently proven to be more than a slight issue this school year. With several inches of snow piling up, MCPS can no longer afford to cancel another day of school after a previous 3-day school cancellation.

Instead, MCPS is now preparing for the possibility of a Code Purple, a school day where virtual instruction would occur. In the event of a Code Purple, Quince Orchard would operate on a two-hour delay schedule starting at 9:45 AM. Zoom links will be shared with each student, where they will be expected to participate as attendance will be taken in all seven classes.

Students simply have to log in using their school Chromebooks and take charge of their learning virtually. This plan was shared this past month in case MCPS decides to announce a Code Purple, so stay on your toes!

Quince Orchard High School Code Purple Bell Schedule

Log in	9:40 a.m.
Period 1 Announcements	9:45 - 10:20 9:45-10:00
Period 2	10:25 - 10:55
Period 3	11:00 - 11:30
Period 4	11:35 - 12:05
Lunch	12:10 - 12:45
Period 6	12:50 - 1:20
Period 7	1:25 - 1:55
Period 8	2:00 - 2:30

PHOTO BY QUINCE ORCHARD HIGH SCHOOL

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





Origins of BHM and celebrations at QO

BY ELISHA SENGA
Staff Writer

Black History Month finds its roots in the efforts of Carter G. Woodson, a historian known as the "Father of Black History." In 1926, Woodson initiated "Negro History Week" to highlight the often-overlooked contributions of African-Americans to the fabric of American society. This week-long celebration eventually evolved into the month-long observance in February we know today, officially recognized in 1976.

Many schools across MCPS pay homage to the rich tapestry of African-American heritage through its celebration of Black History Month. Slaves built "early infrastructure and produced lucrative commodities such as cotton and tobacco," according to the Center for Law and Social Policy.

At Quince Orchard, the spirit of Black History Month permeates the halls, classrooms, and communal spaces. One hallmark of the month is the Black History Showcase. Featured in this showcase is an assembly featuring a fashion show that pays homage to various facets of Black fashion.

A fashion show is intended to foster an appreciation for the creativity and resilience embedded within Black culture, which encompasses a spectrum of styles, from streetwear to Y2K trends to traditional African attire. Each ensemble serves as a visual narrative, illustrating the evolution and influence of Black fashion throughout history.

But the celebration doesn't end with the fashion show. Throughout the month, Quince Orchard hosts events



and activities designed to educate, inspire, and celebrate Black history and culture. During lunch periods, the sounds of music by Black artists fill the air, from jazz and blues to hip-hop and R&B.

Moreover, students have the opportunity to engage in educational workshops, discussions, and presentations sponsored by the Black Student Union and Minority Scholars Program, that explore various aspects of Black history and contemporary issues facing the Black community.

These interactive sessions empower students to critically examine the past, celebrate achievements, and address ongoing challenges related to race, equity, and social justice.

Beyond the classroom, Black History Month catalyzes inclusivity, empathy, and cultural awareness within the Quince Orchard community. By acknowledging and honoring the contributions of African Americans, students and faculty alike deepen their understanding of the complexities of American history and society.

QO students reflect on this past semester

BY DAVID GUEVARA
Staff Writer

It's now officially past the halfway mark of the 2023-2024 school year here at QO, with semester one finished, and now there's time for brief reflection on the wild semester.

The semester includes snow days, early releases and plenty more, but with some time to reflect, students have the opportunity to improve academically and apply lessons they learned. They also get to reflect on the fun activities they did with friends as well as the clubs included within QO. For some students this was their first semester of their high

school careers, while for others this could be the halfway Mark for the final stretch, but nevertheless it gives students the same opportunity.

Junior Zoya Vesal, sharing her thoughts on the semester, expressed, "I enjoyed my classes, had a blast at the football game, and made some new friends." Reflecting on the unexpected interruptions like emergency shut-downs, she added, "I enjoyed the snow days; it felt like an additional winter break and provided a reprieve from some impending tests."

The semester brought mixed experiences for students. While some found it favorable, freshmen faced

the challenge of adjusting to high school's pace. "It was different, taking a little time to adjust," said freshman Daniel Guevara, yet surprisingly, he found the adjustment surprisingly easier than expected. (Note: Guevara is related to the author of this article.)

The semester unveiled diverse challenges, shaping each student's unique journey.

But with this being the beginning of a journey with both triumphs and challenges for freshmen like Guevara, others like senior Andree Rodriguez are on their final run here at QO. When asked about the experiences he gained and how it's been able to translate he said, "after a

few years [in high school] you kind of get the rhythm... being able to develop strategies to help you succeed in each class."

Also mentioning that there was stress from college applications and the deadlines, but now he feels more comfortable in school.

Still as students navigate through the remaining months of the school year, they carry the potential to build upon their foundations, and continue to forge new connections, and foster themselves within the QO community.

Students' study habits for 2024

BY AMBRIELLA YAGAKA
Staff Writer

As 2024 progresses, people look forward to New Year's resolutions: the time to accomplish personal goals, change behaviors for the better, and create fresh starts. Some examples of resolutions can be wanting to take more time off from social media, eating better, or making more time for family and friends. For high school students, New Year's resolutions can often look more school-related.

Quince Orchard students have shown that they seek more organized schedules to help them through homework at home. Along with that, they have created New Year's resolutions to pick up more effective study habits for themselves to be more successful with assessments.

"I used to study the day before a quiz or test, but now I'm gonna try the 20 minutes of studying and five-minute break method to help me be prepared," explains freshman Haylee Martinez-Hart.

While freshmen are finding new habits that will stick with them for the next three years, seniors are working to improve their study habits to be even more effective and graduate with grades they're proud of.

"I used to reread notes for tests and I wouldn't do well, but now I type or rewrite them out on a blank sheet of paper and say the content out loud, and it has helped me remember the information better," says senior Lola Iwayemi.

A Prowler survey consisting of 187 respondents shows that seniors, compared to freshmen, are working on techniques that relate to creating prior study plans and setting goals during each session. Since it's their last year, they plan to work harder than before to leave on a good note.

Freshmen, on the other hand, are getting used to the high school experience and learning about how to handle their work through productive methods. Since it's the start of the second semester of their first year, surveys show that they are working on techniques that focus on being more organized and testing common study plans to see if it's right for them.

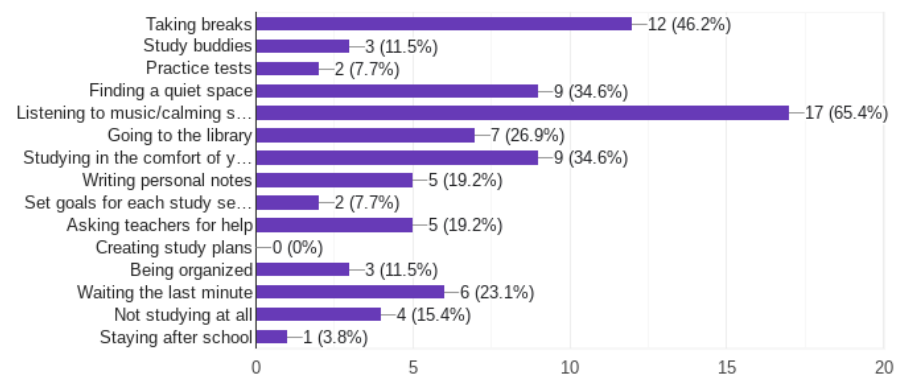
Both freshmen and seniors can relate to the fact that they are working towards setting goals during each study session.

We can also compare study habits between sophomores and juniors. Sophomores, like freshmen, both show past habits that relate to listening to music or calming sounds while studying. Juniors, however, can relate to seniors in how likely they are to take breaks during study sessions.

Many students, overall, are aiming towards a better school year and a more productive lifestyle. As a junior myself, I'm working on studying earlier to be fully prepared for assessments instead of cramming information at the last minute. What's a new study habit you're trying for 2024?

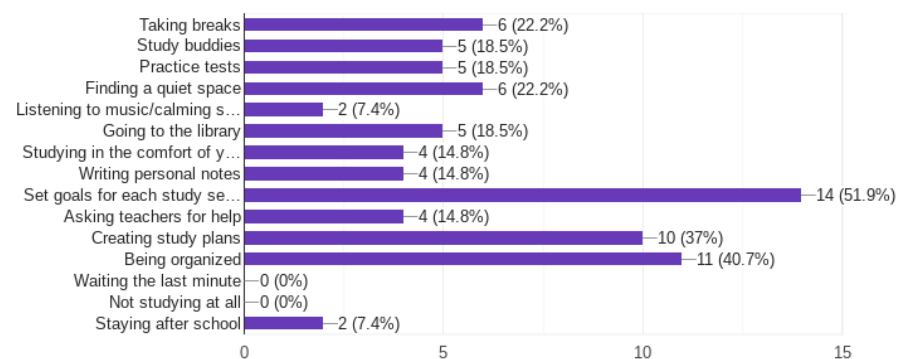
SENIORS ONLY: What are some study habits that you used?

26 responses



SENIORS ONLY: What are some study habits that you will try in 2024?

27 responses



Celebrations of love: Three takes on Valentine's Day

By SOPHIA LEE & BROOKE LYONS

A Classic Valentine's Day

As this special day is coming up, you may be spending it with your special someone. This person may be a crush, partner, or someone you just like spending time with. We interviewed a few students on what they may do with their friends and/or significant other on Valentine's Day, and their preferences on chocolate, candy, and gift spending.

"Baking is a fun bonding activity, and you get food," one freshman, "Julia," who wished to be anonymous, said. A wide array of popular foods such as cookies, cakes, and special concoctions are made to commemorate this holiday. "Hershey Kisses would be my favorite chocolate," she also commented. Indeed, they are one of the most popular types of candy for Valentine's Day, though according to realsimple.com, Conversation Hearts would be considered the most popular Valentine's candy.

Some other forms of candy may be considered in people's Valentine's plans. One couple at QO said they both share the joy of white chocolate with hints of cookies and cream.

There are many other ways you may choose how to spend this day, in addition to treats. "We hang out, and his birthday is two days after Valentine's Day so we have a bigger celebration for it," an anonymous freshman, "Raina," said.

Most certainly, gifts are not to be forgotten on this day: roses, and chocolate boxes are thought of when mentioning this special day.

Some gift ideas said by one anonymous student would be, "I would gift her jewelry, and a Hello Kitty plushie."

Another gift idea suggested by another couple: "I want to get him candy and then probably a smaller gift."

No matter what your Valentine's Day plans may look like, we can all enjoy it in different ways and commemorate the day.

Galentine's Day

Valentine's Day is the ultimate day to celebrate love. Traditionally, it's a time for couples in loving relationships to express their appreciation and affection for each other. However, there are so many more relationships that are worthy of celebrating. A day for the gals, Galentine's Day, commemorates all the women in our lives that we love, whether it's best friends, mothers, daughters, or any other girls who support us through the good and the bad.

Although it's not official, Galentine's Day is typically marked on February 13, but girls have celebrations for it on Valentine's Day as well as throughout February. Some girls just enjoy being in the simple company of good friends instead of planning intricate gifts or activities. "Valentine's Day with my closest friends is so fun because they mean so much to me," says junior Olivia Orlando.

Other girls find more pleasure in going all out to embrace the holiday, like junior Sophia Mangiaracina, who is planning to make "heart-shaped pizzas and wear cute pink and red pajamas" with her friends.

Despite all the gratitude and love shared between girls, there is a question of the true meaning behind Galentine's Day. Many people seem to think that this unofficial holiday is just a cover-up for the loneliness people feel without a significant other. Orlando shares that although she celebrates it, she believes "Galentine's is technically fake. It was just made to make single people feel better." It may not be official, but there's no wrong in making people feel better and emphasizing that even without a significant other, there are still so many other wonderful people in our lives to love. Mangiaracina shares that, at the end of the day "it would be fun to celebrate with a significant other, but I'm happy I have good friends that I love to spend [the holiday] with."

Me, Myself & I

Many people dread the time of year when Valentine's Day comes around. There are the older relatives who constantly ask if you're in a relationship, friends who you have to watch spending time with their significant others, and the overall realization of just how single you really are.

The dread doesn't necessarily mean there's a strong hatred towards Valentine's Day, as it's still widely recognized as a wholesome day of love. It may just be deemed irrelevant without a significant other to share your love for. Although junior Erin Hodge doesn't participate in the holiday, she still believes that Valentine's Day is "cute because it is a day to celebrate love" and it's "sweet when [couples] post cute pictures."

Besides scrolling through heart-filled Instagram posts, it's really just an ordinary day for many people. Junior Evan Church says that he is "planning to spend Valentine's Day like every other day of my life."

Church also shares that he would likely "enjoy Valentine's Day more if I had a significant other." Hodge shares a similar view. "If I did have [a significant other] on Valentine's Day, it would be fun," she says.

What is most important to note is that love isn't limited to only sharing with others. It is extremely necessary for a person to always show love to themselves. So even if the holiday this year is seeming pointless and lonely, enjoy personal time. Buy yourself chocolates, enjoy your favorite meal, splurge on whatever it is you've been eyeing. Essentially Valentine's Day is just about celebrating who you love, so everyone — even if they do have a significant other — needs to take the time to praise themselves.



Kids at Sephora: the beauty world's newest nightmare

BY MADDIE KING
Staff Writer

While the craze of holiday shopping may be over, the stock of items in local Sephoras has yet to be replenished. As of late, adults across the country are complaining about how not only are supplies running low, but the overall “vibe” in Sephora is no longer one of luxury and enjoyment. Sephora, a giant in the makeup retail industry, is making money, but their customers are fleeing. The iconic black-and-white interior has been tainted with messy display cases of expensive skincare. Who’s to blame for this? Surprisingly—10-year-old girls.

In recent months, the so-called “Sephora kids” have been flooding TikTok users’ “For You” pages with “Get Ready with Me” (GRWM) videos, complete with pristine skincare and high-end makeup items that were previously promoted by their favorite influencers.

Drunk Elephant, a skincare line with colorful packaging that is sold in Sephora, has found a new home in many tweens’ bathrooms, and in their subsequent TikTok posts. The products produced by Drunk Elephant include serums, polypeptide creams, and D. Bronzi bronzing drops to enhance the skin’s glow

Drunk Elephant, a skincare line with colorful packaging that is sold in Sephora, has found a new home in many tweens’ bathrooms, and in their subsequent TikTok posts. The products produced by Drunk Elephant include serums, polypeptide creams, and D. Bronzi bronzing drops to enhance the skin’s glow

“While these products sound great in theory, they are not intended for use for children under the age of 13,” said Dr. Mamina Turegano in a recent interview with BuzzFeed.

These extravagant skincare items aren’t exactly the most affordable products either. A sample set of Drunk Elephant’s most popular products runs for about \$74, according to Sephora’s website.

A star of “Real Housewives of New York City” turned TikTok influencer, Bethenny Frankel, has spoken out on the situation, saying what many parents are wanting to hear. She says her daughter, Bryn, age 13, has gotten “sucked into this Sephora trend.”

In a recent post on TikTok that has over 30,000 likes, Frankel explains how “girls that are my daughter’s age, that are her peers, talk to me like I’m their peer. ‘So what do you think of the Dior? Do you have the Drunk Elephant? Do



PHOTO BY DRUNK ELEPHANT

you have the Charlotte Tilbury?”

Frankel, like many other mothers, has taken this opportunity to teach children the valuable concept of spending money, as well as the value of drugstore brands. Many brands, such as E.L.F., have recently come out with more affordable replicas of the popular brands flying off Sephora’s shelves.

A Charlotte Tilbury bronzer wand retails for \$58 on Sephora.com, while the E.L.F. bronzer (made with the same/similar ingredients) retails for \$9 in your local CVS.

According to a recent FAQ posted on Sephora’s website, an anonymous user has asked Sephora to put an age

requirement for those who can purchase beauty products at their establishments.

“I’m so sick of it,” says Julia Ratowitz, a BeautyInsider on Sephora’s website. Sephora has yet to respond to the roaring demands of adult customers. This leaves us with the question: “Can we restrict the luxury of beauty products to children?”



New Year, New Resolutions, More Diet Culture

BY MOLLY RUBMAN
Staff Writer

We are officially in month two of 2024, and after another long year, we are all finally able to have a fresh start. But with new beginnings and resolutions on the rise, an increase in diet culture behaviors is also quite apparent.

The concept of creating a resolution of wanting to be more productive, work out more, eat better, and lose weight is nothing new. People are praised for their motivational outlook and are encouraged to follow through with their goals. Our society sees these various resolutions as healthy habits that will serve them well for the new year and lead to long-term wellness. But are these really healthy things to be striving for? Contrary to popular belief, they are not, and here’s why.

Diet culture, according to Equip Health, a virtual treatment center for eating disorders, is a system of social beliefs and expectations that values thinness above all. Diet culture has been around for decades and influences your day-to-day actions without you even realizing it. When you become so fixated on food and exercise that it is getting in the way of your daily life and ability to function, you become more likely to develop an eating disorder.

Michelle Konstantinovsky from Equip Health states in her article, “The combination of our cultural obsession with annual transformation, the pervasive influence of diet culture, and the lack of control many of us feel after the winter holidays can create a perfect storm for setting unhealthy, image-based resolutions that ultimately fail and reinforce negative self-image.”

Konstantinovsky also explains how even if a new years resolution pertaining to weight loss or eating healthier can start out as an innocent goal you have for yourself, it can go downhill very fast.

Diet culture is especially present in the lives of teens, and it is important to be aware of it and stay educated on how to combat it.

For instance, Dancer Beyond Labels is a club at QO that focuses on body positivity and educating students on healthy anti-diet behaviors. They meet in room 102 at lunch.

Club president, junior Lyla Holstein, says, “I think diet culture in resolutions can be a very negative thing. I believe that most diets are based around unrealistic ideas and body standards. Making these goals usually just leads to a negative relationship with food or your body.”

This is not to say you cannot achieve attainable goals that you have for yourself to better your life or health. There are many other resolutions such as meditating, improving hygiene, journaling, and finding joyful movement that are all healthy behaviors and habits to pick up that does not result in possible long-term mental and physical damage

“It is totally fine to want to improve habits or feel healthier, but diet culture is simply focused around a trend of not fueling your body properly,” Holstein says.

As you decide how you want your 2024 to go, keep in mind the potential negative consequences when putting yourself under too much pressure and holding yourself to unrealistic goals. Have a happy and healthy 2024, Cougars!

Celebrities and politics: The age-old question

BY CHASE PASEKOFF
Editor-in-Chief

Public figures have a large, undeniable impact on the culture of our society. Whether it’s artists releasing music that dominates the mainstream charts, influencers teaming up with companies to sponsor their products through social media, or actors starring in the newest blockbuster film, celebrities have a major impression on the everyday lives of regular people.

Keeping this in mind, it is important to remember that celebrities are typically constricted to their respective lane, and it can sometimes be a risk to stray from what made them a household name. For example, several top celebrities in recent years have begun starting their own companies, like Selena Gomez’s Rare Beauty or Kim

Kardashian’s Skims Clothing. When taking on these initiatives, they were broadening their horizons and expanding their reach to a different type of audience, one that was not just interested in their main selling point as a celebrity. However, branching out into different aspects of the public sphere can be quite tricky in terms of politics.

As a country, politics divide us. Blame can be put onto the two-party system, the growing polarization of viewpoints, and the list goes on, but the point remains — discussing politics is a quick way to turn a friend into an enemy. So, when a public figure begins to discuss their political affiliations and incorporate their views into their platform, it can lead to catastrophic outcomes, often unintended.

A classic example can be seen in 2003 when the popular music group, The Chicks (who, at the time, were

known as The Dixie Chicks), publicly opposed the Iraq War, which took place under the Bush administration. After doing so, The Chicks, with a mostly conservative fanbase who were in support of the war, faced heavy scrutiny from their audience and were ostracized from the country music space.

This raises an interesting question: should celebrities be promoting their political views on their platforms, or should they simply “stick to what made them famous”?

The answer is multifaceted. It’s not uncommon for celebrities to advocate for causes they find meaningful, and to be very public about their beliefs in regards to social politics, but in cases of more controversial political discussions regarding public policy and global issues, should celebrities be weighing in?

In light of the recent mass coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, there has been both a push for many celebrities to speak up as well as for them to keep their views to themselves. Advocates for celebrities to speak up argue that they should be using their platforms to be spokespersons for issues, whereas those pushing for celebrities to stay quiet will claim that they should not be involved in political matters just because they have public influence. The question is not about which argument is “better”, but rather which idea individual celebrities align with the most. Celebrities, as a whole, are not monolithic, and each public figure holds their own set of morals. So all in all, there may not be a clear answer, and celebrities may need to determine what’s best for not only them and their career but how closely they hold their beliefs to the core of who they are.



2024 Grammy Awards Recap

BY KATE BELMAN
Senior Staff Writer

If you weren't aware, we've been in awards season since November. Awards season is the annual period from November to February when most awards shows occur. Last Sunday, February 4 at 8:00 PM, the Grammy Awards were presented by The Recording Academy "to recognize 'outstanding' achievements in the music industry."

GRAMMY nominations for this year came out on November 10, 2023. In total, there are 98 categories for this year's awards. Some of the most coveted awards include Album of the Year, Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best New Artist.

This year, there were three new debut GRAMMY categories: Best African Music Performance, Best Alternative Jazz Album, and Best Pop Dance Recording. According to an article on [grammy.com](https://www.grammy.com), Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason Jr. says these additions as well as other updates and amendments are all a part of the process to transform the awards to be "more fair, transparent and accurate."

If you were busy Sunday night, here's a recap of the evening: Song of the Year nominee Dua Lipa opened the Grammys with a combination of some of her most popular songs. Miley Cyrus won the first Grammy of the evening, for Best Solo Performance. Luke Combs then performed his iconic cover of Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car" as a duet along

with her.

Best R&B Song was presented to SZA for her song "Snooze" from her album "SOS," which came out in December 2022. Taylor Swift won her "lucky number" 13th Grammy for Best Pop Vocal Album on her album "Midnights," and announced her 11th studio album, "The Tortured Poet's Department," which comes out on April 19.

Stevie Wonder performed "In Memoriam," featuring music from artists who passed away recently like Jimmy Buffet and Harry Belafonte. Annie Lenox also performed, singing a Sinéad O'Connor song. Jon Batiste sang as well. Fantasia Barrino performed a tribute to the legend Tina Turner, the "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll."

Jay-Z won the Dr. Dre Global Impact Award and came on stage to accept the award with his 11-year-old daughter, Blue Ivy.

Song of The Year, presented by Lionel Richie, went to Billie Eilish for "What Was I Made For" from the major motion picture, Barbie. Plus, for the very first time, 80-year-old legendary singer-songwriter, Joni Mitchell, performed at the Grammys, with her song, "Both Sides Now".

Best New Artist had 8 nominees: Coco Jones, Noah Kahan, Fred Again, The War and Treaty, Gracie Abrams, Victoria Monét, Ice Spice, and Jelly Roll. The Grammy was presented by last year's winner, Samara Joy. The winner, Victoria Monét, is a 34-year-old R&B and pop singer. One of her more popular songs that you may have heard, "On My Mama",

came out in 2023.

Meryl Streep and son-in-law Mark Ronson presented the award for Record of the Year, with John Batiste, Boygenius, Miley Cyrus, Billie Eilish, Victoria Monét, Olivia Rodrigo, Taylor Swift, and SZA competing for the award. The Grammy went to Miley Cyrus for "Flowers," her viral 2023 hit.

The renowned "Piano Man," Billy Joel, then came on stage. Joel carries quite an impressive career under his belt, like selling out Madison Square Garden in New York City 150 times, being a six-time Grammy Award winner and 23-time

nominee, and selling over 150 million records worldwide. After a 30-year-long hiatus, Joel wrote and recorded a new song. It took two additional years, but the world was finally gifted with a new song, titled "Turn the Lights Back On," which Joel played as one of the final performances of the night.

The show ended with Celine Dion presenting Album of the Year, which went to Taylor Swift, for "Midnights," her fourteenth Grammy award overall, and her second of the night. This is Swift's fourth time winning this award, making her the very first person to win Album of the Year four times.



REUTERS

What's in and out for 2024?

BY SOPHIE FAWKNER
Senior Staff Writer

Social media has always been a way for people to connect. However, social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have already been taking a new form in 2024.

It seems that the younger generation of social media users, particularly those in Generation Alpha, have rediscovered new trends that they think are worthy of sharing.

However, some questions have been posed of whether or not certain trends should be kept in the past, or if they should be kept or brought back.

In response to the heavily debated questions on what clothing trends should be popular, junior Rebecca Greenberg believes that "denim and the classic jean style should be in this year."

Not only does Greenberg believe that certain trends should be "in" for styling purposes, but she recognizes that trends can allow people to feel good about themselves.

"Dressing up for school allows me to feel put together and makes me want to learn more," Greenberg explains.

While Greenberg does appreciate a denim look, she makes it evident that in her opinion, "jean skirts, the ones where the front looks like a denim skirt, but has shorts on the back, is not a good look."

Apart from a brought-back denim look, social media users have shed some light on form-fitting bodysuits.

Junior Ellie Wonnacott is not a fan of these fashion statements and believes that "really tight full-body suits should be out."

Also among the outs of this year are mismatched Lululemon outfits. "Just because it is Lululemon, it doesn't mean that it matches," said Wonnacott.

On a less fashion-heavy note, senior Celia Banza shared her thoughts on the new crazed obsession with Stanley-brand tumblers within the past several months.

"I don't have a problem with Stanley cups, but if you have the need to buy a cup for every outfit, then you have a serious problem," said Banza.

Rather than going crazy for a water bottle, she says it might be a better idea to focus on "buying staples for your closet."

"Getting a plain black shirt is better than always having to get extremely big clothing brands such as Gucci and Louis Vuitton, which are not practical for an everyday look," said Banza.

Junior David Ayala agrees with Banza that "there is no point [in purchasing] and it is ridiculous how expensive [Stanley Cups] are."

Ayala does, however, acknowledge the trend of Crocs to be in style this year.

"I feel that Crocs are comfortable, and I am actually wearing a pair right now. I also like to wear them to work," said Ayala.



Cougar Magazine: A Guide to Long-Term Fashion and Fits

BY MAMS JAGHA
Senior Staff Writer

With the new year introducing a season of growth and individuality, many people are reflecting both internally and externally. This annual phenomenon has sparked a ton of influencers online preaching about different external changes that people can make to have a good year. This includes changes in scenery, differences in routine, and even detachments from bad habits. But, most commonly, it includes a collection of new clothes and the removal of old clothes.

My new fashion column will do the same as I will enumerate numerous clothing pieces or fashion items that will have a long-term stay in your closet and assist in your journey of growth and identity.

Hoodies (Yes, the ones that "Hoodie"):

Say goodbye to thin and unsustainable hoodies that fuzz after one wash! I've recently seen discourse for more functional wear, and this includes hoodies due to their versatility and seasonal style. My favorite stores that sell "Hoodies that Hoodie" are Humane Blanks, Los Angeles Apparel, Aritzia, Ssense, and Madhappy.

With a collection of prints, graphics, and an assortment of plain hoodies, you will be more than satisfied when your package hits your doorstep.

Chunky Rings and Bold Necklaces:

If you're trying to upgrade accessories and enter more of a maximalist style for the new year, in-person stores like your local Target or flea market, preferably Rio Washingtonian and the Georgetown Flea Market, sell reliable jewelry. But, if you don't mind the wait, some great websites include Evry Jewels, En Route Jewelry, and Etsy shops like Vasi Jewelry and Empress Silver!

Basic/Graphic Print tees:

If you know me, you know that I love a fit that is both chill and stylish. A print tee allows you to style up or down depending on the event and even your mood, which is fantastic when your friends force you to leave the house! For some affordable yet stylish tees that you can pair with any bottom and shoes, websites like In Print We Trust, Perceived, and Lucky7printstudio (on Etsy) offer some of the most versatile yet essential tops that I recommend to anyone. They all sell a combo of graphic tees, plain Skims quality tees, and more.

Adaptable shoes:

Trying to step up your shoe game but don't know where to start? These are some staples that are currently making their way around the internet and fashion states like New York: Adidas Gazelles in the color Navy/Taupe, New Balance 9060 White Navy, New Balance White Pink 550s, and Timberlands. Wearing any of these will automatically boost your look—doesn't matter if you're styling up or down!



Athlete of the Month

BY OLIVIAMAYTIN
Senior Staff Writer

INDOOR TRACK, BOYS - SOPHOMORE RONNIE RODGERS
Coach Seann Pelkey chose Rodgers for Athlete of the Month. According to Pelkey, the sophomore earned a "team-best 10th place finish in the Montgomery Invitational with a personal best jump of 5-08 in the high jump. [He] also filled in as a leg of our 4x200 relay."

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

A. I've spent most of my time lifting and watching films. I've also spent some time with numerous coaches who've helped me tremendously.

Q. What is your go-to meal before competitions?

A. My go-to meal would have to be yogurt, almond milk, and sardines.

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

A. I love to swim and make people laugh.

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

A. I started playing this sport last spring. I started because of a TikTok edit of Usain Bolt and after that, I fell in love with the sport.

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

A. I just go with the flow and let God take control. I wouldn't be in this position without him.

INDOOR TRACK - SENIOR NAMEA KALEI

Coach Pelkey chose Kalei for Athlete of the Month. According to Pelkey,

she earned a "team-best 14th place finish in the Montgomery Invite in a season-best 9.56 in the 55 hurdles. [She] also ran a leg on the season-best 4x200 relay and 4x400 relay."

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

A. This past fall, I stuck to a consistent gym training schedule. I would work on my hip strength through mobility and weight lifting, along with regular plyometrics and cardio to keep up my endurance [and] increase my fast twitch muscles and stability.

Q. What is your go-to meal before competitions?

A. My meal the night before a track meet is a burrito bowl with chicken and all the fixings.

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

A. Outside of sports, my hobbies are dance, weight lifting, and growing my relationship with god.

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

A. I started track during the spring season of my sophomore year. I started with the intention of following in my mother's footsteps, and have always wanted to test and see how far my mental and physical state could take me.

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

A. Balancing being a student-athlete is hard, and I just work to prioritize both. I do my best to do recovery and icing while doing school work. And also prioritize sleep to ensure my prime performance in both fields.

WRESTLING - JUNIOR HARRISON SPADONI

On January 3, Spadoni earned his 100th career victory. He is only the 16th wrestler in school history to earn 100 career victories. Harrison is also a 2021 4A West Regional Champion and has twice placed 4th in the Maryland 3A/4A state championships.

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

A. I went to club wrestling and competed in tournaments.

Q. What is your go-to meal before competitions?

A. PB&J with honey on it.

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

A. Gaming.

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

A. I was 7 years old. I started wrestling because all my friends wrestled.

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

A. I mainly go in for lunch and work on assignments so that I don't have to do them after practice.

POMS - SENIOR CADYN O'HALLORAN

According to Coach Tiara Ventura, "Cadyn is a four-year pom squad

member who consistently demonstrates the best qualities of a teammate and role model. "I can rely on Cadyn to always encourage her teammates through a very challenging competition routine, even if she is tired as well," says Ventura. "When practices get rough, Cadyn is always there to put a smile on everyone's face."

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

A. I trained during the summer, keeping my cardio up by running and swimming so I'd be able to have the endurance for the fall and winter seasons.

Q. What is your go-to meal before competitions?

A. I usually eat a bagel and fruit with lots of water before a competition.

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

A. I play piano and guitar outside of Poms.

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

A. I started Poms freshman year because I've been dancing my whole life and I wanted to continue dancing in high school.

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

A. I put my schoolwork first and try to finish it before practice every day.

Inside QO Boys Basketball

BY DYLAN FLAIM
Staff Writer

Quince Orchard Boys Basketball is heading towards the climax of their season. As of February 4, they sit at a record of 8-7. This is a great improvement from last season, where they finished with a disappointing record of 4-16.

Leading them is head coach James Minturn. Minturn, who teaches PE at Kingsview Middle School in Germantown, is in his second season as the Cougars' head basketball coach.

I had the pleasure of being able to do a Q&A session with Coach Minturn, and got an inside look into the team, as well as some tips for JV players.

Q. What are your goals for the season?

A. Our goals are to get better every day and grow as a team.

Q. What has been the highlight of the season so far?

A. Working with our team to get better and grow as players and people.

Q. What does an average QO Boys Basketball practice look like?

A. In practice, we compete and work to get better.

Q. Have there been any players who have stood out this season?

A. Yes, DJ Abegesah is one of our senior captains and has been playing great on both ends of the floor [and] been a great leader for our team.

Q. What is the best part about coaching Quince Orchard Basketball?

A. QO has a great community and support for athletics, and I love working with players I coach.
-James Minturn

Q. What tips do you have for current JV players who aspire to be on varsity?

A. Work on dribbling with your off hand, work on your 3 point shot, and the weight room.



Keepin' Up With DC Sports

BY NOAH KRAVITZ & MOTAZ DEIFY

Staff Writer & Senior Staff Writer

Commanders

It's safe to say the Commanders didn't play their best football this season, although many were hoping the Commanders would be a very promising team after the long-awaited change of ownership.

Obviously the DMV area has wanted to see a competitive Commanders team for a while now, and it looks like that'll be on hold for the time being.

The team began the offseason with the firing of head coach Ron Rivera, who coached Washington for the last four years. His tenure consisted of three different team names, two owners, and eight starting quarterbacks. The team recently hired their new head coach, Dan Quinn, who was the former defensive coordinator for the Dallas Cowboys.

This offseason will be a crucial one in the development of young players, and scouting for the upcoming 2024 NFL Draft that takes place on April 25. It's worth noting that the Commanders hold the 2nd overall selection in the draft.

Capitals

If you're thinking about going out during a night in DC with your family, friends or significant other, then consider attending a Capitals game and watch them rule the ice rink.

One month after the December issue, the boys on ice remain in close standing to where they were before—7th place in the Metropolitan Division, while the New York Rangers and Philadelphia Flyers continue to remain dominant in this division with close to 30 wins.

Recently, the Capitals have re-signed forward Aliaksei Protas to an extension of five more years on the team. The contract agreed to sustain an average of approximately \$3.375 million per year, which is more than his three-year contract that packaged

nearly \$2.7 million when he was first drafted in 2021.

Nationals

As we wait for another season of MLB, we might as well look back on the offseason and what the Nats have done to improve their team. They haven't made any big moves that will get fans jumping.

Many believe that the Nationals' front office has approached this offseason conservatively, planning to not spend much money until this team is well aware of where they are in the process of developing young players.

The Nationals signed a few free agents so far this offseason, bringing in third baseman Nick Senzel and former world champion relief pitcher Dylan Floro. The Nationals also brought in two-time all-star and two-time Gold Glove award winner Joey Gallo to the mix.

On February 24, we will soon see D.C. baseball again!

Wizards

Four months into the NBA season, the Wizards are still trying to hold it together, placing 14th out of 15 teams in the Eastern Conference, with 7 wins and 35 losses. The Wizards were victorious against teams including the Brooklyn Nets, Minnesota Timberwolves, and Memphis Grizzlies at least once earlier in the season.

The Wizards may have fallen short in the season so far, but there are many positives. For instance, forward Kyle Kuzma currently leads in statistics with a career-high of 22 points, 6.2 rebounds and 4.2 assists during the regular season.

In their most recent game on February 4, the Wizards hosted the Phoenix Suns, but once again fell short. Forward Deni Avdija led in statistics during that game with 24 total points, 3 rebounds and 1 assist.

Within the next four years, just like the Capitals, the Wizards are expected to move from the enormous, entertaining Capital One Arena in Washington DC, to Alexandria, VA in a \$2 billion deal, where a new stadium will be built across the Potomac River. Consequently, this agreement is non-binding.



Season Updates

Poms

BY LILY KAPLAN
Senior Staff Writer

There's no doubt that this year's Poms team has had an amazing season—whether they were shining on the football field during halftime or dancing their hearts out during the winter season. The team—made up of eight seniors, three juniors, four sophomores, and one freshman—is successful because of their skill, confidence, and sportsmanship.

The team started training long before they performed on the football field this season. Senior Nina Sayegh, who has been on the team for all four years of high school, believes that “the fall season was amazing.” As a team, she says, “We really started to improve and come together as a team, thanks to our amazing new coach. (Tiara Ventura.)” The team practices six times a week, which shows significantly in their performances.

More recently, the poms team has not only started dancing during basketball games, but their competition season has begun. On January 13, their first competition was held at Blake

High School. There, they earned 2nd place.

Their second competition was held at Northwest High School. Although they didn't perform as well as they wanted, they earned the competition's Spirit Award.

Their most recent and final competition, as well as the biggest one so far, was the County Championship, taking place February 3 at Blair High School. “Unfortunately, we did not receive the score we wanted, but I am so proud of my team,” says junior Lyla Holstein. “We danced the absolute best we ever have.”

Although their competitions have come to an end, the team will be performing at the boys' varsity basketball game tonight. They will be dancing at half-time along with the Junior Poms, a group of (potentially) future Poms in elementary school.



INSTAGRAM/@QOHS.POMS

QO Dive

BY PRITI MADHAVAN
Staff Writer

As QO Swim and Dive advances into their season, divers Andrew Chen and Ellie Pantezzi have mixed emotions about how it's going.

Starting with a background in gymnastics and summer league diving, sophomore Pantezzi's parents saw the potential for a long-term commitment to diving. This decision marked the beginning of Pantezzi's aquatic adventures, and set the stage for an admirable high school career. Chen, on the other hand, joined QOSD two years ago in his sophomore year. “I just thought it looked fun for my second year on swim and dive,” he said.

QOSD has brought both Chen and Pantezzi immense joy, especially when it comes to team bonding. The shared moments of triumph and collective cheers through the pool create an environment they relish.

“I love it! I love being part of a big team and hanging out together and cheering everyone on,” Pantezzi expresses with enthusiasm.

“I really liked team dinners,” Chen says.

Looking ahead, Pantezzi envisions a bright future with QOSD filled with achievements. “I hope to break another record and definitely recruit more divers,” she shares.

Chen, however, is a bit less spirited when asked how he feels about the rest of the season.

“I'm done,” Chen remarks.

Last year, QOSD moved up to Division I, and Chen feels it has taken a hit to his performance at meets. Despite his frustration, the QOSD atmosphere more than makes up for it. He hopes to make more memories with friends as he blazes through his final season with the team.

Reflecting on their previous two seasons, Pantezzi and Chen both acknowledge the ups and downs. While the disappointment of losing most meets this year lingers, Pantezzi and Chen try to maintain positive attitudes. Pantezzi's most impressive achievement this season has been breaking her own 4-dive record of 166.9 and improving to an 187.0.

As Chen reflects on his high school seasons, he says, “Our first two seasons were great, but this year moving up a division was rough.”

Looking ahead to the remainder of the season, Pantezzi and Chen express a mix of excitement and nerves. Post-season meets bring the prospect of elevated competition, which requires them to elevate their game. As they navigate the waters of both challenges and triumphs, Pantezzi and Chen stand poised to make a lasting splash in the realm of high school diving.

Bocce

BY MOTAZ DEIFY
Senior Staff Writer

Last year, the Quince Orchard bocce team was able to succeed in becoming divisional champions, and they hope to do it again. However, many of the players from last year happened to be seniors, which reduced the team by more than half. This year, there are eight total players in this young team and only two returning players: sophomores and captains Maya Lundquist and Hasan Roumani.

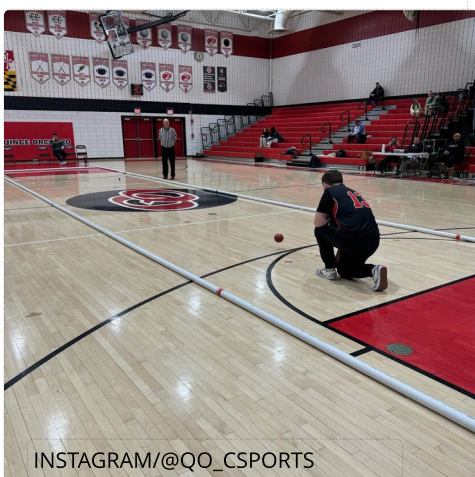
Science resource teacher Jennifer Yeck has been coaching bocce for three years. She is looking forward to winning another division and placing first in counties, but stresses the importance of having fun and working together.

For those that have never heard of this sport, bocce is also known as Italian longbowling, similar to curling. The small ball used is called a pallina,

which is also the target that is supposed to be hit. Each team has four throws and the goal is to try to get close to the pallina as much as possible and score points. Players are also allowed to knock other balls out of the way. The most points you can score in a frame is four points, which is called a bocce.

This sport is also described as “very strategic,” according to Yeck. Players must get “used to the rules of the game, and practice as much as we can,” she said. Athletes have to learn to get used to playing in different environments as “each floor is different [in every school traveled to],” added Yeck.

Although, it takes a lot of practice, bocce is a sport that also doesn't require as intense dedication. Bocce is amongst the QO sports that hosts practices less than 5 days a week, along with Swim & Dive—the bocce team practices on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.



INSTAGRAM/@QO_CSPTS



Girls Basketball

BY NOAH KRAVITZ
Staff Writer

So far it hasn't been the best season that the QO girls basketball team could've hoped for. There is definitely room for improvement as the girls team is in its 2nd half of the season. Coach Bobby Bishop has been relying hard on his veteran players to make way for some of the younger players on this team, who are still relatively new to this environment.

This is his first year without some of his key veteran players including former QO Cougar Jen Juhring. More so this season compared to other seasons is that Coach Bishop has relied more on his younger players to deliver big plays in critical moments.

Because Bishop is without Juhring and others this season, he has allowed the upbringing of some of the freshman and even the sophomores as well. Bishop mentions freshman Abby Emard, and sophomore Maeve Daly who have consistently become better players.

“I think some of these younger players who haven't really had a big experience being on the team yet, are the ones who are doing a good job and carrying a chip on their shoulder. Sometimes you might be a freshman on varsity and might be thinking that your job is done. No, you've gotta keep working.”

Another player that Bishop says has stepped up in a big way throughout the season is junior Evelyn Steele. What do I mean by stepping up? Well, averaging 9 points, 9 rebounds, and 5 blocks a game.

“She's really found her stride. Right now, the focus is on her scoring. Using her height more,” Bishop said.

In the most recent of the team's performances, she's been a key part of how this team is able to stay close in their contests.

As we near down the road and into the playoffs, it will be interesting to see how much leadership is to be a factor into this team's hopeful success.

Not just Coach Bishop, but the whole team in general has really been grateful for senior Kasey Rappaport's leadership throughout this season during the positive moments, and certainly the negative moments.

“It's been huge to see her leadership. It's good to see. She helps keep the team calm, she's a good playmaker and ball handler. This all helps us in so many ways on the court and off the court. We haven't really had that this year in some moments. She's been a great leader and more notably to some of these younger girls on the team.” Bishop said.

In the last three games, the Cougars have lost twice, losing to B-CC and Wootton both by double digits, but blowing out Wheaton by 50+ points.

As of now, Quince Orchard is at a record of 7-9, and awaits a crucial matchup versus top school in the county: Clarksburg on February 9th at the Dome. Be sure to cheer on your Cougars.



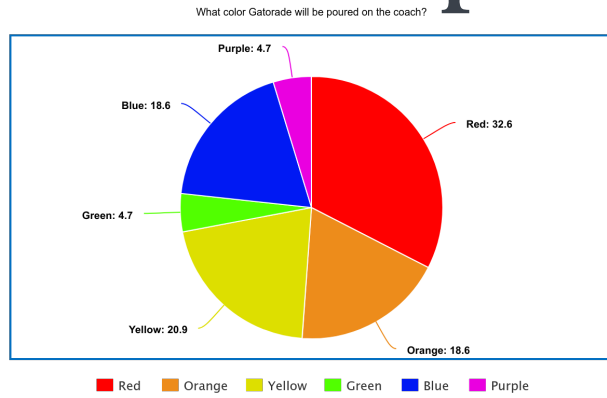
Will QO predict the Super Bowl?

BY MADELEINE BURKE and OLIVIA MAYTIN
Editor-In-Chief and Senior Staff Writer

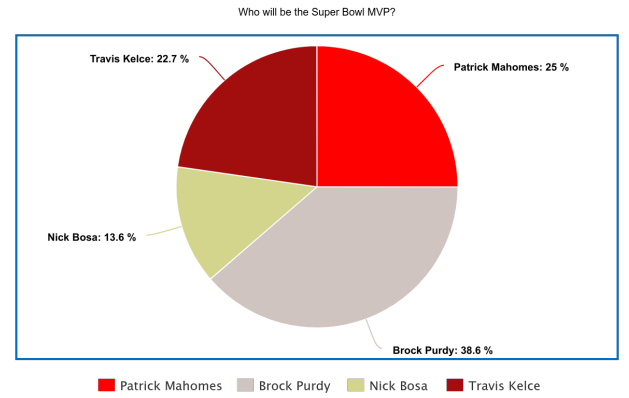
Many Quince Orchard students believed they could guess the game's results, but did they? Here are the predictions from 44 different students!

Out of the 44 votes, 10 people predicted that the 49ers will win, scoring 27 points.

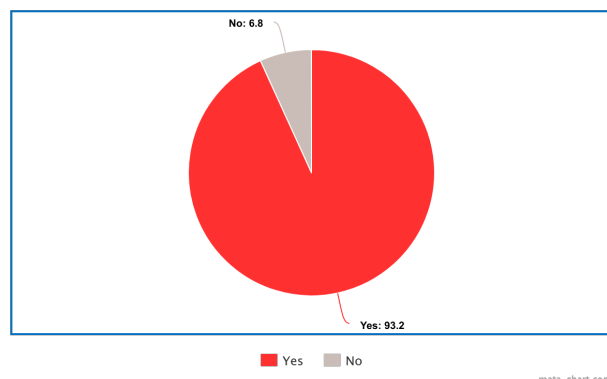
The predicted favored commercial is Doritos! Make sure to watch the commercials between each play.



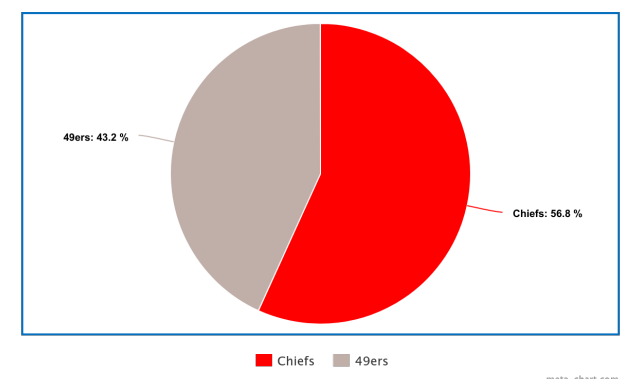
QO predicted that red Gatorade will be poured on the coach.



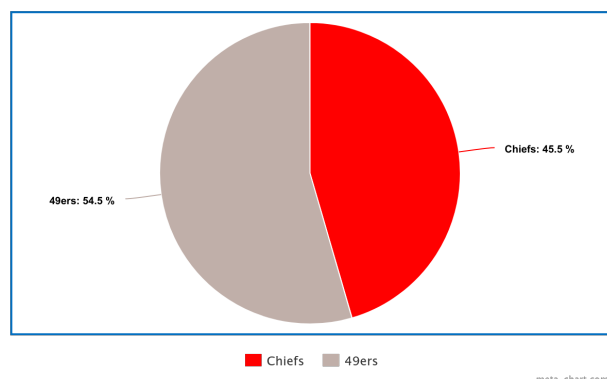
QO predicted that the 49ers QB Brock Purdy will be MVP.



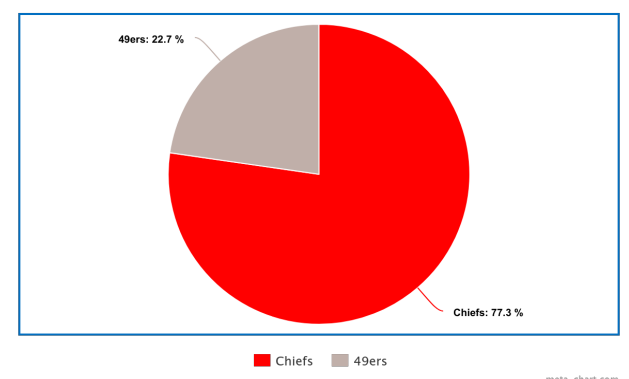
QO predicted that Taylor Swift will be at the Super Bowl.



QO predicted that the Chiefs will take the lead at halftime.



QO predicted that the 49ers are going to win.



QO predicted that the Chiefs will score the first touchdown.

YEARBOOKS ARE ON SALE LOWEST PRICE OF THE YEAR

ORDER NOW



WAYS TO ORDER:



ONLINE
JOSTENSYEARBOOKS.COM



SCAN



CALL
1.877.767.5217
8AM-5PM CST
MONDAY-FRIDAY