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35TH ANNUAL DIVERSITY DAY: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE TOGETHER

By **Nick Aston '28 and Reid Bock '27**

Staff Contributor and Associate Editor

Centered on youth activism and the fight for a sustainable future, Diversity Day 2026 aimed to bring the Choate community together and raise awareness for environmental issues and their impact on students, faculty, and staff. The Equity and Inclusion (E&I) Office often meets as early as a year in advance to brainstorm ideas and start planning for Diversity Day.

Dr. Rachel Myers, Dean of Equity and Inclusion, revealed that this year's Diversity Day theme was inspired by a survey conducted by the E&I Office last year. According to her, while "Athletes and Advocates for Justice" was the most popular theme last year, sustainability was a close second. For Dr. Myers, this Diversity Day is all about raising awareness for the environment, a commonly overlooked aspect of social justice. "We're all impacted by environmental issues, so I'm really excited that environmentalism, sustainability, and marine biology are getting their day," Dr. Myers said.

Planning for Diversity Day doesn't just end after picking a theme, however. Associate Dean for Student Programming Ms. Jillian Forgue offered insight into the planning process for the student-led workshops on Diversity Day. In an interview, she explained how her team embraced every student's ideas, giving them the opportunity to share their passions with the community. Forgue also emphasized the commitment required to lead a student workshop and expressed her gratitude to students taking the initiative to share



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Students and panelists after a Q&A session in the Kohler Environmental Center kitchen.

their ideas. "We really try to accept anyone willing because it is such a big ask. We're really grateful for any students who wants to help," she said.

During the keynote panel session hosted at the beginning of Diversity Day, Environmental Immersion Program students Annie Cady '26 and Coyan Mobarak '26 facilitated a Q&A with three carefully-selected panelists: Carisa Cabrera, Jerome Foster II, and Sophia Kianni.

Cabrera, a published marine biologist, content creator, and climate activist, brought her unique perspective on our world's oceans. As an American environmental activist and the youngest-ever White House advisor, Foster II shared his perspective on ideas of unity and the power of an individual's voice. Lastly, Kianni, a Stanford alumna, Iranian-American social entrepreneur, and founder of

the nonprofit Climate Cardinals, shared her journey to stardom, including a formative education at Stanford and the founding of Phia, an AI shopping agent.

Cabrera, leaning on her background as a marine biologist, emphasized the ocean's ability to unite regardless of environmental interests: "We should stop looking at 'us' protecting nature, 'us' saving nature, and, instead, understand that we are nature defending ourselves. The ocean reminds us that this is all one planet," she said.

Foster II explained his belief that there should be more opportunities and pathways for young people to engage in activist work. He said, "[I think] young people have a space to be at the table ... [young] people are left at that awareness stage and don't know the avenues, and if they can take tangible action within their communities, I think that is something

that's really important when it comes to sustainability and progress in general in society."

With experience tackling big problems, Kianni simply stated that, "when we think about some of these lofty, grand accomplishments ... that many young people who achieve success at an early age have had, if you distill it down to the basics, it's really problem solution: at a local level, state level, national level, and then ultimately a global level."

As a student interested in environmental science, Bowen Jin '26 asked the panel a question surrounding artificial intelligence's (AI) role in tackling climate issues. Jin said, "Kianni expressed how AI should be used to better benefit the environment, and I wanted to further question her because I originally thought that AI might have bigger consequences than presented."

Student-led workshops were at the forefront of this year's Diversity Day, creating spaces for students to share their passions with the community and raise awareness for our world's environmental issues. Vlada Letii '27, a young activist from Ukraine, was among the many students leading a workshop on Diversity Day. With the help of her English teacher, Mr. Aidan Spencer, Letii worked to create a workshop that emphasizes the global climate impact of the war in Ukraine, the importance of youth involvement, and the potential for sustainable rebuilding of Ukraine's infrastructure in a postwar future. In a conversation with Letii, she revealed that her work with an organization outside of school, focused on green rebuilding in Ukraine, played a significant role in her motivation to create her workshop. Letii reflected on how the idea of building

a more "green" future is an inter-sectional issue that affects people from all walks of life, including women, labor rights, and people with disabilities.

As students reflected on the keynote panel session, workshop facilitators started preparing for the Student Film Sessions and Student Workshops. Alongside Isa Marvin '26, Leah Wuttke '28, and Mr. Will Morris, Cady introduced environmental and social justice to her workshop, sharing plant-based recipes with students. From Plate to Planet: Exploring Sustainability Through Plant-Based Cooking explored how different ingredients affect the planet and the trade-offs behind what ends up on our plates. An attendee of Cady's workshop, Taryn Lattanzi '29, discovered how delicious tofu, grain, chickpea salad, and sweet potato brownies could be while supporting a more sustainable future. "Plant-based recipes are very beneficial for our environment, and they promote healthier eating. They were also very good," Lattanzi said.

Reflecting on all the different impacts of environmental issues, Cady said, "If we can educate more people in becoming plant-based, it'll be an easier way to lower the carbon footprint and for people to find healthy protein sources with nutritional value."

People from every corner of the Choate community put an incredible amount of thought and effort into Diversity Day 2026, marking its potential to raise awareness for youth activism and the fight for a sustainable future.

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THALHEIMER SPEAKER DR. JAMIL ZAKI PROVIDES INSIGHT ON EMPATHY

By **Jinx Hartong '27**

Reporter

On January 23, Choate Rosemary Hall welcomed Dr. Jamil Zaki to campus. At a time when cynicism can feel like the default of modern life, Dr. Zaki offered students an alternative framework: people are, as a whole, better than we may think, and believing in the goodness of others may actually make society healthier.

Dr. Zaki, a psychology professor at Stanford University and director of Stanford's Neuroscience lab, has built his career on studying empathy, how it works in the brain, why it can fail, and how it can be strengthened. His research contributes to a range of fields, including neuroscience and psychology, as well as to everyday social challenges such as loneliness.

A significant portion of Dr. Zaki's recent work focuses on a simple but powerful idea: people consistently underestimate how kind, caring, and open-minded others are. That misjudgment, he argues, feeds into the constant loop of isolation and mistrust that people fall into. When people assume rejection, they withdraw, and Dr. Zaki works to directly counter that. His research suggests that fear of awkwardness or hostility often keeps people from



Photo courtesy of www.jamil-zaki.com

Dr. Zaki posing for a picture on steps.

reaching out, even though their peers are usually more understanding than expected.

Dr. Zaki is a frequent public speaker and author. His latest publication is *Hope For Cynics*, which blends scientific research with his personal stories and ad-

vice. His writing and talks aim to show that empathy is not a trait reserved for a select number of compassionate people, but an instinctual skill that can be improved and practiced.

Dr. Zaki was chosen through the Thalheimer Speak-

er Program, which Ms. Devine, an advisor for the program, described as "a series designed to bring an esteemed educator to Choate who would provide insights and observations on broadly defined issues, including but not limited to theology,

religion, literature, social justice, the Holocaust, bio-ethics, and public policy."

The Thalheimer Speaker Program brings in educators at the edge of their fields, like Dr. Zaki, to offer Choate students an opportunity to engage directly with

ideas that feel especially urgent in today's social climate.

During his time on campus, Dr. Zaki spoke about empathy not as a label but as a practical, learnable skill. He emphasized that choosing optimism towards others is not a matter of ignoring reality, but seeing it more clearly. By questioning harsh reflexes and encouraging human curiosity, his research suggests that individuals can build stronger relationships and more resilient communities.

Ms. Devine anticipates that Dr. Zaki's message will reach beyond the duration of his visit. She shared her hopes that Choate students will learn, through Dr. Zaki, to "reflect on how empathy shows in their own life, and how it shapes the way we treat each other."

As Dr. Zaki addressed the Choate community, his visit arrived at a moment in time when students are frequently confronted with messages of division. By grounding optimism in scientific research and real-life problems, Dr. Zaki presented the Choate community a perspective that challenges repeated, prevailing narratives and encourages students to reconsider how they see and treat those around them.

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Visuals by Choate Photos, Lukas Yeh, Leah Han, and Ms. Andrea Serna Pedraza.

Student Committee of Programming and Engagement

CLUB PROPOSAL PROCESS

PROPOSAL FORM
- The proposal form will be open from January 14 - 30 via CLUB FB
- Proposals can be submitted by 3rd, 4th, 5th formers

POST SUBMISSION
- SCOPE will review all proposals
- Proposals that pass the initial screening will be invited to meet with SCOPE

Submit Here!

INSIDE ALL 8 CORNERS OF CHOATE'S SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

By **Malaika Fonkem '29**
Reporter

As application deadlines for Choate's Signature Programs approach, students across campus are beginning to consider which opportunities best align with their interests and goals. These programs, which span disciplines from internships in medical labs to studies abroad in foreign countries, offer students various experiences beyond the traditional classroom.

Among these offerings is Choate's John F. Kennedy Program, which offers students a chance to explore civil service, leadership, and career experience across their junior and senior years. Students across cohorts describe the program as demanding but extremely rewarding, teaching valuable lessons to each group of participants. Amber Yung '26 said, "I learned most ... to not be afraid to put my ideas out there," while JFK Signature Program Director Ned Gallagher further explained his hope that the JFK program will empower students academically and personally, stating, "The program will equip students to understand government and public policy at many different levels, and instill in them a deeper appreciation for how they can impact the world around them."

Science Research Program (SRP), another Signature Program, offers students the opportunity to engage with scientific research in real-world fields. Dr. Chris Hogue, director of the quantitative side of SRP, emphasized, "We really want this program to be for everyone regardless of back-



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Arts Concentration Program cohort outside the Paul Mellon Arts Center.

ground." Although many describe the program as complex and challenging, students attest that both Dr. Hogue and Dr. Selena Gell, director of the biological cohort of SRP, support students in developing research skills, strategies, and scientific understanding with the goal of making the program approachable for all participants. "Over time, I've developed the skills to break down complicated concepts, and watching that shift has been really rewarding," Hiyab Mebrahtu '27 said, a member of the program.

Another program available to students is the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES) Program. The pro-

gram offers students access to a wide range of cultures, dialects, and perspectives. Mr. Yassine Benzinane, Director of AMES, highlighted its role in preparing students for future academic study. "AMES equips our students with the skills and habits of mind to thrive in any Middle East Studies [or related] program in college," he said, emphasizing the importance of language study.

Choate's Global Engagement Program (GEP) centers on encouraging students to explore the world beyond campus. The program fosters students' interest in various parts of our world throughout the year and culminates with a term spent abroad during

the academic year. Designed to align with students' interests, the program emphasizes curiosity and engagement with global challenges. Director of GEP Ms. Ashley Sinclair urged applicants to "ask big questions about the global challenges ... Seek meaningful experience beyond the classroom." Elias Joseph '28 reflected on the program's individualized structure: "A great part of the program is [that] your experience is unique to you and tailored to your interests," he said.

For students interested in the arts, Choate's Arts Concentration provides an intensive and immersive experience. Led by Mr. Matthew McLean, Arts

Department Head, the program allows students with a strong interest in the arts to train their skills through a structured and demanding schedule. William Kim '29, a member of Arts Concentration, pointed out the level of freedom students have in the program. He said, "I enjoy the trust that goes into afternoon practices and the opportunities available," highlighting the consistent schedule of rehearsals, studio work, and creative practice. Mr. McLean emphasized that the program values students with "curiosity, openness to feedback, and ability to work independently," noting that its structure is similar to the expectations of professional artists. He also explained that "students

are permitted to take one term away from the program to participate in a sport" because the program's tangible hours often fall during afternoon activities, displaying the desire for students to excel not just in their chosen field of study but also in other disciplines.

Students passionate about environmental issues may gravitate toward Choate's Environmental Immersion Program (EIP), which blends academic study with hands-on learning. Overseen by Director of the EIP Mr. Joseph Scanio, the program emphasizes experiential opportunities such as "field trips and invited speakers or experts." While students often describe the workload as demanding, Damaris Reynoso '27 said, "If you know how to manage your time well and truly care about the natural world, it's going to be fun." Mr. Scanio echoed this sentiment, encouraging applicants to "embrace multidisciplinary learning, [pursue] student driven research in STEM, and [develop] a deeper understanding of the environment."

Each signature program, whether centered around civil service, scientific research, global understanding, artistic development, or environmental sustainability, challenges students to think critically and with intention. As deadlines approach, students should consider taking a chance on a program that sparks their curiosity. All you have to do is press submit.

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THROUGH THE FROSTED LENS: WINTER WONDER



Graphic by Callie Crowell '28/The Choate News

By **Harry Kim '28**
Associate Editor

As the cold intensifies, campus life naturally shifts indoors, with many students choosing warmth and comfort over outdoor activities. Returning to Choate, some students are eager to embrace the winter atmosphere, while others are determined to stay inside in the warmth. In response to this seasonal retreat, Choate C-Proctors hosted a photography competition open to all forms with the theme of "Winter Wonder."

Student participants were encouraged to submit photographs capturing a wide range of winter scenes, from wildlife and frozen lakes to close-up images of snowflakes. There were no restrictions on subject matter or location as long as the image aimed to showcase the beauty of winter scenery. From sweeping landscapes to often-overlooked details, submitted photos highlighted the unique aesthetics of winter on campus.

This year's winter event was designed by the Choate C-Proctor Community Engage-

ment Group. The members of this group plan various events to engage the community with the outdoor environment and to focus on the natural beauty on campus.

Leader of the Community Engagement Group Rella Wang '26 commented on the motivation behind the photography competition: "We wanted people to get outside and take a second to slow down, and really observe their surroundings. Winter could be a time where people want to stay inside because it's cold," Wang said, adding that the season also offers moments of beauty worth noticing. "There's actually beautiful scenery." The competition submission deadline was January 16, 2026, and the winning photograph will be featured around campus.

Overall, Wang regarded the competition a success, noting the diversity and quality of submissions. "There were a lot of amazing photos," she said. "These [photos] reinforce the idea that we're trying to convey. There can be such beautiful scenery on campus as long

as you slow down to look at the things around you, so I'm really glad that people were able to do this."

Although the "Winter Wonder" photography competition has concluded, there are countless other ways to engage in sustainable practices. C-Proctor groups are currently planning to host events such as sustainable crafting, winter meditation near the waterfall, or nature walks, where student participants can collect flowers and leaves and learn about the land's natural history.

Ultimately, C-Proctors aspire to promote sustainable practices by creating meaningful experiences that encourage students to interact with nature. "It really goes back to the mission of our group: to really enjoy being in nature and build a relationship with it," Wang said. "We also really look forward to people's input. Just send any of us an email about the events [you] hope to see on campus that support sustainability."

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Sipping Culture on a Winter Evening

By **Eliza O'Neill '27**
Staff Contributor

On a winter evening marked by cold air and warm clothing, Choate students traded textbooks for tea whisks. The Japanese Club and Thai Club's matcha and Thai iced tea making event brought students together to sip and unwind.

Japanese Club President Hanna Balmuth '27 explained that she hoped the event would give students a moment "to relax and drink something refreshing after a long week." Thai Club President Andrew Watcharananan '26 echoed that sentiment, explaining that the event was rooted in a sense of comfort and cultural belonging. "I've loved Thai tea my whole life," Watcharananan said. "When I don't get to drink matcha or Thai tea, I really miss it ... it makes me think of home, [and] I wanted to bring that sense of culture and belonging to Choate."

Balmuth and Watcharananan worked closely with Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar to coordinate logistics, including ordering quality matcha and traditional preparation ma-

terials. Ms. Kazar also helped promote the event, noting that she "asked [Balmuth] to create a poster that we could use to advertise the event on Club Hub and Student Notes." Both platforms, introduced this school year, have become vital platforms for sharing information about student-run events across campus.

For Balmuth, the matcha-making event was an occasion for both cultural education and communal bonding. "Recently, matcha has been trending, and I thought it would be a good way to bring the Choate community together," she said. Balmuth acknowledged the common misunderstandings about the quintessential Japanese delicacy: "There isn't always an opportunity to learn how to make it," she said, hoping the event would clarify the beverage's production process.

Japanese Club Secretary Yui Sugimoto '28 underscored how the event reflected the club's broader mission of blending education and cultural appreciation. "What motivated us to plan this event was that I wanted to create an engaging way for students to experience ... such [an] important

part of Japanese tradition that was not just language learning," she said. For Sugimoto, the immersive, hands-on experience the event offered enabled students to engage in the process of making the tea while developing cultural awareness throughout the process.

Eugenia Peloche '29 shared a similar sentiment as an attendee: "[The event] helped me discover the gastronomy part of a culture, which is a really important aspect of cultural learning," she said.

Beyond the tea itself, organizers hoped the event would foster shared memories. "I hoped people smiled, enjoyed some drinks, and made good memories with their friends," Watcharananan said.

While the night offered plenty of rich matcha and sweet Thai iced tea, its impact extended further. As Ms. Kazar noted, it was an "intentional effort to bring students together and strengthen community bonds," blending cultural education with warmth, both literal and figurative, on a cold winter evening.

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Graphic by Xyla Kiang '26/The Choate News

COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE MLK



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Reid Bock '27**
Associate Editor

At the Robert F. Parisi Town Council Chambers, the Wallingford Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) remembrance event brought residents together for a day of reflection and connection. The gathering emphasized shared community values and dedicated a day to recognize MLK's influence on social justice.

On Monday, January 19, the program was held at the Wallingford Town Hall at 10:00 a.m. The celebration was organized as a joint town program presented by the Town of Wallingford, the Public Celebrations Committee, and the Wallingford Board of Education. Their collaboration was a culmination of a partnership between the town's government and local Wallingford schools, all in order to shape community traditions.

Serving as a public commemoration of King's legacy and a space for Wallingford to honor his impact, the event allowed residents to celebrate, as Mayor Vincent Cervoni stated, "the Life and Vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." Various pieces of MLK's work, including essays, readings, and artwork, were presented by elementary, middle, and high school students, spreading his powerful words to resonate with younger generations.

Wallingford Public Library Director Ms. Sunnie Scarpa held an important role in planning the event. "The library's role in the event was to offer a reading that serves as a tribute to Dr. King," she said.

Ms. Scarpa read "Tribute to Martin Luther King Jr." by Toni Morrison, an essay from the collection *The Source of Self-Regard*. The selection connected King's historical legacy with Morrison's liter-

ary voice, creating a dialogue at the intersection of activism and art. Ms. Scarpa describes the essay as a conduit through which Morrison "grapples with King's legacy and her own personal responsibility to continue making the world a better and more equitable place."

For residents who were willing to dive deeper into the themes of justice and equality, the library also prepared a list of additional resources to learn more about Dr. King and his influence. These materials encouraged attendees to extend their engagement with King's ideas beyond the single day of programming, emphasizing contemporary literary reflections on King's life and vision. Together, the program's elements created a thoughtful community observance of Dr. King's enduring legacy.

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Gaylord Healthcare Implements New WOW Factor

By **Alexis Lee '28**
Reporter

On December 10, the Timken Foundation of Canton, a charitable organization based in Ohio that supports healthcare, education, and community initiatives, granted \$33,750 to Gaylord Specialty Healthcare (Gaylord), a nonprofit medical rehabilitation center in Wallingford. Having partnered with the Timken Foundation since 2021, a grant writer for Gaylord, Ms. Cindy Bartholomew, described the Timken Foundation as "a very community-minded company."

The grant funded the purchase of five Workstations on Wheels (WOWs), portable computer carts that bring technology to patients' bedsides. According to Ms. Bartholomew, these mobile workstations "allow nurses to access the patient's record at the bedside, check medications, and enter notes, providing real-time updates for doctors and other medical professionals reviewing the record."

Gaylord is committed to "to [providing] the highest quality care by acquiring the most ad-

vanced technology available for patient rehabilitation and nursing staff education," eliminating the limitations of traditional desktop computers, Ms. Bartholomew said. Now, nurses no longer have to rely on memory when writing patient care notes and can account for questions and interruptions during conversations using the newly implemented WOW mobile assistance.

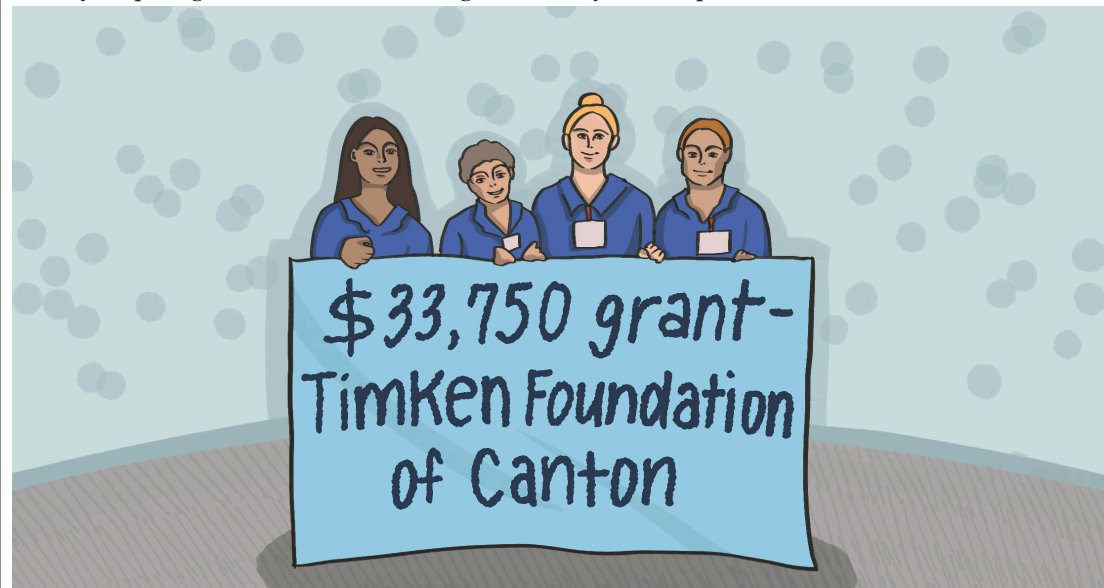
Additionally, the WOWs are currently being used in Gaylord's Center for Education for nursing education programs and in practice for direct care patient units. "Students and nurses alike are pleased to have practice on the equipment they will actually use at the bedside," Ms. Bartholomew said. This benefit extends beyond staff training and also improves patient experiences. Because different medical professionals frequently visit patients, "this equipment provides up-to-date information from each of those visits and prevents patients from having to repeat what they have said about their condition," Ms. Bartholomew said. By reducing inefficiency and opti-

mizing communication, WOWs help "[prevent] medication errors, [increase] the face-to-face time patients have with their healthcare staff, and [improve] patient health through continuity of care."

Gaylord measures the impacts by tracking employee retention, patient satisfaction, various patient care benchmarks, and patient safety goals. The hospital confirmed better patient outcomes, stating that "trained staff who are ready to take on direct care duties and are familiar with the equipment make a big difference in patient satisfaction and overall health."

"Gaylord is a world-class healthcare facility that maintains that quality of patient care through philanthropic investments from individuals, foundations, and companies," Ms. Bartholomew said. Ultimately, the subsidized WOW system supports patient rehabilitation by enabling advanced medical technology, workforce development, and facility upgrades.

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

PRESERVING WALLINGFORD'S PAST: YALE HOMESTEAD RESTORATION



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

By **Suyeong Hahn '27**
Reporter

For more than 25 years, the Yale Homestead, a historic farmhouse built by close relatives of Yale University's benefactor, has remained in a state of disrepair. After being deconstructed in 2000 to make room for commercial development, the building was left unused for decades. However, on December 18, 2025, the State Bond Commission approved \$500,000 in funding to reassemble the house. Wallingford Historic Preservation Trust (WHPT) president Mr. Jerry Farrell Jr. '86 explained that the new funds would enable the organization to reconstruct the home in its original style, employing the same 18th century techniques. The WHPT also

plans to incorporate the original materials that remain intact to the reconstruction effort.

The Yale Homestead was built in the 1790s and possesses deep historical significance to the Wallingford community because of its linkage to Mr. Elihu Yale. In addition to being a British merchant, philanthropist, and colonial official whose name inspired Yale University, Yale and his family members maintained strong connections to Wallingford. Yale's ancestor, Mr. Thomas Yale, is one of the town's founders and earliest settlers. The Yale family also owned property and held civic roles in Wallingford. Originally, the homestead was built by Yale's first cousins, and after his passing, the building remained in the Yale family name for many years. As a result, the building now serves as a physical connection to the Yale family.

Despite the home's historical significance, the house has gone through several critical periods of uncertainty regarding its preservation. The property that housed the initial building was designated for commercial development in the late 1990s and later became a Home Depot warehouse. As a condition of the land sale, the developer agreed to preserve the house, and a community member, Mr. George Mesite, ensured the homestead would be entrusted to the WHPT.

As a local nonprofit organization founded in 1991 with a goal of maintaining and preserving several of Wallingford's cultural properties, WHPT is also responsible for other historically meaningful sites, including the Nehemiah Royce House, the town's oldest home, and the Franklin Johnson Mansion, home to the

American Silver Museum. Now under their care, the Yale Homestead is soon to become an additional learning space and a testament to the trust's efforts to conserve Wallingford's history. State Senator Paul Cicarella described the house as a "treasured historic asset," highlighting that the restoration project helps to "preserve an important piece of our community's heritage for generations." After 25 years of desolate trailer storage, the two-story, eight-room homestead is just months away from reentering public life.

Finally, the Yale Homestead will soon reclaim its place in Wallingford, not only to honor the town's rich past, but as an investment in its community's future.

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A New Taste of Thailand

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Associate Editor

The familiar scent of Thai spices and steaming bowls of pho waft through the doors of Wallingford's newest Thai restaurant: Little Charm Eatery. On December 15, Little Charm Eatery opened in Wallingford and has already seen steady business in its first month.

The owners of Little Charm Eatery were initially inspired by their vision for a comfortable, welcoming space specializing in Thai cuisine. "My wife [Mrs. Belle Jacobson] is Thai, and she's [worked with] restaurants in the past," Mr. Steven Jacobson said, who owns the restaurant. "She wanted a nice sit-down dine-in experience, so it was her vision to open up, redecorate, and renovate in the way that we did." The restaurant's name reflects that vision. "Charm" comes from a Thai word meaning "bowl," a nod to the comforting, nostalgic dishes served at the eatery. When asked about opening in Wallingford, Mr. Jacobson explained that the community's friendly environment and positive energy made it an ideal location. "We just had a good feeling that this is a good place to be," he said.

Little Charm's menu highlights familiar Thai favorites alongside dishes inspired by Thai street food. From drunken noodles to pad thai, dishes emulating Thai street food

flavors have been popular among customers. The menu highlights regional flavors, including a vegetarian section that offers alternate versions of classics such as curry and fried rice, influenced by Thailand's traditional cooking methods and the trending fusion dishes between various Asian cuisines.

While Little Charm Eatery's opening month has been exciting, the team hopes to attract a wider range of customers as more people discover the restaurant. "We've been really busy," Mr. Jacobson said, explaining that the restaurant is still in the process of building its staff team. "We are also pretty understaffed right now, so customers should expect longer waits during peak dining hours." While the opening month has been busy, Mr. Jacobson assured that the Little Charm Eatery is actively hiring and training staff to improve service as the restaurant continues to grow, so that the restaurant can become a place where Wallingford residents can come and enjoy an authentic Thai meal. Looking ahead, the Jacobsons envision Little Charm as a Wallingford staple — one that stands confidently among the town's Thai restaurants, while offering a welcoming space for residents to enjoy authentic cuisine.

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Photo by Lukas Yeh '28/The Choate News

Little Charm Eatery's Storefront on Colony Rd.

THE CHOATE NEWS

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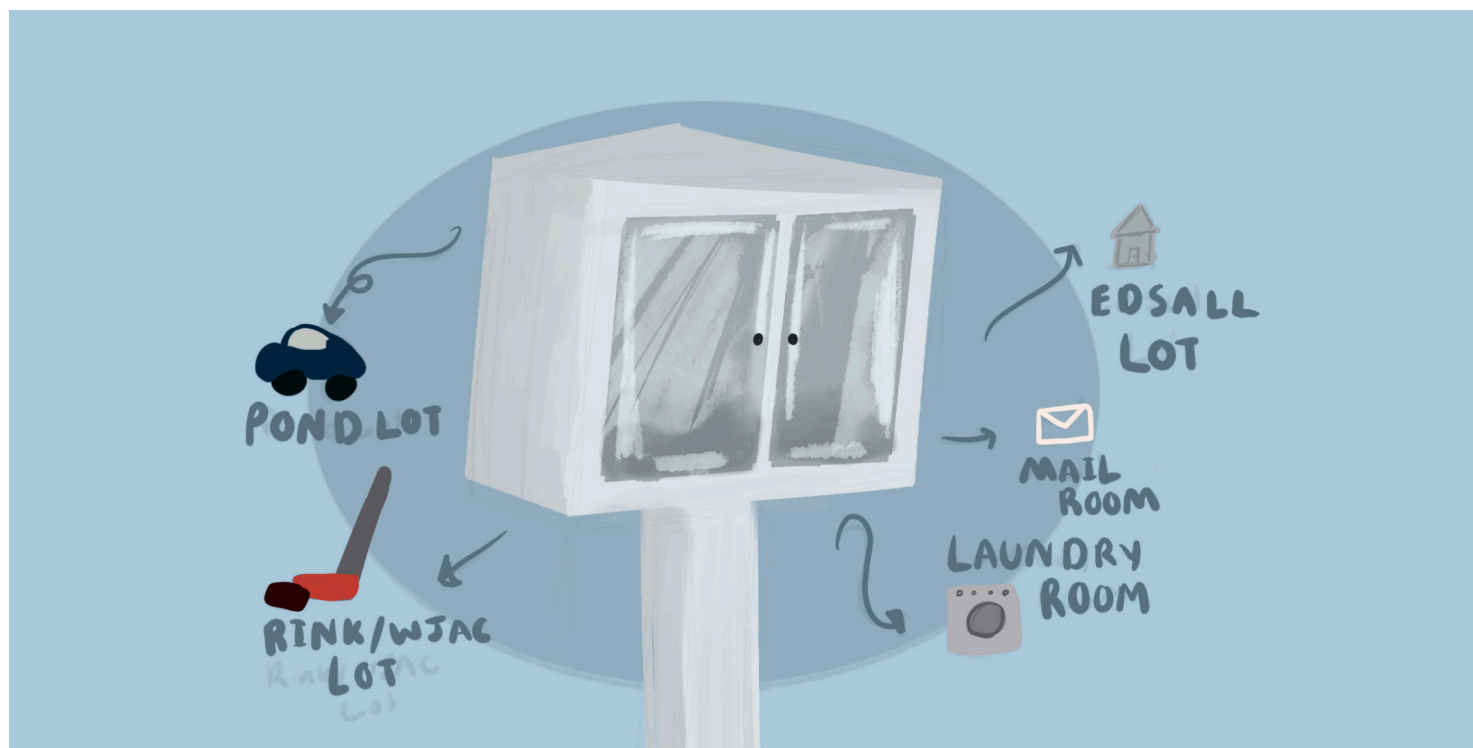
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Gas or Pass? Food Kiosks Deliver Results



Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/The Choate News

By **David Ionescu '27**
Opinions Writer

Whether it's to satisfy a craving, share a meal with a friend, or unwind after a long day of classes, ordering food has become a staple of many students' daily lives. As a result, food delivery services have become increasingly present across campus. In the past few years, Choate's food delivery system has been largely convenient — as simple as stepping outside one's dorm to pick up a meal at the door.

But starting this fall term, food delivery drop-off areas in the form of white kiosks have been placed around campus, and are now the only place students are allowed to pick up food. This new change has sparked controversy among students due to the inconvenience the kiosks bring: many

wonder why they were implemented in the first place.

According to Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 P'29, these delivery kiosks were in the works even before he became Dean of Students. The main reason for installing the delivery kiosks was that prior arrangements were disruptive and raised safety concerns. "[The food kiosks were implemented] mainly to prevent disruption. There were bags all over our campus. Kids sometimes pick them up. Sometimes they don't," Mr. Gilyard said.

Over the past couple of years, incidents such as students letting drivers into buildings or even a driver entering faculty housing have been disruptive to the community. Thus, the delivery kiosks serve as a logical solution to minimize distractions and create zones where a cluster of dorms can pick up their deliveries. Considering the extent of these previous dis-

ruptions, the kiosks are undoubtedly worthwhile measures.

While these changes have certainly reduced campuswide disruptions, there are still many issues with the food delivery system. For example, one challenge is having delivery workers see the kiosks and not continuing to drop food off at dorm doors. Although facilities worked to update Google Maps with the kiosk locations and lights have been installed on top of the kiosks, students still have several concerns. Specifically, these kiosks not only create major inconveniences, such as having to walk a long way or risk their food getting cold, but they also make it extremely easy to steal orders.

While students have been instructed to promptly pick up their orders upon arrival, measures should be put in place to address these complications more directly. One suggestion can be to add solar panels to provide cooling and

heating to keep our food fresh if we can't immediately retrieve it. Additionally, more delivery kiosks can be installed, and weekly changing security codes can be installed to solve some of the aforementioned concerns. However, overall, these inconveniences are minor compared to the risks posed by the previous arrangement to the Choate community. If students have to walk a few more steps so a delivery driver won't wander into a teacher's house, so be it.

The delivery kiosks have significantly reduced the disruptions food orders cause to the Choate community. Although the kiosks are not the perfect solution in terms of convenience, feedback is being considered, and the new changes should be appreciated.

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DUE DATES MUST GO BOTH WAYS

By **Malaika Fonkem '29**
Opinions Writer

It's 1:58 a.m., and you're rushing to get your major assignment done before 8:15 a.m. After working tirelessly through the night to submit it, you finally get it done, only sleeping two hours before school starts. Weeks pass before you get that assignment back, and by the time you need to submit another assignment, you haven't received the relevant feedback you need.

For many, this is the reality of taking tests or submitting major assignments. Evidently, Choate's grading system has one glaring flaw: the inconsistency of grading time. While it is written in the Faculty and Staff Handbook that "faculty are expected to adhere to department guidelines regarding testing, grading, and timely return of student work," specific guidelines are still unclear to students and faculty. The existing policy of teachers not being able to assign new major assessments before returning prior assessments is insufficient. Across courses at Choate, inconsistent grading timelines is a constant issue. This lack of regulation can be detrimental to students' stress levels, grades, and workloads.

The slow turnaround of graded work leaves students in the dark about feedback for their next assignments. When grades take a long time to come out, it can cause unnecessary stress among students

who are worried about the grades they will receive. Moreover, it may signal to students that it is acceptable to push work back. Therefore, this will create a culture of procrastination and stress.

The impacts of slow grading may also affect performance on both homework and assessments. A lack of timely feedback means many students go into new assignments without fully understanding which areas they need to improve. As a result, a teacher's grading speed may inadvertently lead students to receive a lower grade than they could achieve with proper feedback. Having a school-wide, transparent policy outlining due dates for grading could help solve the aforementioned challenges.

Teachers and students both want the same thing: to succeed. Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine emphasized, "I hope that ... students and teachers can grant each other grace and be understanding." If students and teachers can come together to develop a policy or solution that benefits everyone on campus, they can help build a healthy culture of punctuality that ensures students can achieve their true potential in their classes.

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CHOATE DANCERS ARE TIRED!



Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27/The Choate News

By **Jinx Hartong '27**
Opinions Writer

The Choate Dance Company is one of the School's most vibrant artistic ensembles, bringing together dedicated student dancers. The Company provides a professional-level environment where students have the opportunity to engage with dance in numerous genres. However, new changes to the dance program have been implemented, and the Company risks losing student interests due to the new policy's unreasonable logistical, physical, and mental demands.

In order to receive academic credit for Dance Company, meeting graduation arts requirements, dancers must now participate in three weekly dance classes on top of regular Dance Company rehearsals. Previously, dancers were allowed to choose between taking three faculty repertory classes per week or two faculty repertory classes and one student-choreographed piece, which could be done as part of Dance Company. However, according to Arts Department Head Mr. Matthew McLean, "Choate

has clear guidelines that academic work cannot take place on Sundays. Therefore, the arts department was required to remove this as an option."

The change has raised concerns among students, as the Company was already a demanding commitment before. Many Choate students have to balance academics, after-school extracurricular activities, and leadership roles. Dance Company members already pour hours into their dance practices alongside other activities, and simply do not have the time to attend three extra classes a week. With overloaded schedules, along with the physical demands of practices, dancers may no longer have a desire to be in Dance Company.

Choate's Dance Company has always required discipline, hours of rehearsal, and late-night tech weeks, so many dancers feel that the level of effort already demonstrates a serious artistic commitment deserving of academic credit. By layering additional requirements onto dancers' hectic schedule, the program risks pushing away committed dancers who simply cannot take on more hours.

"Choate has so many commitments, and though dance is something we enjoy being committed to, dancers cannot begin risking academic success," dancer Katelyn Nguyen '27 said. For many dancers, their time has to be carefully calculated and divided, with each new obligation, such as afterschool classes, presenting a multitude of problems regarding managing meals and mental downtime. The added classes risk pushing students past a healthy limit, leading to mental burnout.

Beyond scheduling pressures and difficulties, there is an extreme physical toll that comes with these additional dance classes. Alongside dance, many members of Dance Company play demanding varsity and JV sports and are constantly engaging in physical activity. While this extra exercise may initially be viewed as a positive, Nguyen argues that "expecting people to constantly be moving is unfair, and takes so much away from a dancer. When we work out more, our bodies need more rest, something that we dancers cannot get if we want to maintain our academics." Adding weekly classes can put immense

strain on dancers' bodies, leading to heightened risks of overuse injuries such as muscle strains and stress fractures. This is especially concerning for high school students, who are still physically developing and more susceptible to repetitive athletic stress.

The concerns raised by the dancers regarding the Dance Company changes reflect a desire not to do less, but to preserve their craft alongside their personal well-being. The School's "one-size-fits-all" approach of categorizing the student-choreographed piece as "academic" work ignores the physical, mental, and logistical needs of students. If the School hopes to maintain enthusiasm towards dance, it must acknowledge the limits of time and endurance. By working with dancers to create a more equitable path to academic credit, Choate can ensure that Dance Company can remain a space where students feel supported, and the art itself can continue to shine.

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Graphic by Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

SCROLLING THROUGH POLITICS



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Associate Editor

Politics does not always enter our lives solely through textbooks, speeches, or policy explanations. For many teenagers, political memes on social media have become a primary source for current events. Often, politics shows up first as something funny — a meme, screenshot, or sarcastic caption. By instinct, we react quickly, laugh, and move on. By the time we learn what actually happened, we may already feel like we know the story, even if we don't fully understand it. While political memes can make politics feel accessible, they often push us toward quick reactions instead of real understanding, shaping how deeply we engage with the issues themselves. Memes are not reliable sources of information; they strip away context and leave gaps that audiences end up filling with their own assumptions.

I have come to realize that political memes tend to follow a consistent pattern. They rarely emerge from small policy updates or long-term legislative processes. Instead, they appear during scandals, heated debates, and viral controversies. For example, a screenshot of a politician's awkward facial expression during a speech, a cropped clip from a debate taken out of context, or a

controversial tweet reposted with a sarcastic caption. I see this constantly on social media platforms, where complex political moments are reduced to a single image meant to provoke humor or disbelief. Controversial topics are easier to turn into memes because they already contain drama, anger, or shock, which can be expressed in a single image. Humor allows these moments to spread faster than facts ever could, often reaching people before they fully understand what is actually happening. Rather than explaining an issue, memes are telling people how to feel — what to laugh at, what to mock, and what to dismiss. Even though memes make politics feel less intimidating and more accessible, they prioritize our reaction over the depth of content.

Additionally, as these memes continue to circulate, I find myself unable to avoid repetition. When the same image or joke appears again across different platforms, it starts to lose its meaning. At the same time, interpretation varies widely. One person may see a meme as criticism, while another reads it as support for what they already believe. Bias spreads easily through this process, as meaning shifts through various interpretations. Ultimately, political memes seem to exist primarily for humor, often making politics feel unstable and driven by personal reaction rather than clarity.

Over time, political memes tend to fade away as they lose their ability to hold public attention. Once they begin disappearing from feeds, the urgency surrounding the moment also fades. Since I rarely feel the urge to see a meme for the second time, I find myself less inclined to revisit the issue it revolves around — not because it is irrelevant, but because it no longer feels relatable. As attention moves on from one issue to the next, these moments begin to feel temporary. What remains is not an understanding of the current event, but an absence, making it easier to disconnect from what is still unfolding behind the screen.

At first, I didn't think political memes mattered this much. They were easy to dismiss as jokes, background noise, or just another part of the internet. However, when they become one of the primary ways politics is shared and viewed, the level of engagement declines, by shortening attention and lacking clarity of context. In that way, while they reflect the heart of modern political engagement, they often remain at the surface, disconnected from the deeper issues that continue beyond the meme.

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IRAN AT ITS BREAKING POINT

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**
Staff Contributor

The Islamic Republic of Iran is finally collapsing under the weight of its own corruption and cruelty. The regime has proven itself morally flawed, economically reckless, and unafraid to use violence against its own citizens. After the collapse of the prominent Ayandeh Bank and the rial's reported 84% decline over the past year, ordinary Iranians have been forced to bear the consequences. Many blame an elite that uses state resources to fund foreign wars and extravagant projects such as the Iran Mall, while citizens struggle to afford weekly groceries. Protests have emerged since December 28, 2025, spreading across cities in nearly every province in Iran.

The regime's response has been brutal. Over the past weeks of demonstrations, casualty and arrest figures have been difficult to verify amid internet shutdowns. Iran's authorities have claimed at least 5,000 deaths, while the U.S. based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) says it has verified about 3,919 deaths

and reports at least 18,470 arrests, figures that may be understated due to repeated Internet shutdowns designed to suppress information. This is one of the most lethal acts of political repression in recent history, and it exposes the Islamic Republic as a nation that prioritizes its own luxury and regional influence over the lives of its citizens.

As unrest continues to spread, the question becomes how the United States should respond in a way that supports the Iranian people without escalating conflict. Direct intervention carries huge risks, since Iran is a nuclear state with powerful allies both regionally and globally. President Donald Trump P'oo's threats of military strikes, accompanied by slogans such as "Help is on the way," were reckless and invited escalation, reflecting an impulsive approach to foreign policy.

Instead, targeted sanctions, including recent U.S. measures aimed at the regime and its allies, can begin to pressure the Islamic Republic without putting American troops in harm's way. Economic pressure can weaken the regime's capacity to suppress dissent and silence its citizens. At the same time,

the U.S. should bolster Iranian voices by attempting to expand Internet access and support private media that can bypass state censorship. Efforts to reduce the cost of satellite Internet access and reports that the Department of Defense has considered cyber operations to highlight non-military options that could disrupt the regime's control.

There is no need to micro-manage the Iranian revolution to support it. This is a moment that belongs to Iranians themselves, and while the U.S. often seeks to intervene in global crises, it cannot set the precedent of becoming a global policeman for every foreign disaster. Still, the U.S. cannot stand entirely idle while a brutal regime slaughters its own citizens.

By combining economic pressure and information support, the U.S. can stand with the Iranian people in a way that avoids military escalation and the risk of repeating past Middle East interventions. The Iranian fight for freedom deserves non-militaristic support that empowers citizens without overextending American resources.

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

WHY THE UNITED STATES WAS JUSTIFIED IN CAPTURING NICOLÁS MADURO

By **Jai Midha '27**
Associate Editor

Throughout history, powerful countries have imposed their strength on weaker nations. Think of the Roman Empire, the Mongol Empire, the British Crown, and now the United States — through sheer militaristic force or ideological hegemony, these sovereignties have imposed their rule onto others.

Most recently, President Donald Trump P'oo has ordered an operation in which U.S. forces captured and detained Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. So, was this legal? Why did the U.S. initiate this? Should the U.S. be allowed to do this? I believe so. This is not an argument that the operation was morally admirable; it is an argument that the United States can claim a strategic justification for its actions.

To make this case, the facts must be laid out. On January 3, U.S. forces captured and arrested Maduro, breaking international law. Maduro held a dictatorship-like rule in Venezuela, with elections that have been widely criticized for their lack of fairness, harassment of journalists, and resulting human rights abuses. Worth noting, Venezuela holds the largest world oil reserves in the world, exceeding those of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iran. With these facts established, it is also important to clarify the limitations of any sovereign nation.



Graphic by David Ionescu '27/The Choate News

The core purpose of any sovereign nation is to advance its own strategic goals — economically, socially, and politically — without the intervention of other sovereign nations. This perspective is known as realism. Under this view, U.S. actions towards Venezuela can be interpreted as advancing core American strategic interests.

The most significant aspect of Venezuela to the United

States is its vast oil reserves. Venezuela holds approximately 303 billion barrels of oil, composing about 20 percent of the world's oil supply. From this perspective, U.S. actions in Venezuela can be seen as an attempt to secure access to oil, or in other words, economic gain. It is a right of the United States to pursue its interests, when its actions are viewed under a realist framework.

Furthermore, it is in the United States's interest to demonstrate strength and a willingness to engage in violence. This engagement in Venezuela signals that U.S. demands real consequences, contrasting with previous diplomatic threats that lacked enforcement.

This argument presents an apparent contradiction. If U.S. actions are justified due to its sovereignty, then can't the

same be said for Venezuela? By intervening, the U.S. violates Venezuela's sovereignty under the Westphalian state system. Why, then, would the U.S. still be justified?

When we see someone getting bullied, we are taught to intervene rather than remain a bystander. Similarly, when nations witness abuse by other governments, they are often encouraged to step in. This principle is

known as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). It is unjust to allow tyrannical leaders to abuse their people without intervention from more stable nations. While sovereign nations are entitled to independence, they lose that protection when they violate the fundamental rights of their citizens. This is most evident in cases of genocide or systemic oppression based on race, religion, or identity. World War II and the Yugoslav War serve as examples where international intervention was justified, even if it came too late.

In Venezuela, Maduro exercised a level of control that increasingly resembled abuse and authoritarian domination. Under R2P, the U.S. had a justification to intervene and remove Maduro from power, which it did by capturing him and placing him on trial.

Both economic interest and global responsibility to protect support the U.S. decision to capture the Venezuelan president. In doing so, the United States demonstrated its military strength and willingness to act. In this isolated case, the use of force was justified. However, military force is not always the right choice. A slowdown is necessary, and the United States must ultimately return to diplomacy.

Jai Midha is a fifth-former from Singapore. He may be reached at jmidha27@choate.edu.

A FIRST- AND FOURTH- YEAR LOOK AT CHOATE

By **Sophie Chang '29**
Reporter

For me, the most exciting thing about boarding school was the thrill of exploration and the promise of change. My father graduated from Choate in 1993, and my brother, Jason Chang '26, is a current student. Over and over, I've heard that Choate fosters a warm and loving community with the people, making this institution special. Now, as a student myself, I can confidently confirm this.

Every new student at Choate meets different people from unfamiliar places and backgrounds. Coming from a public school, Choate was a completely different world in terms of the amount of prestige and opportunities offered. My first few days on campus, I was overwhelmed not only by the change in school life but also by the difference in the community.

Maybe it's your Nichols prefects helping you move in on the first day of boarding school, feeding you late night ramen, and helping you with lots of homework (thanks Elizabeth). Or, your physics teachers staying late after office hours to get you the extra help you so desperately need on kinematics. Or, your French teacher flipping homemade crepes for you and all of your classmates during TEE week. Or, your friends pushing together their beds to make one mega bed, and having a sleepover in your room. Or, your dorm-mates organizing a surprise

birthday party for your friend at an Italian restaurant.

Amidst the fun and chaos, it's easy to forget that Choate is made up of driven, ambitious students who have worked extremely hard to be here. My aspiration, as a freshman in the Choate community, is to actively contribute positively to our campus. Many of these goals are things I would never have considered attempting in my old school, such as parliamentary debate, writing for *The Choate News*, and running for Student Council.

However, I think that's one of the most unique things about Choate: being given a wide range of opportunities with no limits on what you can accomplish and achieve. Continuing forward, I will continue to meet new people, make new friends, and learn more about myself. In the meantime, I'll do my best to cherish and help others cherish their time at Choate Rosemary Hall.

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By **Andy Stahlman '26**
Reporter

If you're new to Choate and wondering what you should do with your time here, wonder no longer. Here is my guide, built upon my four hard years of experience at our school upon the hillside.

First, explore the various spaces on and around campus. Take that walk to the waterfall in the dead of winter. Go for a 5k run on the Cross-Country courses to appreciate the fall foliage.

Take the shuttle up to the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC) to observe the solar panels and enjoy a delectable five-course meal.

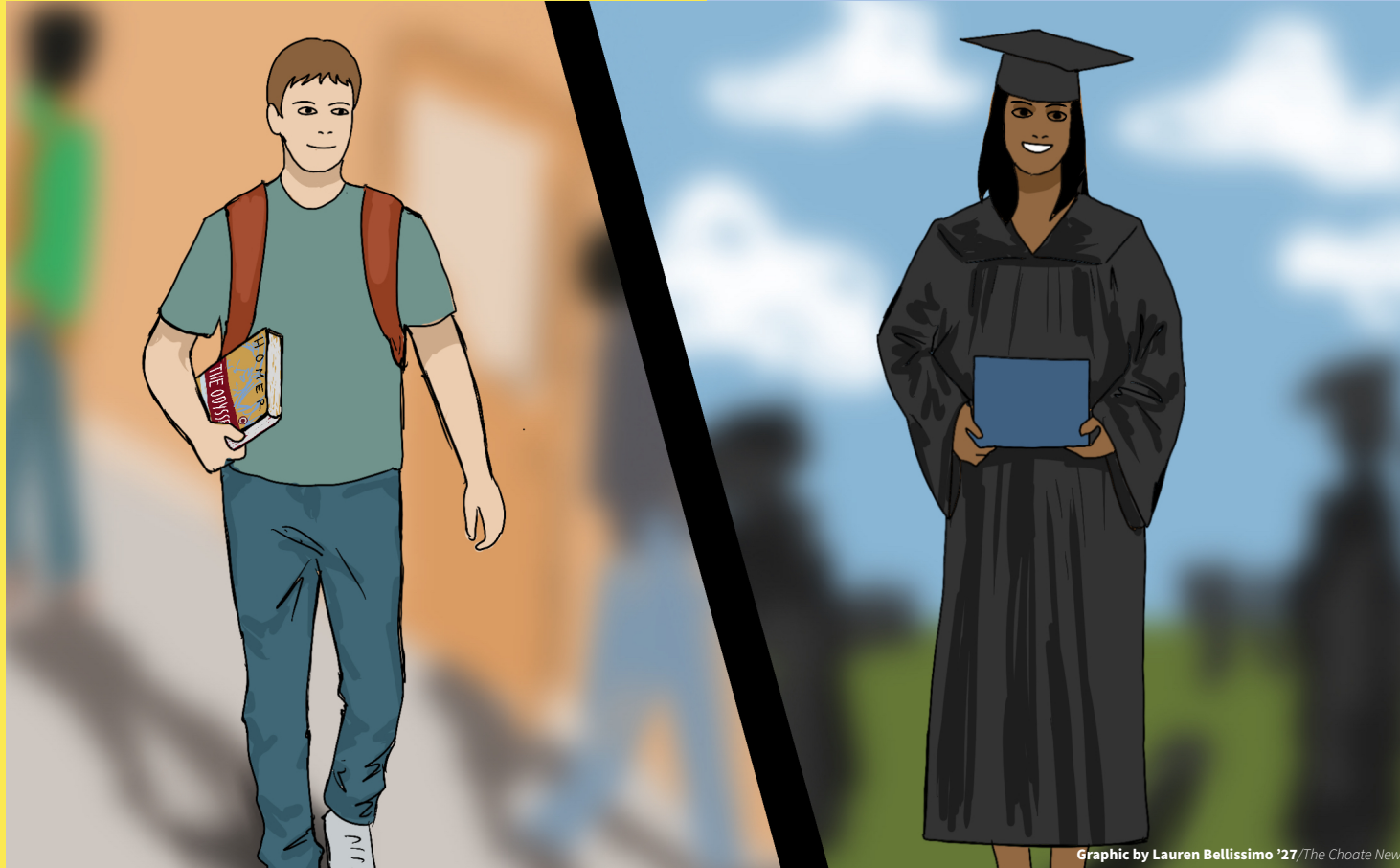
Second, find a club and get involved. I don't mean just show up every once in a while. Put time into it. You're going to do a lot of things that you don't care about, so don't be afraid to let yourself care for once. You will get so much more out of it than you could ever imagine. From the yarn club to Model United Nations, there is

something at this school that is worth your time and energy; just go out and find it. Don't be afraid to show other people that you are truly passionate about something. Who knows, maybe you will be a senior one day, urging underclassmen to join it.

Third, Sushi Palace. All you can eat sushi. Sushi Palace is not for the weak of heart; you must come prepared. When we go out, we all fast on the day off, build up the hunger inside us so that we can beat the palace. Order more than you think you can eat, and push yourself. Some of the best memories of my time at Choate have been the looks on my friends' faces when we have to eat one more piece, and we just don't think we can. Be aware that it is not in Wallingford, but every once and a while, it's worth the time to push the REACH request in for it.

And finally, make your own traditions. Don't let anyone tell you there is a right way to 'do' Choate. Your friends are far more important than any single class, Sushi Palace, or club. In the distant future, many things at this school will be different, but I have faith that there will still be groups of students finding joy together. Choate is a stressful place, but don't forget to grow up while you're here.

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Graphic by Lauren Bellissimo '27/The Choate News

S'more Bonding



Photo courtesy of Zoie Wang '26

Atwater Prefects jam to Katy Perry's classic hit "California Gurls."

By **Liv Feschet '29**
Reporter

Even though dorms at Choate have a unique identity and remain physically separated from each other, they are seldom isolated. From manhunt to karaoke night to s'mores, here are some classical co-dorm events on campus.

Manhunt:

Manhunt is a variation of hide-and-seek where seekers aim to capture hiders with an additional tagging aspect: once a hider is tagged, they switch sides and join the seekers. Nichols and Logan, the largest female and male freshman dorms on campus, recently played Manhunt. "We knew the Nichols girls wanted to play Manhunt, and it's also a tradition for dorms to play Manhunt, so we organized the event," Emma Schwerin '26, a Nichols prefect, said.

Both Nichols and Logan engaged in Manhunt for around 40 minutes in St. John Hall, with prefects serving as seekers and prefectees as hiders. "Manhunt was a really fun experience. I enjoyed how much thought the prefects put into making sure that we have fun and interact with other dorms," Eugenia Ballesteros Peloeche '29 said.

Karaoke Night:

Mead and Atwater, two freshman dorms that neighbor each other, have a tight relationship. "This year, the two dorms are relatively close because a lot of the Mead girls and Atwater boys have become friends," Zoie Wang '26, a Mead prefect said. "We see them hanging outside the dorm and I think it's a really good dynamic." To maintain this relationship, both Mead and Atwater prefects help to plan events.

The two dorms recently co-hosted a karaoke night in Lanphier Commons, singing classics like "California Girls" by Katy Perry, "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield, and "Like a Prayer" by Madonna. "It was an unique experience, since we don't get to do karaoke a lot at Choate. It was great to see all our prefectees sing and enjoy an evening together," Wang said.

S'mores:

For Tenney and Bernhard, the partnership started due to location, with their communal courtyard serving as a place to host many events. "The signature cross-dorm event is s'mores, which we do once to twice a year," Oscar Hyatt '26, a Tenney prefect, said. The dorm advisors and Student Activities Committee provides campfire and supplies for the event, and fellow dormmates can enjoy a night outside with marshmallows and chocolate.

"I like these inter-dorm events because it allows the Tenney boys to branch out beyond the people they're typically around and meet some new people that they wouldn't usually interact with on a day-to-day basis," Hyatt said. Echoing Hyatt's sentiments, Tenney resident Julien Cohen '28 said, "The s'mores event was great, not just for meeting new people, but also to get closer with the people in your dorm."

Ultimately, these inter-dorm events show that campus life remains deeply interconnected. Whether through high-energy games, shared music, or fireplace conversations, students from other dorms are able to form friendships and strengthen a sense of community beyond their hallways.

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INFLUENCERS ON CAMPUS

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor

From finance to candid lifestyle videos, various Choate students have a media presence across numerous outlets. For many students, social media is not just a platform for self-expression, but also for education, advocacy, and connection. They build meaningful engagement both on campus and beyond.

Jake Sigal '27

Jake Sigal '27 manages two social media accounts: one on Instagram (@financewithjakeandlachlan) and one on TikTok (JL investing), creating content with Lachlan Farren '28 to educate his peers about stocks and financial concepts. His initial motivation for his social media journey stemmed from his desire to promote financial literacy among teens and underdeveloped communities. "We make videos about basic investing concepts, like what stocks and IPO mean. How does the stock market work? We also post news videos related to finance," Sigal said.

Although his experience being an influencer has been largely positive, there are challenges that come with it. "Editing is the most challenging part. It takes longer than you would

initially think, and it takes a while to find a consistent way of doing it," Sigal said. However, working with his partner, Farren, has helped him make the process more manageable.

Overall, the comments on his videos encourage him to persevere further, now with a goal of reaching 1000 followers on each platform. "Next time you are on social media, check us out if you're curious about the stock market and how it works," Sigal said. "Also, feel free to DM us if you have any topics you want us to cover."

Ben Grosskopf '26

Ben Grosskopf '26 is a student influencer with over 2.2 million followers on TikTok and 235,000 on Instagram. He first started by creating "Get Ready With Me" videos, then transitioned to dance tutorials and coffee-making videos, with the initial motivation to share his background in hockey and subsequent transition into dance. "In Canada, boys are expected to play hockey throughout middle school, high school ... but I wanted to show that it was okay for boys to dance too," he said.

Last year, Grosskopf's social media direction took a different turn, moving from expressing his creativity to

sharing his journey with intestinal lymphoma.

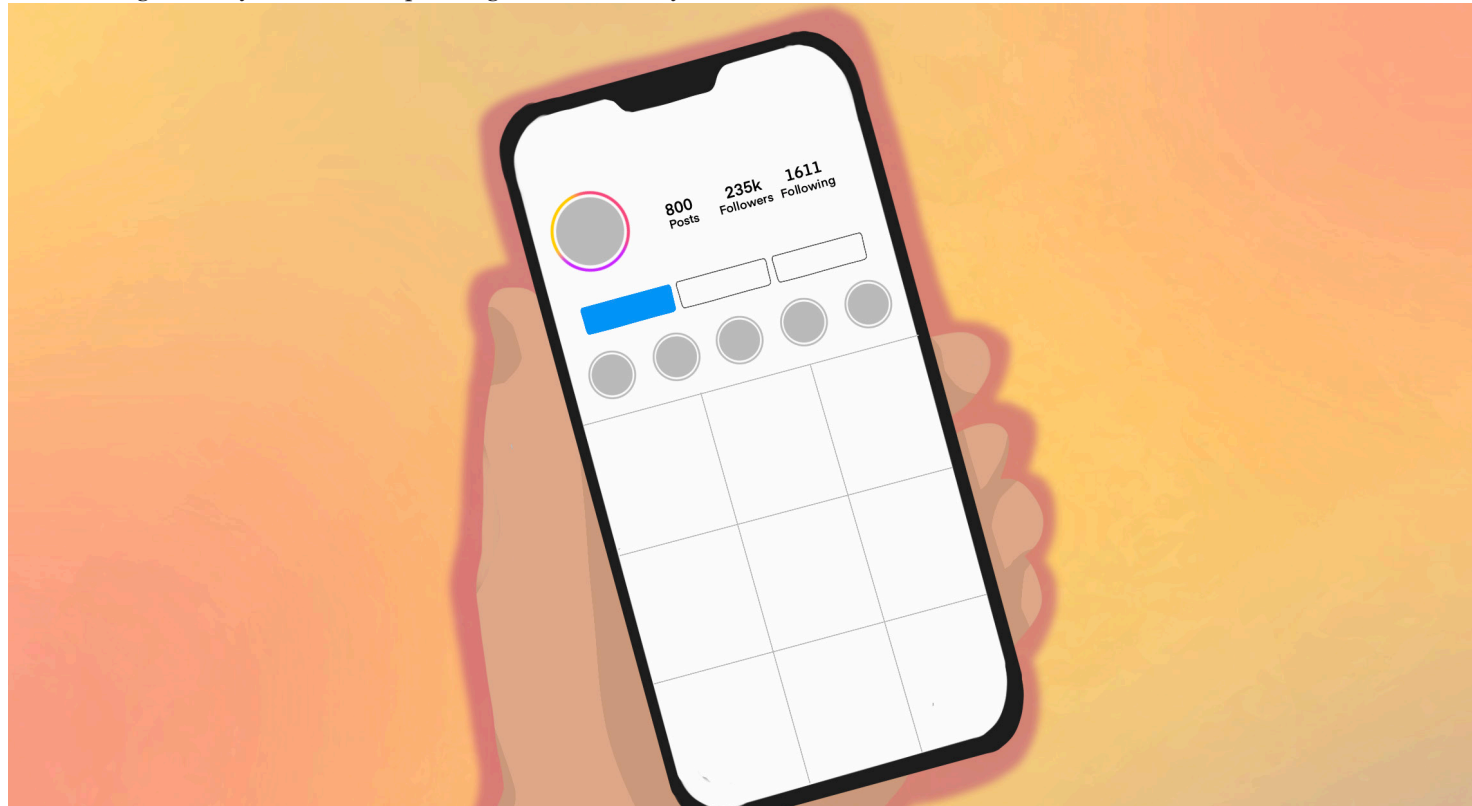
Though initially hesitant, Grosskopf decided to share his experience after realizing there was little awareness and social media presence representing others his age going through the same pain. "I think the biggest difference I've made is spreading awareness posts for childhood cancer and helping others feel less alone," Grosskopf said. "Once, a girl came up to me and told me how much she appreciated my videos, and she started crying. She was saying that my videos made her feel so much less alone ... That made me realize my videos were worth it."

Still, as a student influencer from a young age, Grosskopf has faced several challenges. "As I grew my audience, obviously, the haters and the negative voices started to arise, too. I don't think I let it affect me, but once I started, I was putting my full self out there; that's when they started to sting a little more. But I think that having to go through that on social media made me a lot tougher in person," he said. "Also, one of the hardest things is managing schoolwork and social media content creation."

Currently, to balance schoolwork with social media production, Grosskopf creates content about being a student. "Nowadays, I have been open about so many kids pressuring themselves academically as students. I think that people have appreciated that, because they can also find relatability." He advises students to have confidence in themselves and not fear criticism. "I think content creation is something that's a little bit stigmatized," he said. "I think that people need to be less afraid to put themselves out there. Eventually, you'll reach the right people and the right audience who are supportive."

As social media has become increasingly important in everyday life, Choate students are finding innovative ways to use these platforms. For students like Jake Sigal '27 and Ben Grosskopf '26, social media goes beyond entertainment; it is a space to educate, share personal experiences, and connect with others. While the social media journey comes with challenges, their experiences show that students can have a positive impact both on campus and beyond.

Harry Kim may be reached at hkim28@choate.edu.



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

Tuning Up Before Taking the Stage

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Reporter

Choate has a gallery of artists fiercely committed to prioritizing warm-up routines, ranging from vocal and full-body exercises to tongue twisters. Whether they're preparing for a lead role in the fall musical or a solo in the spring dance showcase, these warm-up rituals are a testament to many artists' commitment to their crafts.

As a vocalist, actor, and rising dancer, Benoit Bracey '28 is heavily involved in arts opportunities at the School every term. For Bracey, warm-ups aren't as easy as do re mi. In musical theater terminology, his style falls under what performers call "opt-ups," meaning that vocalists sing notes higher or lower than are required for their current repertoire to make sure they are ready to sing.

"Sometimes, [warm-ups] can just be so silly and so fun out there," Bracey said. If Bracey could mandate a single vocal exercise, he would choose the "classic" scale, "Mommy made me mash my M&Ms." Bracey believes this is an excellent vehicle for practicing enunciation and an entertaining way to get into rehearsing. "I would like to hear at least every main singer just do that warm-up," Bracey added.

Trained in classical voice and contemporary musical theatre, Leanne La '26 is a prominent member of the campus performing arts community. Her favorite warm-up is tongue twisters. "They help loosen tension in

your throat, but also free your tongue," she said.

Her warm-up routine consists of full-body and breathing exercises, credited to her voice teacher and Yale summer instructors. "I didn't feel as free and as dynamic in my voice as I would with practice or with a warm-up," she admitted, when she decided to skip her routine.

Skipping warm-ups isn't in Leilani Gao '26's vocabulary. Gao has studied ballet for the past fifteen years, participating in Dance Company and off-campus ballet productions. Given her estimate of more than 15 hours of practice per week, she is a disciplined dancer. However, before practicing, she utilizes YouTuber Maria Khoreva's warm-up routine.

"Typically, it start[s] with movement of the feet ... before you go into the bigger body movements," Gao said. Given ballet's technical demands, warming up is essential: "You have to have your muscles be warm ... to be able to execute specific techniques and specific movements," she said.

Gao's favorite component of her warm-up is core exercises. "Core is really important for dancers," she noted. Without a strong core, dancers can rarely achieve their trademark poise and strength.

From tongue twisters to core work, warm-ups are a necessity for student artists in Choate. They are majorly important, even if they're in the minor key!

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

Beyond the Red Carpet at Choate



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Associate Editor

From Broadway stages to pop music arenas, the awards show season continues to spark conversation across campus. Whether watched live with family or on replay through social media clips, these ceremonies remain a cultural touchstone, shaping taste, fueling debate, and introducing new artists to Choate viewers.

Streaming the Grammys live gives Cora Lloyd '28 a way to bond with members of her family. She said, "There is suspense and anticipation when you're watching it live, and then you see the real-time reaction." Lloyd also credits the Grammys with expanding her music taste. After watching HAIM, a rock band, perform during the 2022 ceremony, she found herself listening to the group regularly. "If ... there's an album that wins Best Album, I'll listen to that if I haven't heard of [it]," she said.

For Alexandros Antonopoulos '26, awards season is synonymous with theater. As a consistent Tony Awards viewer, Antonopoulos makes an effort to watch it live with his family each June. He is especially drawn to the performances, explaining that the Tonys al-

low the audience to see "most of ... the shows that are nominated for best musical or best play to perform something." He particularly enjoys "[hearing artists] talk about ... their different experiences and their lived experience." Still, Antonopoulos is critical of how winners are chosen, arguing that "mainstream popularity [is] overtaking the craft and the level of talent behind it."

For Jennifer Obijuru '27, award shows are entertaining but deeply flawed. She regularly watches the Grammys, Video Music Awards, and Oscars. However, she is skeptical of their fairness, bluntly stating, "I feel like it's rigged." Obijuru believes fan voting should play a larger role, arguing that "fans ... who are paying to see it in theaters or listening to the music in their free time ... I think their votes should matter more." While award shows may not change her personal viewing habits, she notes that "they influence public opinion."

Even as fewer people sit down to watch entire ceremonies, award shows still give students and faculty something to react to, talk about, and argue over.

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119's WRAPPED

The Choate News' 119th masthead is back this January with the second annual Spotify Wrapped column! These past couple of weeks, the question "What was your top song this year?" has prominently circulated our School's campus. Read below to hear what songs blasted through the newsroom throughout 2025, and learn a little more about the team that makes *The Choate News* run!

Graphics by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

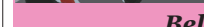
Reinah Lee - Editor-in-Chief

"400 Lux" by Lorde
1v1 basketball specialist? Freakishly athletic (even with knee complications)? Smiling through it all? Despite the uncanny similarities, our beloved Editor-in-Chief isn't LeBron. But whether she's chucking cash at Plane Jane or negotiating for a Tuck muffin at 9:29 p.m., you know she'll be humming along to Lorde till her veins run red and blue.



Ethan Zhang - Managing Editor

"Love Yourz" by J. Cole
With J. Cole in his ears and a rodeo wrap in hand, this exec will tell you there's "no such thing as a life that's better than yours." When he's not spamming your inbox with News announcements, catch our Managing Editor captaining the WaPo team (or impersonating Abby Lee Miller at School Meeting). His personal philosophy? Love yourz.



Bella Welch - School News Editor

"EoO" by Bad Bunny
When she's not busy skating circles around opponents on the hockey rink, this athletic queen is busy engaging in a global study abroad in Rennes. Between baking delicious chocolate chip cookies and donning elegant J. Crew sweaters, this School News Editor's chicness is unmatched — just like the effortless, confident swagger of "EoO."



Rachel Fan - Local News Editor

"Japanese Denim" by Daniel Caesar
You might not have seen this Local News Section Editor for a while, but that's because she's hard at work doing SRP homework or using her powers as the double bassist to carry every music ensemble on campus. In her (very few moments of) free time, Rachel is the queen of nonchalance, probably appreciating Daniel Caesar's smooth vocals.



Maia Shah - Local News Editor

"Dreams" by Fleetwood Mac
Who are you to keep Maia Shah down? Between cross-examining you in debate, having heated foreign policy discussions, and putting together outfits that never miss, this Local News Editor's big "Dreams" always shine through with a calm confidence that would make even Stevie Nicks proud.



Steven Kee - Campus Opinions Editor

"Smooth Operator" by Sade
The masthead's very own quarter zip connoisseur and dabke devotee "smoothly operated" Campus Opinions from Madaba, Jordan this fall. While juggling an eight-hour time difference, crafting layouts abroad, and ensuring the safe transport of Jordanian honey, Steven didn't just listen to "Smooth Operator" — he lived it.



Zaki Shamsi - Opinions Nations/World Editor

"Yellow" by Coldplay
The Choate News' very own star (and future politician) truly knows how to make the light "shine for you." If this Opinions Nation/World Editor isn't making his writers' work "turn into something beautiful," he's giving his own opinion on the debate stage, at School Meeting, or on his motivational Instagram account, @shamsi.speaks.



Eshana Hora - Campus Opinions Editor

"Folded" by Kehlani
A devoted matcha enthusiast, this section editor knows that one cup can solve all your problems. Whether she's spearheading Campus Ops with Steven or working on edits behind the scenes, Eshana hasn't just ironed things out — she's also got your clothes already folded.



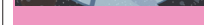
Deyi Meng - Features Editor

"Dancing in the Flames" by the Weeknd
There's nothing this Features Editor loves more than eating red onions like an apple. But, when this SRP and chemistry beast hears "Dancing in the Flames," it's not onions he's devouring — it's the dance floor, baby!



Elizabeth Burgstahler - Arts and Leisure Editor

"Castle in Hollywood" by Laufey
When she's not listening to Laufey in the newsroom, this section editor is creating beautiful music herself. You'll find her shredding on the piano (gracefully) and somehow constructing a 40-billion-part capella arrangement. Watch out, cause one day, like her 2025 top song, you'll find her in a castle (center stage) in Hollywood (Carnegie Hall).



Kaitlyn Yu - Sports Editor

"My World" by Conan Gray
This Sports Editor rocked to her hype song, "My World," in 2025. As a dual-varsity athlete, Kaitlyn's top song of 2025 shows the good vibes of her pre-match playlist. When she's not in the pool or on the course, you can find this girl on a stage with a mic singing her heart out to some Conan Gray.



Finn Wikstrom - Photography Editor

"Brian's Movie" by Peach Pit
When he's not jamming out "Brian's movie," you might just find this Photography Editor scrolling through IMDb's Top 100 to choose the next three-hour film he'll tackle. Or you might find him instead with a guitar in hand, inspired by the chill vibes of Peach Pit writing songs with his very unserious band.



Scarlett Park - Photography Editor

"In My Life" by The Beatles
Never the loudest in the room, but always impossible to miss, this Photography Editor carries her chill energy from the archery range to Lilith rehearsals. A connoisseur of limited-edition food T-shirts (iykyk), her style is just as effortless as her rizz. When she's not taking photos or stressing from Bio, Scarlett keeps things classic — just "In My Life."



Leah Han - Graphics Editor

"Starlight" by Muse
Always smiling (and occasionally crashing out), your eyes light up with stars every time you see this graphic editor's face, whether she's hitting the bullseye at the archery, playing high notes in the Symphony Orchestra, or drawing her tenth graphic for the next *News* issue.



Ian Wu - Layout Editor

"Who Dat Boy?" by Tyler, the Creator
He doesn't need to be the loudest in the room, but his black-and-white fits shine as soon as he enters the door (don't forget the iconic black cap). Who Dat Boy? It's 119's Layout Editor. His behind-the-scenes work is what keeps the rest of the team afloat. Don't relax just yet because his layout designs can shock you when you least expect it.



ARTS CON TAKES ON NEW YORK CITY

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Associate Editor

From walking through the bustling streets of Times Square to seeing Michelle Williams in person, student-actors had the opportunity to swap a Saturday rehearsal for a day watching professional actors shine on the Broadway stage. On January 10, several Theater Arts Concentration (Arts Con) students travelled to New York City to see two performances: a matinee show of Anna Christie and Operation Mincemeat.

The Arts Con trip to New York was one of the first theater-specific field trips since the program shifted to holding discipline-specific trips that allow students to see how their chosen art is being practiced in the professional world.

"It was a long-standing practice to do one Arts Con field trip, and typically we would go see a musical," Arts Director Mr. Matthew McLean said. "But it never felt like it spoke to all the [Arts Con disciplines]." Since last year, Arts Con has held separately planned trips for each discipline.

Mr. McLean helps schedule these field trips to help students develop their craft and gain inspiration for their artistic ambitions. After visiting New York City, actor Matthew Choi '26 highlighted what made Operation Mincemeat stand out to him: "I really liked the physical comedy within Operation Mincemeat," Choi said. He also appreciated the set design, saying,

"There was a moment in the ending number where the set unraveled itself to unveil a completely new set, which was really cool."

Choi explained that the two contrasting productions inspired him to broaden his own abilities. "Seeing two very different shows, one being very serious and having dramatic acting, and one very comedic and fast-paced, I would say I definitely want to focus on diversifying my acting range so I can act in a variety of shows," he said.

Arts Con member Sophie Eliades '27, who has a technical theater focus, also benefited from the trip. "[Operation Mincemeat] was one of the most insane shows that I've seen, both acting-wise and technically, because it has a cast of five people," Eliades said. "They do quick changes in less than a second."

By watching Anna Christie and Operation Mincemeat, Eliades was able to observe professional theater from both a performance and a technical perspective. "The acting performances were insane, and so were the lights and the sound," she said. "That was very cool as a technician, to see theater on that scale."

Reflecting on how the experience influenced her goals as a theater technician, Eliades added, "It made me want to design something that could make someone's jaw drop."

Suleika Sandi '26, another member of the Arts Con theater performance cohort, praised both performances. "Both were really amazing," she said. "They showed



Photo courtesy of Ms. Andrea Serna Pedraza

Theater Arts Con students enjoy a rainy day in New York City. They observed different styles of acting and also different set designs." Like Choi, Sandi found Operation Mincemeat's physical comedy particularly memorable. "[It was] really inspiring to see how the actors were so good with the comedy, and also were able to switch between characters," she said.

For Benoit Bracey '28, Anna Christie offered a more intimate viewing experience, as "[Anna Christie] is not a giant, big Broadway stage," he explained.

Looking ahead to Choate's upcoming winter musical, *Airness*, Bracey noted that Operation Mincemeat was especially instructive. "[In *Airness*,] we're dealing with a lot of physical comedy, so it was very informative to see how professionals did that ... it's definitely helping our rehearsal process right now," he said.

Beyond observing professional theater, the trip also al-

lowed students to strengthen connections within the Arts Con community. "It was really cool to have just this full-day adventure with everybody ... and get to know them outside of a working context," Eliades said. "So often when I do interact with [theater performance Arts Con students], it's because it's tech week or I'm stage-managing them."

While Arts Con trips are now discipline-specific, students can still connect through Arts Community Events. "It's just a fun hangout and social get-together that we do on a Friday afternoon," Mr. McLean said. "We want to still have some opportunities to build community even though we're not doing a trip all together."

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FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record
61 - 35 - 0

Varsity Games

Boys' Ice Hockey (6-5)
vs. Taft, 7-5

Girls' Squash (5-1)
vs. Miss Porter's, 7-0

Boys' Swimming (2-1)
vs. NMH, 107-64

Girls' Basketball (5-3)
vs. Greenwich, 80-21

Boys' Wrestling (4-2)
vs. Andover, 24-55

Girls' Ice Hockey (5-5)
vs. Taft, 1-2

Boys' Basketball (5-3)
vs. Westminster, 45-72

Girls' Swimming (1-2)
vs. Andover, 78-108

J.V. Games

Boys' Squash (7-0)
vs. Hopkins, 7-4

Girls' Basketball (3-0)
vs. Andover, 39-20

Boys' Basketball (4-2)
vs. Andover, 37-46

Girls' Ice Hockey (2-2)
vs. Rumsey Hall, 5-10

Theater's a Sport: Roll the (Athletic) Credits

By **Dylann Kong '29**
Reporter

During the fall of 2025, Choate's theater program presented a rendition of *The Old Man and the Old Moon*. Preparing for the show was not an easy feat for the students involved, as producing a play is a major energy and time commitment. Being in a musical production isn't simply just acting; students must master the choreography, act, dance, and sing, most times simultaneously. Therefore, various students shared their perspectives on whether theater productions should qualify for athletic credit.

Currently, only the spring term production is counted as athletic credit. "I can speak specifically for the winter play; it has a lot of movement. There are 17 dances in this play, so it's more physically demanding than your usual play," Mia Cueto '28 said. Cueto also plays Girls' Varsity Volleyball in the fall and is the choreographer for this year's winter play as an Arts Concentration (Arts Con) student. "I know firsthand exactly how demanding the choreography is," she said.

Furthermore, theater can be equally, if not more, physically demanding than some of the some sports that fulfill the athletic credit requirement at Choate. Girls Varsity Swimming Captain Claudia Li '26 acknowledges this. "A lot of varsity sports are very physically demanding, and then there are also sports options you can choose that are not so physically demanding ... There's yoga and ... another option where you can lift weights in the gym

by yourself," she said. As a varsity athlete who is also directing a play for Student Directed Scenes (SDS) this winter, Li feels she can draw a fair comparison between the physical demands of theater and those of her sport.

However, Jordy Miller '27 stressed that there is no reason for Choate not to include the fall or winter plays as athletic credit, since they are just as physically demanding as sports. She said, "I wish in particular that the winter play was counted as athletic because it's so physically demanding ... for example, when we did *Macbeth* last year, we had to learn how to do fight choreography." She also noted their demanding rehearsal schedule: "We have rehearsals from nine o'clock in the morning to six [every weekday]."

Furthermore, Choate's theater program frequently overlaps with the school's athletic culture, particularly through dance and performance at major athletic events. "During Pep Rally, all of the student choreographers from our dance program are helping with those performances. So there are definitely moments in which we have crossover, this recognition," Alexandros Antonopoulos '26, who has been involved in the theater program for four years, said.

As the discussion continues, students highlight physical and scheduling demands as factors that influence their athletic decisions. Yet, whether or not the policies change, the general student consensus is that theater deserve the same recognition as current athletic requirements.

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CHOATE SHINES IN BLUE AND GOLD AT PAST WINTER OLYMPICS

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Associate Editor

As anticipation builds for the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan, Italy, it is worth reflecting on the athletes who have carried Choate Rosemary Hall onto the world's biggest sporting platform. According to the Choate Archives, since women's ice hockey made its Olympic debut in 1998, alumni from Choate's Girls' Ice Hockey program have competed in every subsequent Winter Olympics. Among them, Angela Ruggiero '98, Kim Insalaco '99, Julie Chu '01, and Hilary Knight '07 stand out not only as Olympians but as teammates, several of whom competed together for the U.S. Women's National Ice Hockey Team.

This legacy traces back decades. The Choate Girls' Ice Hockey program was founded in 1973, when Polly Packard, wife of Sixth-Form Dean Jeremy Packard '55, founded the original team. The program started with limited resources, yet the team went undefeated in its first season. That foundation paved the way for future generations, establishing a culture of perseverance and competitive excellence that would eventually extend beyond campus.

Ruggiero stands as one of the most accomplished defenders in the history of women's hockey. She competed in four Olympic Games, is in the 2015 Hockey Hall of Fame, and was named the best player in the NCAA and the world by The Hockey News. In a February 2006 Choate News article about Team USA's visit to Choate, Ruggiero reflected on her time at the School, explaining that Choate provided her with "opportunities in the academic arena" while



Graphic by **Eliza Aldrich '27**/The Choate News

preparing her to compete at the highest level of athletics.

Chu built one of the most sustained Olympic careers among Choate alumni. She earned silver medals in 2002, 2010, and 2014, and a bronze medal in 2006. During her senior year at Choate, Chu served as Student Council Class President and captain of both the Girls' Varsity Soccer and Ice Hockey Teams before relinquishing those roles to train with the U.S. Women's National Ice Hockey Team. Chu said in a February 2010 Choate News article that "there's a great support system from friends, family, and the entire Choate community." Chu's dean, Ms. Fran O'Donoghue, also highlighted her character, noting that she was "intelligent, athletic, and outgoing."

Knight represents a newer generation of Choate Olympians shaped by those who came before her. In the same 2010 article, she said, "In 2006, I saw Angela [Ruggiero] on the ice, and I looked up to her ... and four years later I'm here." Known for her dominance on the

ice, former head coach Courtney Riepenhoff described Knight as "a player who just dominated the league." Co-Captain of Girls' Ice Hockey Team Caroline Potolicchio '10 noted that Knight was "an unbelievable leader" whose personality allowed others to see her "as a friend." Insalaco represented Team USA at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, where the team earned a bronze medal.

Together, Ruggiero, Insalaco, Chu, and Knight represent only part of Choate's Olympic legacy. Alumni such as Phoebe Stanz '13, who competed for Switzerland at the 2014 and 2018 Winter Olympics, and Josephine Pucci '15, who represented the Czech Republic at the 2022 Olympic Games, further illustrate Choate's global reach. These athletes highlight how Choate's Girls Ice Hockey Program has consistently prepared players at the highest level to carry its values onto the international stage.

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PATRIOTS VS. SEAHAWKS: A SUPER BOWL REMATCH?

By **Norah Wang '27**
Staff Contributor

As Super Bowl LX gets closer, it's hard to avoid football talk around campus. Whether it's in the dining hall, dorm common rooms, or during free periods, students are sharing predictions, arguing over teams, and talking about who they think will win. Even students who don't usually follow the NFL get excited, making the Super Bowl one of the most anticipated events of the year.

In the days leading up to the game, many students start planning watch parties with friends or casually checking updates about the teams playing. Some pay close attention to statistics and matchups, while others rely on their gut feeling, favorite teams, or memories of past Super Bowls. Regardless of their approach, everyone seems to have an opinion.

Jack McGuane '26 predicts that the New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks will face off in the Super Bowl. McGuane stressed how the strength of each team's defense will play a critical role in determining the finalists. While both teams have strong offenses, he believes their defenses — particularly in the secondary — stand out. The Seahawks' defensive backs, like Tariq Woolen and Devon Witherspoon, have been shutting down receivers all season, while the Patriots' pass rush could cause problems for Seattle's offensive line. As a result, McGuane expects a close, defense-heavy game.

When it comes to picking a winner, McGuane is confident that the Patriots will come out on

top. A big reason for that is quarterback Drake Maye. "Without him, this team is barely an eight-win team," he said. Maye's ability to stay calm under pressure and make big plays is why McGuane believes he would have the biggest impact on the game.

Echoing this confidence, Matt Pain '26 said, "The Patriots are going all the way. I have 10 out of 10 confidence in this because of Drake Maye."

McGuane also mentioned a few players who people might not be paying as much attention to but could still make a difference. For Seattle, tight end AJ Barner was pointed out as someone who has quietly been effective, especially in the red zone. Quarterback Geno Smith is also expected to play an important role, especially through his connection with wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, who has had an incredible season so far.

For the Patriots, Efton Chism III, an undrafted free agent, has recently been getting more playing time and has started to prove himself when given the opportunity.

As a Patriots fan, McGuane is confident that his team will come through, though he admitted that anything can happen in the Super Bowl. A single turnover or big play can completely change the outcome.

Another reason students are especially anticipating this matchup is its history. "This is a repeat of the greatest Super Bowls of all time," McGuane said. A Patriots-Seahawks Super Bowl would be a rematch of Super Bowl XLIX in 2014. That game ended with Malcolm Butler's game-winning interception at the goal line, a moment many football fans still talk about today. Seeing these teams face off again ten years later would make the game even more exciting to watch.

As Super Bowl Sunday approaches, Choate students may not all agree on who will win, but they're definitely looking forward to the game. Whether it's for the football, history, or just watching with friends, the Super Bowl continues to be an event that brings the Choate community together.

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Gym Monitors Go Above and Beyond

By **Ignacio Granda '27**
Reporter

As winter sets in at Choate, students have searched for different ways to stay active, shifting from playing spikeball on the lawn and football on the field to pursuing a range of physical activities in the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC) and other indoor facilities. Whether it's a casual lift before practice or a quick run on the treadmill, there is always a desk monitor ready to scan students into the WJAC fitness center. Though their role may seem unassuming at first, it is more significant than many expect.

Head Desk Monitor Ms. Kathy Mattis offered insight into what a typical shift looks like and the unseen work that students may overlook. Ms. Mattis is a certified trainer who has worked at the desk since 2019 and is on duty six days a week.

While many Choate students are sleeping after a long night of homework, Ms. Mattis is up early at 5:30 a.m., helping clean up and set up the fitness center for students to use at 6 a.m. Her day consists of helping students access yoga mats and bands and assisting them with training or stretches throughout the day. Ms. Mattis assists students with all kinds of athletic support, from demonstrating training exercises to offering injury prevention tips.

After classes end, a big wave of students usually enters the gym. Ms. Mattis described this time as the busiest: "There are often two different fitness classes, so trying to keep only those kids in here is always a challenge, because people

want to work out when they're done with classes before they have rehearsals or practices," she said. However, after this wave dies down, the frenzy in the WJAC fitness center slows until closing at 9 p.m., and Ms. Mattis helps clean up and close the facility for the night.

Bowen Jin '26, a student who frequently visits the WJAC fitness center, highlighted their positive attitudes in the gym. "The gym staff are super friendly ... they're always willing to chat," he said. Furthermore, Jin noted that desk monitors helped ensure students' safety and wellbeing. Ms. Mattis said, "Our main responsibility is making sure that you guys don't get hurt."

Jin recalled an early morning workout when he was hungry and exhausted, and nearly fainted. A desk monitor noticed his condition and stepped in, providing him with water and some saltine crackers. This moment went beyond basic supervision, underscoring the desk monitors' role in ensuring students are safe at all times.

Despite their numerous contributions, desk monitors can be viewed negatively by students when they enforce fitness center rules. However, Boys' Varsity Hockey coach Mr. Sanders said, "They're not the ones that are making the rules. They're just enforcing them, and the reason for this enforcement is to make sure that everyone is safe."

At the end of the day, desk monitors provide essential support to members of the Choate community.

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Graphic by **Elly Koo '28**/The Choate News