The Choate News

The official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907

Choate Rosemary Hall
333 Christian Street
Wallingford, CT

Vol. CXX · No. II | Monday, April 27, 2026 | thechoatenews.choate.edu

Will Gilyard '98 Succeeds Jenny Elliot as New Head of Student and Academic Life

By **Ava Hult-Falk '27**
Staff Contributor



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram

Mr. Gilyard in his office smiling for the camera.

For most Choate students, Mr. Will Gilyard '98 is already a familiar presence in their daily lives. As the Dean of Students, he's worked tirelessly to handle student affairs while embodying Choate's core values of integrity, compassion, and respect. Recently, it was announced that Mr. Gilyard's campus role will expand as he steps into the position of Head of Student and Academic Life, succeeding Ms. Jenny K. Elliott.

During School Meeting on April 7, when Head of School Dr. Curtis announced Mr. Gilyard's new role, Dr. Curtis reflected on the selection. "This was a national and international search with a very strong pool of candidates. We spoke with many impressive educators and leaders. Mr. Gilyard stood out. Not just because he knows Choate, though that certainly matters, but because of the way he thinks about schools, about students, and about the kind of community we are trying to build."

The Head of Student and Academic Life works closely with multiple constituencies, including the Dean of Students and the Dean of Faculty, to ensure that students' academic and social experiences align. Ms. Elliott has held the inaugural position since the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

When asked about the role, she explained that its wide scope makes it difficult to confine to any single routine. "My primary responsibility is to support the folks who run day-to-day life at school," she said, noting that her work often evolved depending on Choate events.

In tandem with her leadership, she has remained involved in student life through coaching and teaching. Ms. Elliott taught Honors United States History in the fall and served as Assistant Girls' Varsity Squash Coach in the winter. She added that those jobs "give me the opportunity to be with students, which I really love." She considers these moments among the most meaningful parts of her time as Head of Student and Academic Life, as they allow her to connect with students while continuing to work at an administrative level.

As Ms. Elliott moves on from her role at Choate to become the 17th Principal at Philips Exeter Academy, she expressed confidence in Mr. Gilyard as her successor, stating that he has built "deep trust within the community," and emphasized his ability to connect with students and faculty in ways similar to her own. Ms. Elliott also complimented his leadership style, describing Mr. Gilyard as someone who "makes people feel seen and included."

Ben Lee '27, who will serve as Choate's Student Council President for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year, echoed Ms. Elliott that Mr. Gilyard's leadership style is "really based on the three pillars of our school, integrity, respect, and compassion ... [and] he puts those values into action when he is taking care of our students, our faculty, and our school culture."

Mr. Gilyard brings years of experience working directly with students into his new role, having served as the Dean of Students and being at the center of campus life. Taeyoung Kim '28, an advisee of Mr. Gilyard, emphasized that he can "tell that [Mr. Gilyard] cares deeply for every student and, beyond that, his colleagues and simply everyone he meets. I'm sure he will bring his care, kindness, humor, and sense of awareness to his new position."

Mr. Gilyard also addressed the different aspects of his new role and their significance, stating that "the role of Head of Student and Academic Life is a big one in that you're really thinking holistically." While the Dean of Students focuses mostly on student life, Mr. Gilyard explained that serving as Head of Student and Academic Life will allow him to engage more in setting academic priorities and long-term planning for Choate. Dr. Curtis further explained Mr. Gilyard's impact in his former role of Dean of Students. "Over the past three years ... he has done an outstanding job. He has brought clarity to complex situations, real care in how he works with students, and a steady, thoughtful presence to the daily life of the School."

Mr. Gilyard's main goal is to be clearly committed to student well-being and growth. "If [students] are feeling safe and taken care of and given space to take risks and try new things. That gives kids the best opportunities that we can provide as a school," he said. It's clear that his time in the Deans' Office has given Mr. Gilyard a good understanding of students at Choate, and more so, what type of administration they can benefit most from.

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DR. ELAD I. LEVY '89 HONORED WITH 2026 ALUMNI AWARD

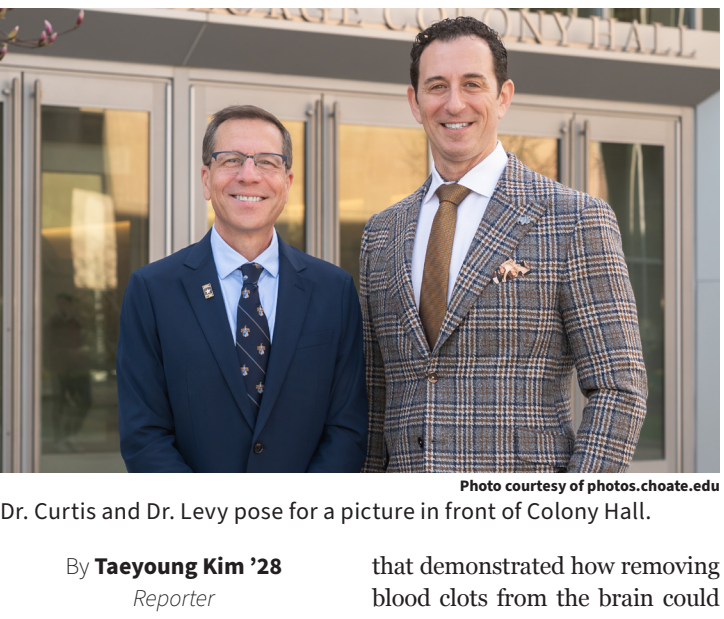

Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Dr. Curtis and Dr. Levy pose for a picture in front of Colony Hall.

By **Taeyoung Kim '28**
Reporter

On April 7, Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis presented Dr. Elad I. Levy '89 with the 2026 Choate Rosemary Hall Alumni Award during School Meeting, recognizing his achievements in neurosurgery and his contributions to medical innovation. As the highest honor awarded to Choate alumni, the award recognizes those whose professional achievements and greater impact celebrate all that they learned during their time at Choate. Returning to campus, Dr. Levy reflected on the school's physical transformations and enduring spirit. "Coming back to campus was like a time warp," he said. "There were beautiful new buildings, but I knew I was breathing in rare air."

Dr. Levy's work has had a profound impact on neuroscience, particularly in the treatment of those who have suffered strokes. In his speech, Levy referenced a 2015 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that demonstrated how removing blood clots from the brain could stop or even reverse strokes. "This became the new standard of care," Levy said. In recent years, his focus has shifted toward neurodegenerative diseases, where he has explored how brain-computer interfaces and related technologies can help restore speech and movement for patients with neurological conditions. He described the field as an "incredibly exciting time to be a neuroscientist or neurosurgeon."

For students, the most impressionable aspect of Levy's work is his passion and determination. "His story shows perseverance, hard work, and how dedication and doing what you love can lead to big things in the future," Asa Gibson '28 said. In addition to focusing on his passions throughout his career, the way Dr. Levy faced uncertainty with courage spoke to the student listeners. Lucas Du '29 said, "growing up, [Dr. Levy] did not have everything figured out. He did not have a [particular] path laid out for him ... he was embracing the moment." Du added, "I think many people can relate to this, as we are all young students trying to [find] our passions." Some students also had the opportunity to continue the conversation beyond the School Meeting. Joe Yan '26, who is interested in pursuing a medical career, was invited to a luncheon with Dr. Levy and 20 other students after School Meeting. "He gave us a lot of useful insight into the medical industry," Yan said.

Looking back on his time at Choate, Dr. Levy sees small moments on campus as key to shaping his perspectives today. He recalled being encouraged to join the crew team during his first few days on campus, a turning point that became foundational to his work ethic. "Bloody hands from rowing became a symbol of grit, resilience, and a work ethic that opened futures I have not even imagined," Dr. Levy said. He connected the commitment required in rowing to the demands of neurosurgery, explaining that those early challenges helped prepare him for the rigor and discomfort of his career. "Whenever I face challenges ... I envision my bloody hands after rowing practice."

Drawing on these experiences, he encouraged students to make the most of their time at Choate. "Choate has rare air; inhale deeply," he said, emphasizing the school's distinctive environment, across academics, athletics, and the arts, that pushes students to grow.

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Choate Opens the Door to College Application Season

By **Drew Wolfson '27**
Staff Contributor

For most students, college research means scrolling through rankings and websites. On April 15, Choate offered something different — more than 130 colleges and universities came to Choate's campus to showcase their schools and highlight opportunities available as students prepare for the next step in their academic journeys.

The College Fair drew fifth-form students looking to learn about schools and fourth-form students eager to get an early start on the college process. Represented schools ranged from Ivy League and Big Ten universities to smaller liberal arts schools and institutions abroad, with admission officers available to answer questions and discuss their programs.

Dean of College Counseling Ms. Marcia Landesman and her team spent significant time planning and preparing for the fair to ensure it was a positive experience for students. "I want students to come in with an open mind. I want students to follow up on the schools they've already researched and to talk to a school that's new ... and I want students to have genuine, authentic conversations," Ms. Landesman said. "It's an opportunity for students to continue the research that they've already started with primary sources ... And ask your questions of people who work at the colleges and universities on a whole range of things that students are curious about."

Ms. Landesman encouraged students to explore academic programs, social life, and extracurricular activities. She added that the College Fair might "expose you to some schools that weren't on your radar ... I think it's one thing to read about a school, it's another thing to ask a person about it."

Choate students took this approach to heart. Edward Jeong '27 found the experience valuable: "I thought it was really useful. I learned a lot of new stuff about schools that I might not be able to learn online ... A lot of colleges talked about their core curriculum. That was something interesting, and it was something that I didn't know about before."

Davis Linardos '27 echoed this sentiment: "It was really nice to have the schools all laid out ... just looking them up on your own, you don't really fully get a sense of how many options there are, but when you see them all lined up in the gym, it puts it all into perspective, that there are really a lot of different ways I could go," he said.

Ms. Landesman credits College Counseling Office Coordinator Ms. Megan Jackson for leading much of the preparation for the fair. She explained that "Ms. Jackson does all the work with the support of other offices on campus. She sends out invitations months before and collects that information and does all the logistics."

A unique aspect of the College Fair is that Choate invites college representatives to a pre-fair dinner, giving them the opportunity to connect with one another and with Choate faculty. Ms. Landesman described the value of this tradition: "It kind of sets the mood ... so we can visit with them [and] ask them the questions that might be particular to us."

The College Fair offered Choate students a rare opportunity to move beyond online research and engage directly with college representatives, turning abstract searches into real conversations. By speaking directly with the people who know these institutions best, students left the gym with clearer perspectives, new questions, and a more concrete sense of the paths that may lie ahead.



Photo courtesy of @choatecollegecounseling on Instagram

Choate students talk with an admissions officer.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Leah Han '27, Aida Tepe '28, and Choate Photos.



SCHOOL NEWS

Future of Journalism at Harvard Summit

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
and **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Local News and Arts Section Editors



Photo by Rachel Fan '27/*The Choate News*

Choate News masthead takes a selfie at Blank Street Coffee.

The 120th Masthead of *The Choate News* traveled to Cambridge, Massachusetts, for the Harvard Crimson Journalism Summit from April 11–12. Between panels, workshops, and conversations with student journalists from across the country, the Summit offered the masthead an opportunity to develop reporting skills and explore new approaches to journalism. Over the weekend, members attended seminars on topics ranging from the fundamentals of journalism to multimedia storytelling, gaining practical techniques and a broader understanding of the field.

Programming included seminars on "Journalism Fundamentals and Ethics," presentations from The Harvard Crimson's editorial, multimedia, and sports boards, and several guest panels. "It was really nice to be taught by a group of student journalists like myself, and understand how a paper within [a] larger institution functions," Editor-in-Chief Maia Shah '27 said. "I found [it] really helpful, especially [for] my role in *The Choate News*."

A highlight of the trip was the breaking news simulation, which challenged students to report under pressure with limited resources. With only 90 minutes to work, the masthead was tasked with reporting on a made-up scenario: the alleged embezzlement of class funds at a high school. Within the allotted time, the masthead worked as a team to call sources, gather information, and produce an article, mirroring real newsroom pressure and pushing students to think quickly and efficiently.

Shah and Managing Editor Rachel Fan '27, both of whom attended the summit last year, approached the challenge with a stronger strategy. "I thought a lot of the workshops last year were very valuable, and I was able to translate their lessons into my work," Shah said. Returning to the event with experience allowed them to guide newer editors through the process more effectively. "I wanted to come back with a new group of Section Editors and keep in mind [the] considerations that we want to implement into our own paper for this upcoming school year," Shah added.

For others, it was their first exposure to fast-paced reporting. Local News editor Sabrina Liu '28 explained that the breaking news simulation challenged her interviewing skills. "[I had to develop] skills of forming connections and trying to ask appropriate questions so [interviewees] won't hang up on you. That was very fun. I feel it's closer to a real experience working in journalism," she said.

Features editor Harry Kim '28 also emphasized how he learned to reach out to interviewees effectively during the simulation. "If we introduced ourselves, asked them how they were doing ... it loosened up [the interviewees] and helped with the interview overall," he said. Campus Opinions editor Eshana Hora '27 also highlighted the importance of direct communication with sources. "I learned the value in having a verbal conversation with a potential interviewee, as it can be more convincing compared to solely emailing them," she said.

In addition to learning from simulations and seminars, the masthead's trip allowed them to interact with students from peer boarding schools. "We met some other boarding schools there, and we talked with their mastheads ... it was really cool to see how different student papers function, how they publish differently, what their layout looks like, and what kinds of articles they are running," Shah said.

Specifically, *The Choate News* masthead interacted closely with Phillips Academy Andover's student newspaper. Through these conversations, masthead members gained insight into how different student newspapers operate.

The Phillipian works as a weekly publication, while The Choate News runs biweekly. "They have a way bigger masthead," Fan said, noting how staffing supports a more frequent publishing schedule.

"One of my takeaways was to have a really good lede for your article," Liu said, referring to the introductory sentence of a news story that grabs the reader's attention. "Especially now with social media, not a lot of people read the news, so it's very important to be direct and clear about the article's content."

Shah was inspired by the variety of editorials and opinion articles published in *The Harvard Crimson*. "I think it would be interesting to see how we can get more student voices into the paper, more opinions, editorials, and even staff opinions so we're publishing more interesting content that's going to fuel conversations around campus," she said.

Kim stressed the importance of how he learned the significance of effective communication in the newsroom. "*The Harvard Crimson* has very effective communication [across the masthead and writers] ... and I think that's what we really need," he said. "Keeping up with the writers who write the articles is really important for us to ensure quality and good organization."

While the conference provided connections across schools, the trip to Cambridge also brought *The Choate News* masthead closer together. "My favorite part of the trip was hanging around and having fun with the masthead members," Kim said, reflecting on the trip.

On both days, the masthead went to different restaurants. "We rode the [subway] together, bonded with our faculty advisers, and got froyo. There were a lot of good bonding moments that were outside of the conference," Shah said. "To me, the trip strengthened the bond between the masthead because we were engaging with each other in a non-*Choate News* setting," Hora said. "We got to bond while also learning more about each other out of the newsroom."

As masthead members return to the newsroom, they bring newfound ideas and a strengthened sense of community within the group. Whether walking through the streets of Harvard Square or in the newsroom on Tuesday and Sunday nights, the masthead will continue to take lessons learned from the Harvard Crimson Journalism Summit to every issue of Volume 120 of *The Choate News*.

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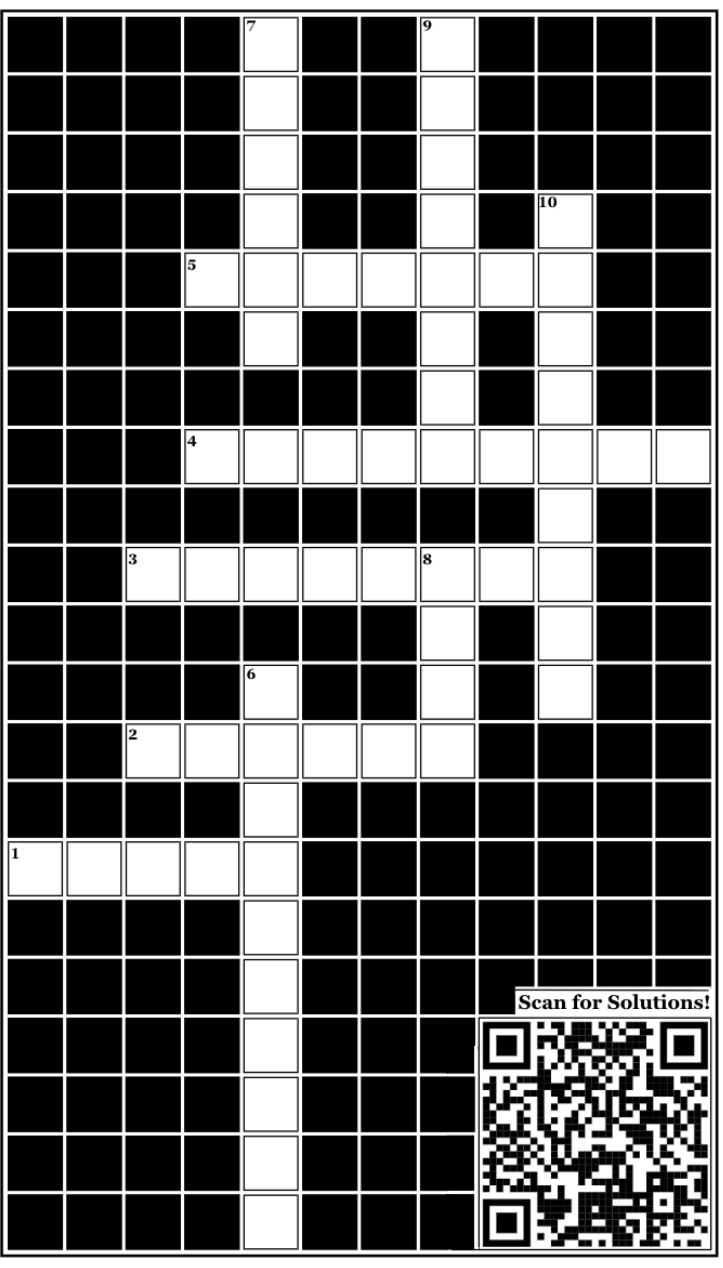

Across

1. The Seeds to Success entrepreneurial market was hosted at this orchard
2. Dr. Elad Levy '89 joked that brain surgery can evoke the smell of this chip
3. A fourth-former successfully lobbied to add this Japanese seasoning to the Dining Hall
4. Loyalty in Latin, or the first half of Choate's motto
5. Jake Kleinstein '29's physics class has an unhealthy obsession with this French treat

Down

6. Ms. Amy Howland adores her stand mixer from this brand
7. Elishua Mercado '27 channeled this TV persona for Fifth Form Family Feud Night
8. Choate students use this app to borrow e-books and audiobooks
9. This sport snapped a 21-year home losing streak vs. Deerfield
10. This girls' program grew from three athletes to 18 in just four years

By Norah Wang '27

All clues are related to articles published in this issue.

FUN, FRIENDS, FAMILY FEUD!

By **Sophie Chung '27**
Staff Contributor



Photo courtesy of Leruo Chikapa-Phiri '27

The host of Family Feud posing with fifth form students.

On April 10, the Student Activity Center (SAC) was transformed into a hybrid game show and high-energy social event. With couches rearranged, podiums with buzzers, blue lights, and Elishua Mercado '27 dressed as Steve Harvey, the event unmistakably resembled the household favorite TV show, Family Feud. The fifth-form Family Feud event drew over 40 students as participants and roughly twice as many spectators, making it one of the most well-attended SAC events of the year.

The event, led by Jason Schmidt '27, was proposed by a student at a Form Forum in Early February. "We usually do active stuff with Spikeball, dodgeball, and kickball," Schmidt said. "We wanted to try something different for people who might not want to be in that active environment." To plan the event, fifth-form members of Student Council worked closely with Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long, who helped them secure podiums, a buzzer, and lighting to help set the mood for Family Feud. Planning was divided amongst members of the Student Council. Schmidt, Ethan Sun '27, Everett Royall '27, and Edward Jeong '27 took the lead in organizing engaging questions for students, drawing from online Family Feud archives to create unexpected questions for participants. Gopika Sheth '27, Katherine Zhou '27, and Ben Lee '27 organized prizes, such as posters and T-shirts, as well as social media promotion, and communications, which can be credited for the outstanding attendance of the event. "This has probably been the most planning we've had to do for an event," Schmidt said. Unlike Spikeball or dodgeball, Family Feud required someone to actively run and manage it the entire time." Schmidt said. While the Student Council took on a heavy load preparing for the event, students were also asked to contribute their ideas. A poll posted on the Choate Student Council Instagram page invited students to vote on which food would be available at the event, ultimately landing on Chick-fil-A, a reliable favorite.

With a total of 10 teams competing, the SAC was filled with friendly competition and an interactive audience, fueled by additional yummy treats like brownies and cookies, a hit for the Class of 2027. Mercado's performance as the host was a highlight of the event. He wore a suit and bald cap like Steve Harvey, and embodied the game show host spirit."He has that game show host kind of personality," Schmidt said. "We didn't have a script for him — just the way he was moving around the room, asking people questions. I think that was really cool." Explaining his performance, Mercado said, "I definitely watched a few Family Feud episodes beforehand. I was trying to get into character ... and I just tried to be as funny and comedic as possible."

For Schmidt, that energy is the whole point. "I think it's really easy on a Friday or Saturday night to go out with your friends and spend time in your small groups," he said, "but these events allow different friend groups to come together." The event ran for nearly two hours, and most attendees stayed. This event was an example of true form connection "I think that's the biggest thing, not waiting until senior year to get going on this stuff," Schmidt added. For participants, the competition itself was just as memorable. Madeline Baldwin '27 said that the event was "a very fun way to spend a Friday night," noting that it gave her the chance to "hang out with friends and spend time with others in [her] grade that [she] doesn't normally get to see." She described the competition as "very high-energy," with everyone being "very competitive and wanting to win." She added that she was disappointed not to have won one of the Class of 2027 T-shirts, while expressing hope for more events like it in the future.

Gunther Stewart '27, an attendee of the event, described the night as "a great way to bring the fifth form together and just have a fun evening with friends," adding that the atmosphere felt "very electric" with "people very engaged and the energy really contagious." He noted that what stood out most was how interactive the event felt, saying that "everyone was actually involved the whole time, not just watching." He explained that if he had to describe the event in one word, "I would say unifying."

By the end of the night, the SAC had shifted from a typical student space into a space to build community. Between the competition, crowd engagement, and moments of humor, the fifth-form Family Feud blended organization and spontaneity, keeping students invested from start to finish. For organizers and participants, the event highlighted how structured programming can still create space for connection, and proved why events like this continue to draw strong student involvement across grade levels.

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CHESHIRE STUDENT DETAINED BY ICE DESPITE HIS LEGAL STATUS

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

On April 6, an 18-year-old Afghan student named Rihan (last name undisclosed due to privacy reasons) was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) outside his home in Cheshire, Connecticut. According to News 12 Connecticut, he was in a car with his uncle and brother when ICE agents approached him. By 8:25 a.m., he was brought into the Cheshire Police Department, where ICE agents purportedly "placed metal chains on his feet."

At approximately 9:30 a.m., Rihan was taken to the Hartford ICE office, where he reported being questioned by multiple ICE agents, who pressured him to sign a voluntary departure form. He refused, asserting that he was not required to sign anything. He was later transferred to Plymouth County Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Massachusetts, about 170 miles from his home.

Rihan legally entered the United States from Afghanistan on October 8, 2024. His father, Zia, worked as an interpreter for the United States military in Afghanistan, and after the family received direct threats, Rihan was granted humanitarian parole until October 7, 2026. However, his online Form I-94 incorrectly stated that his parole expired in 2025. It was this paperwork error that resulted in his arrest.

His arrest has shaken the Cheshire community and drawn significant local opposition, with many calling his detainment unjust. Chair of the Cheshire Board of Education Ms. Samantha Rosenberg collaborated with legal advocates and school officials to communicate the Board's stance to the broader Cheshire community. "I also attended a press conference to publicly express our support for Rihan and his family," Ms. Rosenberg said.

Cheshire Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey F. Solan shared that although the incident did not occur on school premises, Rihan's detainment has "certainly heightened concern and anxiety among immigrant students, particularly given the knowledge that our student was going about business legally."

Meanwhile, Cheshire High School has made counseling and other emotional support services available for any students or faculty who may be affected. "We recognize that this situation may be distressing, particularly for those who know Rihan personally. Our priority is to ensure students have access to trusted adults and appropriate support within the school environment," Ms. Rosenberg said.

Dr. Solan has worked to maintain the delicate balance between protecting Rihan's privacy and providing the community with the necessary information. "It starts with communication with the family. We try to honor their desire," Dr. Solan said. "In this case, I was careful not to mention the student by [last] name as asked, but felt that a public communication was necessary given the amount of information already released and the associated concerns."

Ms. Rosenberg echoed this sentiment when discussing Rihan's student rights and privacy. "Our role as a school district is to ensure that every student feels safe, supported, and able to access their education," she said. "Our focus remains on supporting students and families within our educational role, while also ensuring that schools are welcoming environments for all members of our community."

Legally, Connecticut cannot deny K-12 public education to any student, regardless of immigration status. "Immigration is an adult issue and should be addressed with parents/caretaker adults and not children," Dr. Solan said.

U.S. Senator for Connecticut Mr. Richard Blumenthal released an official statement addressing Rihan's arrest on April 10. "I am furious and disgusted that ICE has arrested a Cheshire teen who came to the U.S. because his family helped out troops in Afghanistan. This family deserves protection, not prosecution. I am going to do everything I can to help this young man."

As of April 17, Rihan remains in Plymouth County Correctional Facility, though his situation will continue to develop in the coming days. U.S. District Judge Mr. Richard G. Stearns ordered the Department of Homeland Security to schedule an immigration bond hearing for Rihan on April 20. He could potentially be released from custody and return home."Our hope remains that he will be able to return to his school community as soon as possible," Ms. Rosenberg said.

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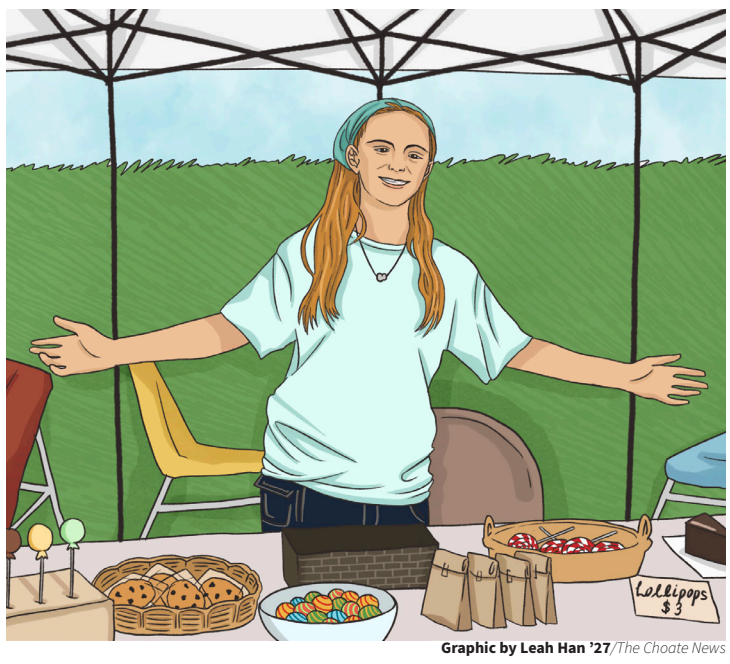
Young Entrepreneurs Mean Real Business at Lyman Orchards

By **Will Seery '28**
Reporter



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

On April 11, Lyman Orchards became a center of creativity and community as young business owners gathered for the "Seeds to Success: Children's Entrepreneurial Market." Held at the Apple Barrel Farm Market, the event brought together 34 student vendors, ranging from ages 5 to 17, each running their own booth and engaging directly with customers.

The market featured a wide range of goods, showing both creativity and entrepreneurial initiative. "Visitors expect[ed] to see handmade soap, candles, bath salts, jewelry, healing balms ... Pokemon cards, Lego sets, [and] 3D printed objects," Hartford Market Manager for the Children's Entrepreneurial Market Ms. Rhema Seale said. The variety of products created an engaging marketplace where each item showed a student's effort to identify demand and connect with customers.

Unlike a typical farmers' market, the event put full responsibility in the hands of its youngest participants. "[Participants] can develop and create a plan and interact with customers," Ms. Seale said. While parents remained nearby, Ms. Seale emphasized that "their child is solely responsible for running the booth," reinforcing building independence as a central goal of the event.

For many participants, the event acted as more than just a marketplace; it became a learning experience rooted in real-world application. "Giving children the opportunity to experience entrepreneurship as a whole is the goal," Ms. Seale said. She added that "children are not only determining if their product choice was successful ... but they are also brainstorming ways to perfect their business." Over time, she noted, "they often become more confident with each market that passes," while learning how to "engage with customers for sales and price products."

The event also aligns closely with Lyman's Orchards' broader mission as a community-centered space. "We love partnering with organizations that encourage youth and family engagement," Director of Business Development at Lyman Orchards Ms. Becky Critchley said. "Providing the kids with a platform to promote their business ... creates a community bond that we fully support."

That sense of connection was evident throughout the day, as families attending other orchard events — such as the Spring Apple Hunt — stopped by to support the young vendors. "It brings families together in a really fun, hands-on way," Ms. Critchley said. "Kids are creating and selling, while parents and neighbors come out to support them."

Beyond its immediate impact, the Entrepreneurial Market showed a broader emphasis on experiential learning and local engagement. "Events like this give kids an opportunity to build confidence, learn real-world skills, and feel supported by their community," Ms. Critchley said. She added that it "strengthens the sense of community in a way that benefits everyone."

For some participants, the experience may go even further. Ms. Seale noted that "Kids Markets has granted several of our participants scholarships to grow their businesses," helping turn early ideas "into something greater than they could have ever imagined." As the market concluded, it left behind more than just sold-out booths and satisfied customers. For the young entrepreneurs of Middlefield, the event offered a meaningful introduction to business, independence, and real-world lessons that extend well beyond a single Saturday at the orchard.

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Egg-Stravaganza: A Wallingford Tradition at the YMCA

By **Dylann Kong '29**
Reporter

Families filled the Wallingford Family YMCA on April 12 for its annual Easter Egg-stravaganza, taking part in egg hunts, crafts, themed gym games, and photos with the Easter Bunny. Children aged four to 12 were split into two groups — younger children went first, followed by the seven to 12 age group, rotating through activities across the three-hour event.

The craft station, led by Mr. Michael Miller of the Catalyst Art Studio, an art studio in downtown Wallingford, gave kids a chance to wind down and express their creativity through pinwheel-making and other hands-on activities. Mr. Miller said the pinwheel project was chosen specifically with the event's two age groups in mind, with both groups taking part in the same activities. Miller said the project was designed to be "fun and engaging," while still being simple enough for kids to complete quickly.

Throughout the afternoon, families rotated among stations, including the egg hunt on the lawn, the craft table, and photos with the Easter Bunny, while volunteers and staff members helped guide the event and make sure things ran smoothly. When the day ended, the Easter Egg-stravaganza once again proved that family and community stood firmly at its core. Mr. Miller shared that the event "definitely just brings families together, lets kids meet new friends and get more involved with the YMCA."

The Easter Egg-Stravaganza has become an annual tradition. "Definitely every Easter," Miller said when asked how often the studio collaborates with the YMCA, adding that the two organizations have built a close relationship over the years. Beyond the activities themselves, Miller emphasized a bigger takeaway from the event: to teach kids that the world is not just about consuming, but also about giving. "Art is fun. We spend so much time staring at our screens and watching other people do [work]," he said. "You can be one of the people who make something, and you can show it to someone. It'll make them happy."

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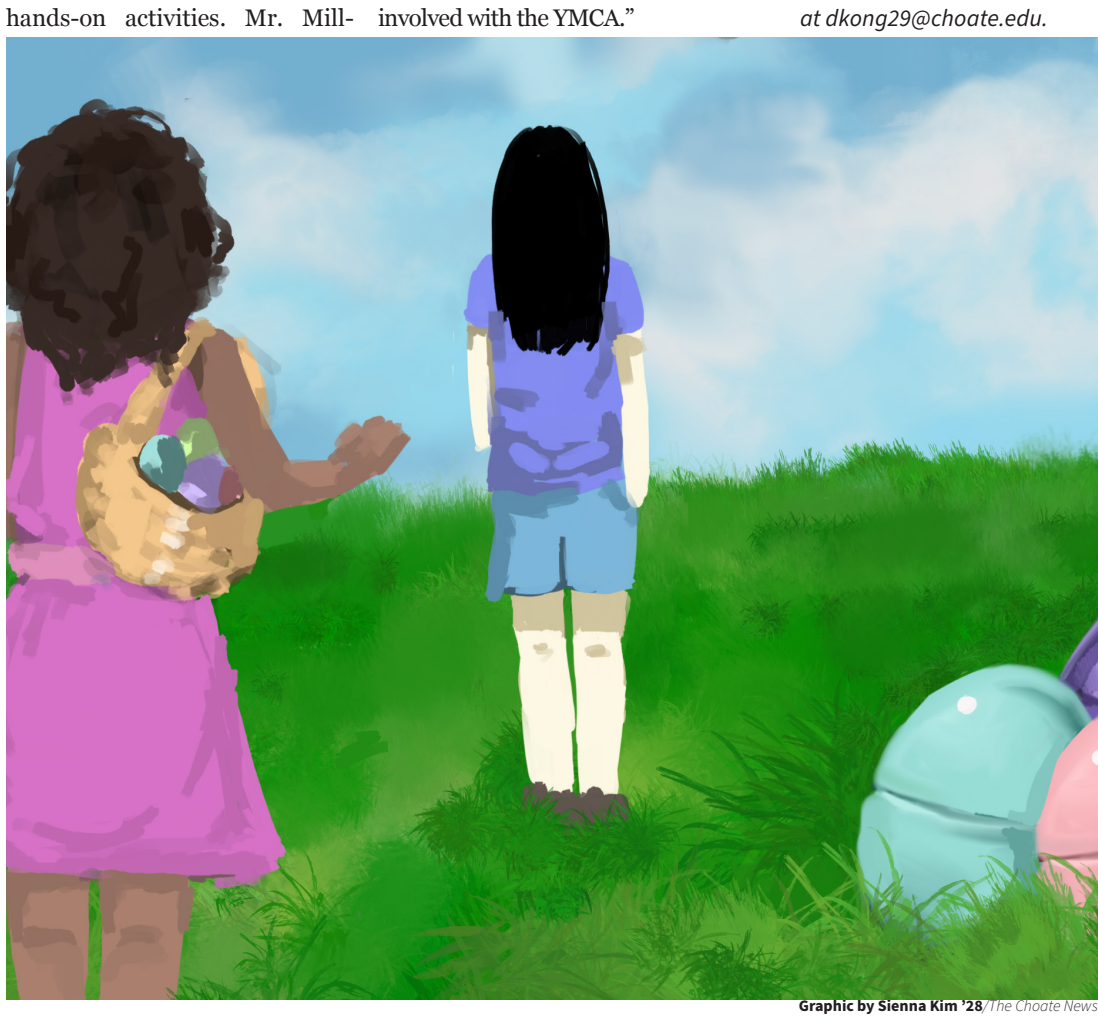

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The Choate News

120th Masthead

VOL. CXX
NO. II

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Course Selection 101: Attention Rising Seniors

By **Leilani Gao '26**
Opinions Writer

For many juniors, the prospect of senior year can be stressful. With looming deadlines and life-altering decisions about college, it can be difficult to balance schoolwork on top of everything else. As a senior with a few weeks left in high school, I wanted to share a few words of wisdom on course selection with any juniors who are curious or stressed about this subject, just as I was last spring. Before course selection in senior year, it's important to have goals and objectives laid out. Knowing what you want to prioritize makes planning each day's schedule much easier and more intentional. It is important to choose a course load that allows you to balance commitments, not overwhelm yourself, prepare for college, and give yourself time to truly enjoy your last moments at Choate.

Senior fall feels similar to junior spring. I took several honors courses throughout this year, especially in the fall, and the general sentiment among most of my peers was to do well in them. Of course, it's the time to challenge yourself and increase rigor — but only where you can continue to excel while balancing college applications and athletics.

However, the biggest challenge comes around in the spring: senioritis. As a junior, I used to sit in the library watching seniors play Roblox rather than doing their homework, and I promised myself that I would never be as unmotivated as they were, that it wasn't in my blood to do so.

Yet, these days, I spend my time scrolling on Instagram reels late into the night with my dormmates. Senioritis has hit me hard, and I find myself doing what I told myself I would not do a year ago. The time required to study for a test seems to have increased by three-fold compared to previous years. I would highly recommend that any incoming seniors prepare for this, and to avoid overwhelming their course selection in their senior spring. A schedule packed with the hardest courses may look impressive, but there's a fine line between this and burning out or missing out on your last moments of high school. As Amber Yung '26 shared, the "most important thing is to pick electives that you enjoy and also to have a lighter course load for senior spring."

Another tip is to think ahead about the skills you will need in college. Do the colleges you are interested in have a core curriculum? Will you need to hone your analysis skills? Or do you need to learn more about conducting research for your major? All of this information is useful so you can choose your courses with intention. As a prospective economics major, I considered how I could maximize my math and economics coursework at Choate to build a strong foundation for my college courses.

Lastly, don't forget that this is your last year here. Use it to your advantage, perhaps spend some more time enjoying the Choate campus before you leave. Though this may be a sentimental, soon-to-be graduate speaking, there's truly something beautiful and special about Choate's campus and people. There's no prize — other than the cum laude society — for who grinded the hardest during the last few months of senior year. Instead, what matters more is to live to the fullest at Choate and to experience every single moment with happiness and enjoyment.

These points are the basic gist, but to each their own. Senior year should be both work and enjoyment, and oftentimes finding curiosity in your courses is what makes them so special. Something I've noticed recently is that, without the stress of college grades, I've learned to appreciate the process of learning more. Find classes you will enjoy, be realistic about senior spring, and think ahead to hone specific skills for college. Just as importantly, protect your time outside of the classroom. Above all else, think about your legacy at Choate. Once you leave, what will you want to have accomplished? There are so many opportunities at Choate, whether it be through academics or otherwise. How will you choose to spend it?

Leilani Gao *is a sixth-former from New Canaan, CT. She may be reached at lgao26@choate.edu.*



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

Choate's Spiritual Inclusion Has a Blind Spot



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

By **Jinx Hartong '27**
Opinions Writer

In a community so driven by the next deadline, spiritual life offers Choate students a space for relaxation and connection. One of Choate's biggest strengths is our diversity, a quality that fuels our classrooms, dorms, and dining hall conversations. The school provides various ways for religious students to practice their faith, including worship in the chapel, kosher options in the dining hall, or a visit to the spiritual center below the library. We are a school that prides ourselves on being global, a place where our different perspectives can coexist and connect with one another. However, while the foundation of spiritual life is strong, the execution of support for certain religious observations, specifically Ramadan, reveals some gaps.

Choate's spiritual life is, in many ways, designed to be a sanctuary. The spiritual life team does an outstanding job of offering an open door to students of all backgrounds to find guidance and reflection. Choate spiritual life also raises awareness for students of all religious backgrounds, working with students to hold and advertise religious and cultural events, frequently making them open to the public. While these efforts create opportunities for conversation and kinship, they can fall short when it comes to meeting the day-to-day needs of students practicing their faith.

The most pressing issue is the feeling of isolation students experience while fasting during religious observances. While Choate promotes spiritual awareness at a broad level, the early morning hours of Suhoor, a pre-sunrise meal that Muslims eat before they start their daily fast, have left students feeling forgotten by the School.

For many Muslim students, the essence of Ramadan is found in joining together to fast and pray. However, students shared that this sense of togetherness, particularly during Suhoor, is confined within the bounds of school policy. "Since Suhoor is so early, we're not allowed to leave our dorms to pray or eat together," Zahabiya Khokha '27 said. "It can feel incredibly isolating having to pray alone. I wish we could have special accommodations," she added.

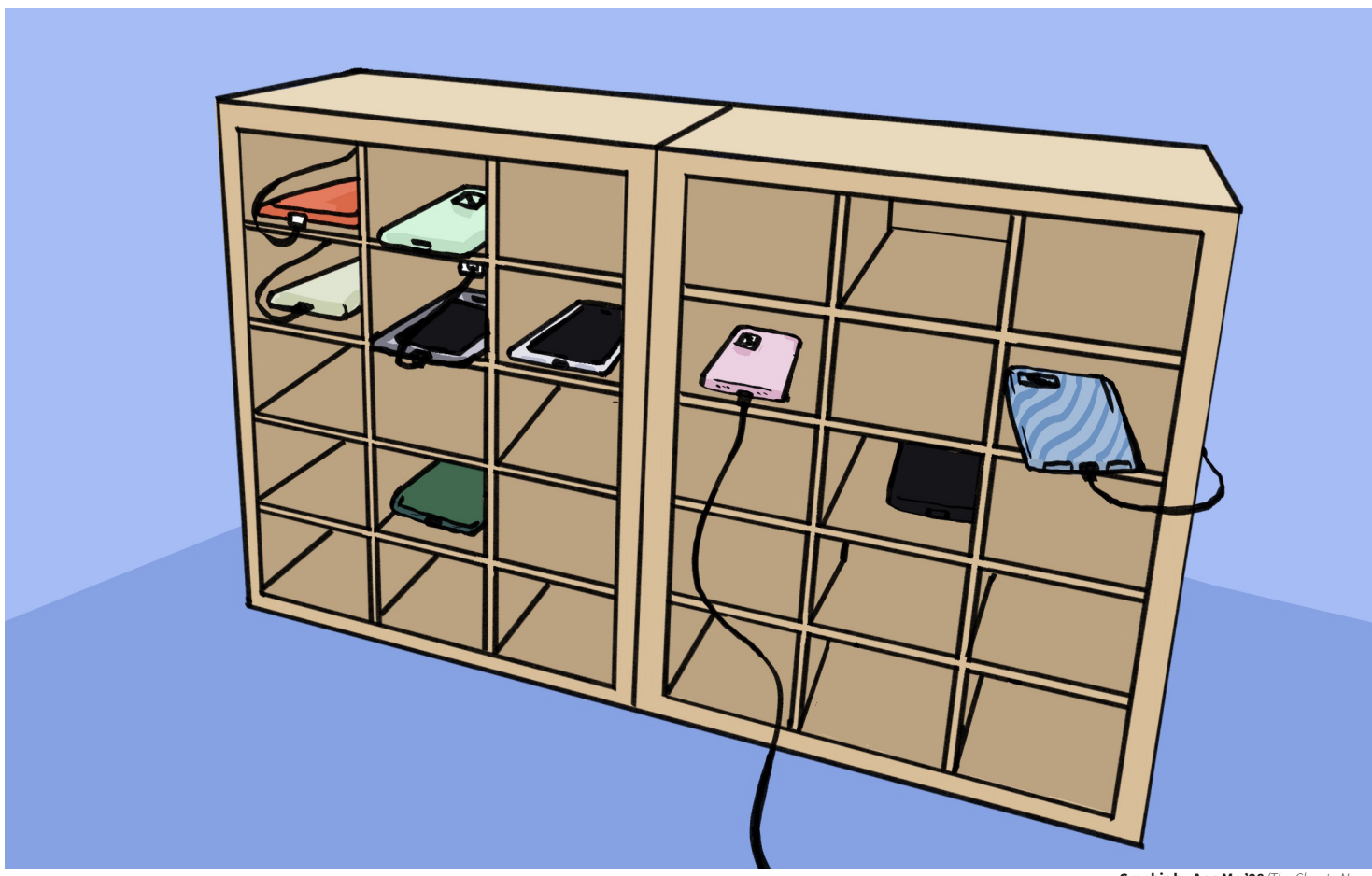
Arabic teacher Mr. Yassine Benzinane, who has helped coordinate Ramadan observance on campus, described one meaningful effort: students gathered at 3:30 a.m. in the Spiritual Life Center to prepare a homemade meal and join in Tahajjud prayers before dawn. "Because fasting during Ramadan can be both physically and mentally demanding," Mr. Benzinane said, "we also coordinate with Sage whenever possible to offer favorite Ramadan food items so that students can maintain a balanced diet and sustain a productive day of learning and extracurricular engagement." Despite the school's best efforts to support students observing religious holidays, some students do not feel as though current options leave room for improvement. Several students who observe Ramadan have also expressed concerns regarding the nutritional value of Suhoor meals provided. Since students are fasting from dawn to dusk, eating a dense meal in the morning is important for maintaining energy and academic focus throughout the day. Currently, the pre-packed Suhoor meals include foods like cereal and juice, and while this is not nothing, Khokha explained that "this isn't enough to get me through the day."

This gap in support is not limited to Ramadan. For Catholic students during Lent, a period of time where Catholics fast and reflect, it can be challenging for them to find activities that allow them to focus on prayer. Carolina Sandoval '29 said, "I have to learn how to avoid technology and read books and try to have prayer, which is hard for me sometimes at school." She hoped to see more offerings for Catholic students who are unable to participate in dances or loud activities during Lent, allowing them to reflect in a quiet environment.

To truly support students who are part of a religious minority, Choate must bridge these gaps. Director of Spiritual Life and HPRSS teacher Reverend Aaron Rathburn recognizes the importance of student collaboration, saying, "We're always happy and eager to help support students in their practice of Spiritual Life, in whatever form that may take!" Swapping cereal for more substantial, protein-rich foods and allowing students to come together in prayer would ensure that students would feel more supported in their faith. "I hope that during the next Ramadan, we can feel more supported," said Khokha.

Jinx Hartong *is a fifth-former from Chanhassen, MN. She may be reached at jhartong27@choate.edu.*

TALK TO YOU LATER? WHAT ABOUT CALL YOU NEVER!



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/*The Choate News*

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

I know my phone is bad for me. I know the endless void of reels rots my brain, and the blue light eats away at my sleep. Yet like almost all Choate students, I use that rectangle in my back pocket religiously. Choate's nighttime phone policy in the dorms seems simple ... But it is far from perfect. Though the core of the current policy is justified by the aim of ensuring that students get off their screens and chat face-to-face, it fails to accommodate online connections.

Every evening, third-formers relinquish their devices during study hours and overnight to "encourage longer and better sleep habits," per the Student Handbook. Fourth-formers turn their phones in during study hours, receiving them after 10:30 p.m. It's not really a strict policy. Compared to schools like Deerfield, which requires students to leave phones in dorms during the entire school day, Choate's policy is relatively lenient.

Without a doubt, Choate's strategy to combat students' phone dependency succeeds in fostering better sleep habits and focus among all underclassmen. I, for one, pay more attention to my Chemistry homework without my phone buzzing tantalizingly at my side.

However, the faults are just as clear. Students cannot use their phones to connect online, or take a well-needed break from academics. My family and I navigate a 12-hour time difference. It is important for me to talk to them, and the prime time would be from 8 to 10 p.m. And when am I not permitted to use my phone? 8 to 10 p.m.

Other students feel similarly. Liv Feschet '29, a resident of Nichols House, hails from Hong Kong and has struggled to stay in touch with family due to the phone policy, especially on weekends, as devices are required to be in the common room "phone lockers" by 11 p.m. "It's super inconvenient, because I call and they pick up, and then three seconds later I have to go down and put my phone away," Feschet said. "It's just so much harder to contact everyone."

And honestly, the School cannot overlook the fact that phones are the primary way this generation maintains relationships. "[My phone] is just my way of communication with everyone in my life. So I feel by taking it away, it's taking away a bit of my freedom," Tatum Littlejohn '29 said.

Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life Mr. Pat Dennehy expressed his willingness to consider "tweaks," especially with healthy student discourse. "I think if you engage in those conversations ... that's how you shift culture," he said. Mr. Dennehy also emphasized that the intention behind the policy "was to combat the mental health issues that come up with [phones and technology]."

Choate's nighttime phone policy is flawed, but I believe it is not far off from its target. If the School can find a way to allow students to use their devices responsibly while still allowing them to keep in close contact with their families and friends, it would certainly be a success.

Prudence Chen *is a fourth-former from Taipei, Taiwan. She may be reached at pchen28@choate.edu.*

MCILROY MASTERS

By **Jai Midha '27**
N/W Opinions Section Editor

There is no other event for any sport like the Masters Tournament for golf. Since 1934, the Masters has been held at the Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, known for its fast rolling greens, tight pin positions, and Pimento cheese sandwiches. Every year, the world's best 90 golfers come together in the first major championship of the season. With an incredibly hard course and a competitive player pool, winning a Green Jacket at the Masters has been a key milestone for any professional golfer.

On April 12, 2025, golf enthusiasts witnessed history: Rory McIlroy won not only two Master Tournaments, but did so back-to-back, a feat only accomplished by three other golfers in history — Jack Nicklaus, Nick Faldo, and Tiger Woods.

Hailing from Northern Ireland, McIlroy dropped out of high school at 16 to pursue a golfing career. In quick succession, he won the U.S. Open, the PGA Championship (twice), and the Open Championship — the three other major championships in golf — in his first four years on tour. Yet, for the next 11 years, McIlroy came close, but never clinched the Masters title.

Finally, with three lead changes on the last day of the tournament, McIlroy missing a 3-foot putt to win, and a playoff hole against Justin Rose, McIlroy won his first Masters on April 13, 2025, donning a Green Jacket despite carding four double bogeys.

McIlroy, undergoing various ups and downs in his career, has been labelled as irritable by critics. Yet, some students cite him as an influential role model in their lives. "He's a real inspiration to me. He's the reason why I started playing golf," Boys' Varsity Golf Team Member Logan He '28 said.

McIlroy went into the third and last day of the Masters with a six-stroke lead, the most ever by anyone at the Masters. However, he lost the lead by shooting a 73 — one over par — on Saturday, April 11, and tied for the lead with Cameron Young and 10 other players. Yet, after another round on Sunday, complete with three lead changes and a narrowly-missed playoff against world's current top golfer Scottie Sheffler, McIlroy went from an 11 year drought to wearing back-to-back Green Jackets.

At Choate, students had mixed opinions about McIlroy's win. For example, He wasn't sure if McIlroy could execute his second triumph in a row at the Masters. "There were multiple times when it looked like Rory [McIlroy] wasn't really [going to] win it, but in the end, it was good to see him pull it off," he said. "I wanted to see [McIlroy] succeed ... because I like seeing greatness occur, and I think he's the greatest player of his generation," He added.

Yet, other students saw McIlroy's back-to-back victories as a lost opportunity for other golfers to win their own first Green Jacket. Girls' Varsity Golf Co-Captain Rebecca Huang '27 said, "I was disappointed because I really wanted Justin Rose to win ... because I think that [Rose is] a player with a lot of class, and I really respect [him]."

The Masters, with its prestige, difficulty, and Pimento cheese sandwiches, is truly *a tradition like no other*.

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



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/*The Choate News*

Who Really Benefits from American Allies?

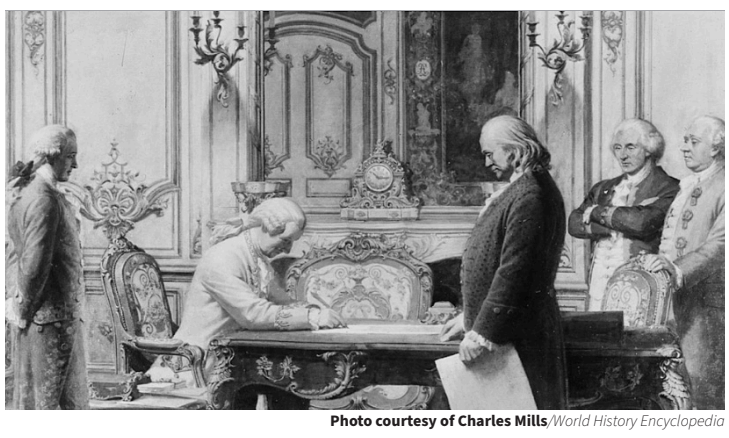


Photo courtesy of Charles Mills/*World History Encyclopedia*

Benjamin Franklin and officials signing the 1778 treaties.

By **Logan He '28**
Opinions Writer

Since the Cold War, America has maintained strong alliances with nations around the world, most prominently through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But over the past few decades, questions about these alliances have emerged-which side benefits most — America, or its allies. I believe America's allies benefit far more. To see my point more clearly, we ought to consider the counterfactual world in which these alliances didn't exist. In that case, it is the allies of the Americans who would lose the most, economically and militarily.

Let's take a look at what Europe and the nations of the First Island Chain (FIC) — a US-aligned string of major Pacific archipelagos bordering East Asia composed mainly of Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines — have to lose. If the U.S. withdraws from its alliances, these nations would lose a significant deterrent against the kind of Russian and Chinese regional pressure that has already materialized in Ukraine and the South China Sea. Consider the state of Taiwan as of now, even with major U.S. backing — through the Taiwan Relations Act and as a major supplier of arms — China has made threats and military exercises that seem to directly threaten Taiwanese sovereignty. China's assertiveness extends beyond the boarder FIC, where it has pursued strategic military positioning throughout the South China Sea. Without U.S. backing, the Philippines and the rest of Southeast Asia would be left considerably more exposed. It is not a foregone conclusion that these nations are to be taken over, but rather the threat of such a coercion, one currently held in check by American deterrence, would grow substantially.

The situation in Europe follows a similar logic. Russia has demonstrated a clear willingness to pursue territorial expansion, as seen in Georgia in 2008, Crimea in 2014, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Some would argue the current war in Ukraine demonstrates the incapability of Russia's influence over Europe, but a closer analysis demonstrates the exact opposite: the constant and heavy funding from the U.S. is exactly what is making the War toll out this long and make Russia's attack this ineffective. Looking through both of these examples of foreign influence, it seems natural that without the deterrent of the considerably sizable American military, these allies would lack the protection they currently enjoy.

That protection carries significant economic benefits. Rather than individually spending billions of dollars in their military — which is necessary not only to deter and protect against forthcoming conflicts, but also to protect shipping lanes, guarantee trade security, and enforce free trade — countries are capable of spending on domestic infrastructure and social issues, gaining a huge advantage for the citizens of their country and internal development. This tradeoff is especially consequential for smaller nations, where simultaneously maintaining credible defense and robust domestic investment would otherwise be a near-impossible balancing act. For small countries, where balancing a strong enough military and strong domestic investment, this oversight of America is immensely beneficial.

Considering America's benefit, one could see that it may be relatively minimal. If the U.S. were to withdraw from its alliances, it would no doubt suffer economically. It would most likely lose many of its free trade agreements, while the active undermining of its allies could lead to more volatile trade with them. But, unlike some of the other nations, the US is completely capable of independently functioning — both economically and militarily. The USwould be completely fine with the minor detriment of trade loss with these nations. In short, without these alliances, America would fare far better than its allies.

The poimt that often comes after this question is whether, because its allies gain more from these alliances than America does, America should leave them. The short answer is no. Although America's allies do benefit more from their relationship with America, the situation is mutually beneficial. Its allies aren't gaining at the expense of America; rather, they are supporting each other. This means that America should stay in these alliances as they have vested interests in these countries continuing. With better relationships, America is able to maintain trade of goods, services, and technologies, and retains a network of stable partners that would be costly to lose. Its allies are not prospering at America's expense, but are prospering *alongside* it. Continued alliance membership remains in the interest of ordinary Americans, even if the balance of benefit tilts toward partners.

Logan He *is a fourth-former from Wallingford, CT. He may be reached at lhe28@choate.edu.*

U.S.'s Military Supply Chain Overreliance

By **Ayaz Zuberi '27**
Opinions Writer

The United States should bring critical supply chains tied to national security back under its own control. I am not arguing for isolationism or against global trade in the U.S., but that supply chains related to national security ought to be under government control. Such a change is about recognizing that dependence on geopolitical rivals for essential materials creates avoidable risks that, in conflict, could backfire quickly and put our country in jeopardy.

Rare earth elements, such as lithium, lanthanum, or cobalt, are the clearest example. These materials are essential for fighter jets and missile guidance systems, critical pieces of America's military infrastructure. Right now, China dominates the global supply and processing, controlling a significant majority of refining capacity and raw materials. This concentration gives China enormous leverage over American military infrastructure. In fact, China has already restricted rare earth exports to expand power over America, signaling that these resources can be used as a political tool. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. still relies heavily on imports for many of these materials, despite some domestic reserves — China controls 85% of the rare earth materials necessary for military uses' supply chains.

Imagine that in our current supply chain state, China restricted such materials during a military conflict. The ramifications would make an already expensive system even more costly. This is a textbook example of a strategic vulnerability that America could avoid by internalizing supply chains. A 2024 report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies warns that supply chain chokepoints, particularly in minerals and semiconductors, represent one of the most underappreciated national security threats facing the U.S. today.

Bringing these supply chains under greater American control doesn't mean doing everything alone. It can also mean working with trusted allies, diversifying sourcing, and investing in domestic processing and manufacturing capacity. The goal is to build resilience.

Critics argue that reshoring supply chains is expensive and inefficient. And they're not wrong. Building mines, refineries, and factories in the U.S. takes time and money. But national security has never been about choosing the cheapest option; it's about ensuring citizens live safely. It's about making sure that, as citizens of America, we feel safe from all threats, domestic or international. Supply chains tied to national security should be treated with the same seriousness as national threats themselves.

There's also a broader economic upside. Investing in domestic supply chains can create jobs, stimulate innovation, and strengthen America's industrial capacity, which has weakened significantly in recent decades. Over time, such investments could reduce America's need to intervene in conflicts and dependence on overseas resources. Internalizing supply chains makes America less volatile on global disruptions and brings stability over time, something we could not achieve with over-reliance on volatile regions of the globe for resources.

At its core, this issue comes down to control and stability. In a world of rising geopolitical tensions, relying on potential adversaries for critical resources is a gamble America cannot afford. Rebuilding and securing these supply chains at home or within a network with trusted allies may cost more upfront. Still, it buys something far more valuable: resilience and greater security for all American citizens.

Ayaz Zuberi *is a fifth-former from New York, New York. He may be reached at azuberi27@choate.edu.*

THE CRACKS BENEATH INDIA'S MARKET BOOM

By **Leela Curry '29**
Copy Editor

India's equity market isn't collapsing in the dramatic, headline-grabbing way of a sudden crash. What's happening is quieter, and arguably more concerning. The foundation that powered its recent boom is starting to erode, revealing structural weaknesses that go far beyond short-term volatility.

For years, India's market story was compelling: a rising middle class, digital access to investing, and a cultural shift away from savings toward financial assets. Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) became the engine of this transformation, turning millions of small, consistent contributions into a powerful force supporting equities. This wasn't just a market trend, it was framed as a generational shift in how Indians build wealth.

However, that narrative depended heavily on momentum. The surge in small and mid-cap stocks during 2023 and early 2024 created the illusion of stability. Now, as those gains roll out of the standard three-year return window, reality is setting in. Returns that once looked like nearly 20% annually are collapsing towards low single digits. The new class of investors who entered during the upswing is starting to feel disappointed and disillusioned.

The timing couldn't be worse. Retail investors, who were supposed to anchor the market domestically, are now beginning to pull back. According to Open Magazine, the number of new investors decreased by 24.5% between January and February. This drop in new entrants and net selling activity signals something deeper than routine profit-taking. It suggests that confidence, arguably the most important ingredient in any retail-driven market, is weakening.

At the same time, foreign investors are exiting. CNBC reported that, as of March 27, $12 billion had been removed from the market by foreign investors. Their concerns are structural: high valuations, tax inefficiencies, and a weakening rupee. Currency depreciation undermines returns even when stock prices hold steady. When global capital begins to withdraw while domestic investors hesitate, the market loses both external and internal support.

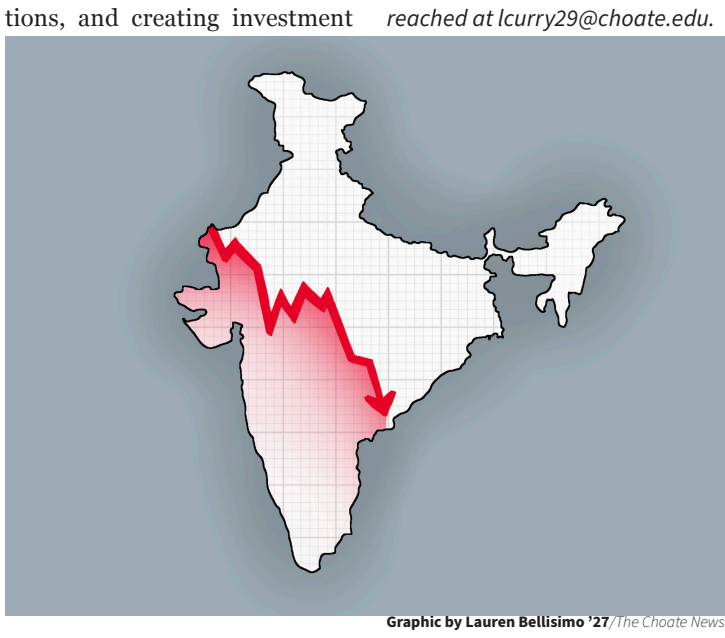
What's emerging is a disconnect between perception and reality. India's equity markets have been priced as a high-growth, high-confidence story, but the underlying economic and financial systems haven't fully caught up to justify those valuations. The recent IPO wave illustrates this disconnect clearly. According to BusinessWorld, Indian Chief Economic Advisor Anantha Nageswaran said that "[IPOs] have increasingly become exit vehicles for early investors, rather than mechanisms for raising long-term capital." The departure of early investors is a sign of someone recycling optimism, not a sign of a maturing market.

The deeper issue is how dependent the financial ecosystem has become on continuous retail inflows. Brokers, asset managers, and exchanges have scaled their operations on the assumption that participation will keep rising immediately. That is a fragile model, as return capital is not inherently stable; it is sentiment-driven, reactive, and often cynical. When returns fade, participation doesn't just slow, it can reverse sharply.

This is where the conversation needs to shift. The problem isn't simply that the market is cooling, it's that it was never as self-sustaining as it appeared. India's equity boom was built on a combination of favorable global liquidity, strong narratives, and a wave of first-time investors. Strip away any one of those, and the structure starts to wobble.

Rather than focusing on external factors like currency dominance or geopolitical shocks, the more urgent question is domestic: can India build a market that isn't reliant on constant inflows or optimistic retail money? That means improving corporate earnings quality, ensuring more transparent valuations, and creating investment opportunities that generate real economic value rather than just speculative returns. India's market isn't doomed, but it is at a turning point. The next phase won't be driven by enthusiasm alone, it will require substance.

Leela Curry *is a third-former from Darien, CT. She may be reached at lcurry29@choate.edu.*



Graphic by Lauren Bellisimo '27/*The Choate News*

FEATURES

Student Council Hands Over The Reins After A Successful Year

By **Mary Higashi '29**
Copy Editor



Photo by Harry Kim '28/*The Choate News*

New Student Council members standing in front of Hill House Lobby.

By now, it's all very familiar: every Tuesday after School Meeting, Student Council members climb onto the benches outside of Colony Hall in donut costumes, waving colorful signs and calling out over the moving crowd as students gather to purchase the donuts for charity.

This picture is part of a larger set of efforts led by the 2025 - 2026 Student Council over the past year, ranging from weekly fundraisers to small changes to improve our daily campus life.

Boar Bites was one of the Student Council's most memorable initiatives this year. Former Student Council President Zaki Shamsi '26 said that it has "been the most impactful thing that we've done" during his four years on the council. He explained that the Student Council's role extends beyond campus: "part of serving Choate is helping Choate with its goals, and what Choate's goals are is to serve its community, which involves Wallingford." Through the weekly fundraiser, Student Council contributed approximately $5,000 to the Sisters Project, a local Wallingford organization supporting women in need.

In addition to the Boar Bites, Shamsi highlighted Sixth-form President Thandiwe Taylor '26's initiative to build a tea station in the Andrew Mellon Library, as well as Sixth-form Representative Abby Kim '26's work to improve textbook access by expanding free and online materials, among other notable achievements.

Fifth-form members also led several projects throughout the year. As former Fifth-form President and upcoming Sixth-form President Jason Schmidt '27 explained, "[Ethan Sun '27] and I worked really hard to push out our fall dance, which we called Boar Bash. It was definitely a good start to a tradition that we're looking to continue." The event was a change from previous fall dances, with more planning involved to mark the beginning of the school year.

Schmidt also highlighted fellow former Fifth-form Representative Gopika Sheth '26's efforts to increase outdoor seating. "It fosters community in the fall and in the spring," he said, and called it "one of the highlights on campus." Additionally, former Fifth-form Representative Arushi Krishnan '27 focused on improving day student resources. Over the past year, she worked to introduce umbrella checkouts at the library and to add seating in the parking areas for students waiting for their rides.

Lastly, fourth-form members advocated for a range of new initiatives on campus this year. Shamsi noted that the fourth-formers were "all really passionate throughout the year," contributing a lot to the School community.

Fourth-form President and upcoming Fifth-form President Bruce Van Wingerden '28 said, "The sophomore class accomplished quite a bit last year." He highlighted that former Fourth-form Representative Liana Alkhayer '28 helped enlarge the white food delivery boxes and worked to implement board games in the Dining Hall. Former Fourth-form Representative Maya Abeles '28 helped organize the origami event and implemented day student mug nights.

Additionally, former Fourth-form Representative and upcoming Fifth-form Representative Harry Kim '28 introduced Furikake seasoning, new ice cream and sorbet flavors in the Dining Hall, helped implement water fountains in Tenney House and Bernhard, and automated 'Happy Boar-thday' emails to celebrate every Choate student's birthday. Finally, Van Wingerden worked on getting jams and jellies at Lanphier Center, making the class roster available on Canvas, and he is currently working on implementing hammocks around campus.

For many of the students who served on the council for multiple years, or are continuing their tenure this coming year, a common theme has been growth. As Schmidt explained, "our members have really matured and understood that student council is not just the ideas that we want to pass, but it's the standard we're setting for the community." Student Council Advisor Dr. Mary Roca agreed with this sentiment, pointing to growth and connection she saw in many of the seniors with whom she had worked since freshman year.

As the 2025-2026 Student Council passes its leadership to a new group of members, President Ben Lee '27 and Vice President Katherine Zhou '27 look ahead to their goals for the year. Dr. Roca also noted the transition to the new council: "This current council has a lot more new faces ... which means new ideas and new perspectives, and a chance to see things from a different angle." Zhou said her goal was to do her "absolute best to stay true to my word." She also expressed her confidence in the incoming council, adding, "I think that we are going to have a very productive year ... we're gonna make a lot of change that is actually applicable to the student body."

As the 2025-2026 Student Council steps aside and passes the torch on to the next, the flame continues, leaving a clear mark on campus life, and the incoming council carries forward the momentum and responsibility to build on it.

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"Fidelitas et Integritas": The Motto That Defines Choate

By **Anna Park '29**
Copy Editor

Inscribed on official documents or nestled in the school website, Choate's motto, "Fidelitas et Integritas," appears in many corners of campus. Yet few understand the meaning, history, and applications of this motto. "Fidelitas et Integritas," a Latin phrase, stands for fidelity and integrity, referring to the development of character through loyalty and honesty. The Choate School officially adopted the motto "Fidelitas et Integritas" in 1907, according to the Choate Rosemary Hall Fall 2013 Bulletin. After multiple other school logos and mottos, in 1997, the motto was changed back to "Fidelitas et Integritas" and has been in use ever since.

Fidelity and integrity are key values connected to one's character. Choate fosters this development of personal character and morals through a four-year journey.

Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 recognized that on the academic side, the motto means "doing the [school] work ... recognizing that you are not alone and asking for help ... It is staying engaged in the learning process and with one another because we learn from and with each other. It is about revision, it is about listening, it is about agreeing or disagreeing, and respecting humanity." In an athletic setting, "It is about commitment to teammates, to your coaches, to your preparation, and showing up. It is about being honest with yourself as an athlete, respecting your opponents in both victory and defeat because we are all competing, and it is about celebrating those moments," he said.

Mr. Gilyard referenced community-wide standards in places like dorms and the dining hall. He said, "We treat people with compassion, integrity, and respect even when we disagree. We make hard choices in the face of difficulty."

"Fidelitas et Integritas" is exemplified through all members of Choate, regardless of role. Faculty members serve not only as teachers but also as mentors and coaches to the student body. Staff ensure that the School runs smoothly every day, and our Deans and the Head of School oversee Choate as a whole. Choate Alumna and Director of Day Students Ms. MaryLiz Williamson highlighted Mr. Gilyard as someone who strongly represents the values of the school motto. "The care that he has for his colleagues, this place, for the students ... there is real care for all. We often say that integrity is a thing that you do when you think no one's watching, and so to that end, he is always encouraging us to be that," she said.

Students also take charge of representing the motto in positions such as, but not limited to, Student Council, the Judicial Committee, sports captains, Gold Key Leaders, and prefects. English teacher and Nichols Dorm Head Dr. Mary Roca noticed various places across campus where students' actions and words set an example. She said, "I think I see it where students are looking out for and supporting each other. So whether that's in the dining hall, reminding, 'Hey, we have to make sure we clean up after ourselves,' or kind of holding each other accountable." Dr. Roca also said that integrity appears "in the JC process, or when students kind of acknowledge 'I took a shortcut that I shouldn't have taken.' I think one thing I really appreciate about our school community is that we have a lot of students who reflect and speak up when they know something isn't right."

Integrity and loyalty to the school are ubiquitous, appearing in both academic and extracurricular settings. "It's really not supposed to be anywhere else, but where you are at a given point in time. It's there when you're in a classroom, it's there when you're on an athletic field. It's there when you're giving a speech at the School Meeting. It's there when you're on stage performing," Ms. Williamson said. "I personally don't think we can delineate it, but it should be pervasive and everywhere."

The legacy of "Fidelitas et Integritas" will continue to be the beacon of the Choate community in years to come. In the words of Ms. Williamson, "through education, through connections with each other, and the worlds that students inhabit, the world faculty and staff inhabit, we're all part of this community trying to accomplish this goal of learning, growing, and doing it in a way that we can all feel proud of."

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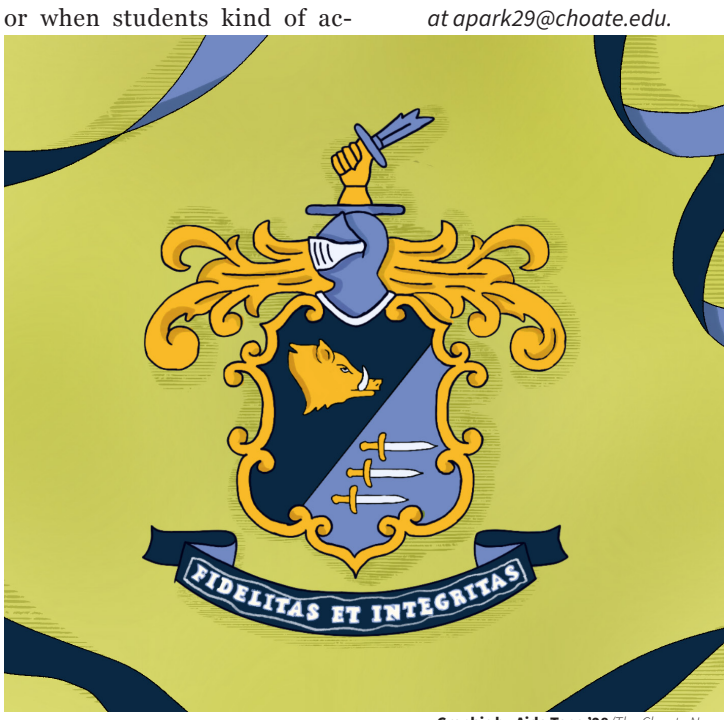

Graphic by Aida Tepe '28/*The Choate News*

Boars Offer Help: Choate's Math and Writing Centers



Graphic by Aida Tepe '28/*The Choate News*

By **Suyeong Hahn '27**
Staff Contributor

Whether it's for help in math or writing, Choate offers students the opportunity to get involved through its tutoring centers. In these collaborative environments, students can seek peer support at the Andrew Mellon Library throughout the week. Student tutors step into leadership roles, fostering a learning environment where connection and personal growth fuel academic success.

The writing center was established in the spring of 2016 with a vision to provide students with a peer-to-peer tutoring program. English teacher Dr. Stephen Siperstein emphasized the importance of a peer-to-peer system. "Collaborating with a peer removes the pressure of evaluation and judgment," he said. The math center was found to offer similar support to students.

Both centers offer students not only academic support but also opportunities to grow as leaders. Writing Center tutor Jamie Lee '27 credited his visits to the writing center during his freshman year as inspiration to become a tutor himself. He finds fulfillment in witnessing a process that mirrors his own. "Students come in stressed about an assignment, often just needing reassurance. You can really tell they are more confident by the time they leave ... It also makes you proud to know you were able to be a stepping stone for someone else," Lee said.

Math tutor Julie Ha '28 has also enjoyed providing a helpful framework for her peers. One of her students came in after an assessment and "told me that the strategies I told her really helped her to navigate during the test, and that really made me feel proud," she said.

However, the role comes with its own set of challenges. "We talk about wearing different 'hats,'" Lee said. "It can be hard to figure out which role I should be playing ... should I agree with them or should I clarify things more? ... But over time, it becomes more natural."

Math tutor Daniel Shim '28 finds a similar challenge in accommodating students' learning styles. "Sometimes something feels easy to you, but the student doesn't understand it," Shim said. "You might have to explain it in different ways and show different methods so the student can understand it better," he added.

However, for Shim, the joy he has found through connecting with his peers has been incredibly rewarding. "I love being around a wide range of students and even just spending time in the library, building those connections," he added.

Writing tutor Rafia Pasha '26 also emphasized creating a warm environment before delving into the work. "Sometimes it can be difficult to get the student comfortable with sharing [their piece]," she said. "I have found that talking a little bit to get to know each other ... makes the atmosphere a little friendlier."

Ha noted that even as a tutor, she continues to learn from other students. "I really appreciated the chance to talk to [my] peers about [math], and I also learned a lot. It helped me with my class, too," she said.

Dr. Siperstein emphasized that students should not be discouraged from visiting these centers. "Any kind of writer can go to the writing center for any piece of writing at any stage of the process."

"Enjoy it," Lee advised aspiring tutors. "It creates a more positive effect on life overall. Just have fun, interact, because ... you might even make lifelong friends."

Choate's tutoring opportunities offer peer support in a comfortable, accessible environment to students at every level. With this culture of peer mentorship, the Choate community grows stronger in both confidence and connection.

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Last Sonatas and Serenades: Seniors Wrap Up Their Musical Journeys With Solo Recitals



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Burgstahler '26

Elizabeth Burgstahler '26 plays the piano at her senior recital on March 29.

By **Oola Breen-Ryan '29**
Copy Editor

From pianists to vocalists to violinists, Choate has no shortage of musical talent. As seniors near the end of their academic and musical journey at Choate, they have the opportunity to plan, practice for, and perform a solo recital in front of their peers, teachers, and family.

This spring, seniors will perform pieces ranging from simple songs they learned as freshmen to long, intricate concertos. "It really is a scrapbook of everything that they've done," Administrator of Music Ensemble and Private Lessons Ms. Ashlee Hyatt said.

Stephanie Nguyen '26

For Stephanie Nguyen '26, her senior piano recital serves as a way to "fully wrap up my musical journey at Choate." Nguyen has been playing the piano for many years, so she believes this recital will be a capstone of her trajectory. "I started at a pretty young age. It was at a friend's sleepover. She played the piano, and I thought it was really cool, so I decided to come with her to her music lesson," Nguyen said, explaining how her piano journey began.

During her recital on May 17 in the Colony Hall Auditorium, Nguyen will play a variety of compositions, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Sonata in C Major, which has added sentimental value for her. "It's a pretty simple piece, but I think that when I performed [it] my first time, I was in third or second grade. Third grade was really when I started taking the piano a little more seriously," Nguyen said. Now, nine years later, she has come full circle. "I'm excited [to] just [get] up there, performing. That's why I'm doing this ... showing my friends and family, showcasing my music," she said.

Kristie Lu '26

For Kristie Lu '26, a violinist, this recital serves as both a finale to her Choate musical career and a hopeful look at her future. "Violin is something that I'm so passionate about, that I don't think I'll ever stop doing," Lu said.

Lu is a member of the Juilliard Pre-College music program, and performed her Juilliard senior recital on April 11. She's excited to play in the chapel for her upcoming Choate recital on May 10, because the acoustics will be different from her Juilliard recital. "It's definitely a different space ... I did hear that the sound projects well," she said. "I'm excited to play there because I love playing in spaces with good acoustics."

Brianna Hekle '26

Brianna Hekle '26 sees her relationship with music as a symbiotic dynamic, and wants her recital to be a tribute to that. "I've put so much time and effort into music, and music has also given me a lot," she said. Hekle's main instruments are voice and violin, but she also plays the piano and guitar for fun. In addition, she is a part of Choate Chorale, Symphony Orchestra, and Bellacanto. "Music has always been a part of my life," she said.

Hekle plans on performing a combination of voice and violin pieces in her recital on May 10. "For voice, it's going to be some classical songs in different languages, so I'm doing a French piece, I'm doing an Italian piece ... I've tried to put in some musical theater songs. For violin, I'm doing mazurka, which is a piece you play along with a dance," Hekle said. Her goal is to represent "this transitional phase" in her life, "where I'm leaving behind high school and moving on to college."

Elizabeth Burgstahler '26

Elizabeth Burgstahler '26, whose piano and voice recital was on March 29, views her recital as "a culmination of what I've done throughout my time at Choate, and just playing piano in general." Her musical journey has been lifelong. "My family has always really prioritized music," Burgstahler said. She has played piano her whole life, but only started singing in her third-form year at Choate, when she joined a cappella and choir.

In her recital, Burgstahler sang two songs and played four songs on the piano. "I mostly played things from my senior year," she said, "but I did play the piece that I auditioned for Arts Con with." She also wanted to highlight the friends and family that helped her get to this point. "I ended my senior recital with a chamber piece ... my sister, who plays the cello, came and played, and one of my friends came," Burgstahler said. The presence and cheers of her family and friends served as a major motivational factor.

Sixth-form musicians have demonstrated passion and dedication to music over the past four years, and their senior recitals serve as a polished showcase of their talent, a final homage to their Choate instrumental career, and a celebration of their achievements. "I think that this recital is hopefully a chance for me to express my gratitude to the people at Choate who have contributed to my musical experience," Hekle said, "and then just express my gratitude to music itself."

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Music and Academia: Choate Faculty are "Undefinable," Too

By **Bridget Rivard '28**
Staff Contributor

Maybe you've seen them perform at School Meetings or campus events. Maybe you've been in one of their classes that they've integrated a musical component into. Or maybe you had no idea that your teachers have hobbies and passions outside of teaching until today. Several faculty members at Choate are passionate musicians, and these teachers have applied a musician's lens to life at Choate both inside and outside of the classroom.

Many students may have seen Philosophy teacher Mr. Morgan Harris perform bass guitar during School Meeting or play the drums during the winter play, *Airness*. He started his musical journey on the piano when his parents put him into lessons at nine years old. However, recurring stage fright and reluctance to practice caused him to lean away from the instrument. He first picked up a bass guitar when he was in sixth grade. "I started learning bass from just doing it live, just playing, just getting together with some friends and ... play[ing] in a few different little bands in high school."

In addition to playing in these small bands, Mr. Harris shared that his high school hosted a "Coffee House" event every couple of months, "where people would ... play live music and read poetry and show films they made, and it was a cool little creative thing." He continued with bass guitar, forming a ska ("fast reggae with horns") band in his junior and senior years of high school that rehearsed in the band room before school. In college, Mr. Harris experimented with banjo, mandolin, and eventually drums. Mr. Harris hadn't played the drums in a live setting since college, until he had the opportunity to open for the *Airness* show this winter.

Mr. Harris believes that "It's absolutely vital to maintain a creative outlet as an adult." Mr. Harris emphasized the reset music provides him with, saying that "something as simple as just being able to grab an acoustic guitar and play one song for five minutes is ... an incredible reset."

Meanwhile, Science teacher Ms. Kit Stone cited oboe as her musical passion, drawing from years of experience. "I grew up in a household where classical music was always playing, so I gained an appreciation for music from a very young age," Ms. Stone said. "I started playing the oboe in fifth grade when my mom suggested it might be an instrument I would like for the challenge."



Photo courtesy of Ms. Kit Stone

Ms. Kit Stone plays her oboe.

Ms. Stone continued her music journey at Cornell University by minoring in music and was principal oboist in the Cornell Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra for six years. "Some of my favorite memories include performing at Carnegie Hall in high school and playing all five of Beethoven's Piano concertos across two evenings in college," Ms. Stone said.

For 10 years before coming to Choate, Ms. Stone frequently taught oboe private lessons. Although teaching at Choate and coaching volleyball for two seasons reduces time for music lessons, Ms. Stone continues to integrate music into her daily life. "I still find time on the weekends to play just for myself," she said.

Playing the oboe has taught Ms. Stone the value of putting in hard work. "Music has taught me so much about discipline," Ms. Stone said. "Especially playing an instrument like the oboe, where it takes years and years of work to develop your sound and the strength to support a clear tone. You have to be dedicated to practicing every day, and even then, progress is slow."

For Ms. Stone, using music as a medium to gain connection with others is especially important. "Find people to play with," she said. "Start a quartet or a quintet with friends. Music is made to share with people and it is always more fun with friends!"

For students at Choate who balance passions in the arts with other interests, Mr. Harris suggests students "mindfully multitask" in a way that allows you to engage in multiple activities without overwhelming your brain. "Seek out those opportunities to practice your craft. You also get to make special bonds with other people in the process," Mr. Harris advised.

The musical passions of Choate faculty demonstrate the multidimensional backgrounds and pursuits of our teachers. As exemplified through the musical careers of Choate faculty, music integrates itself into the classrooms and daily life as an abstract creative outlet and a source for practice and discipline.

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Baking Cakes, Cookies, and Cinnamon Rolls at Choate

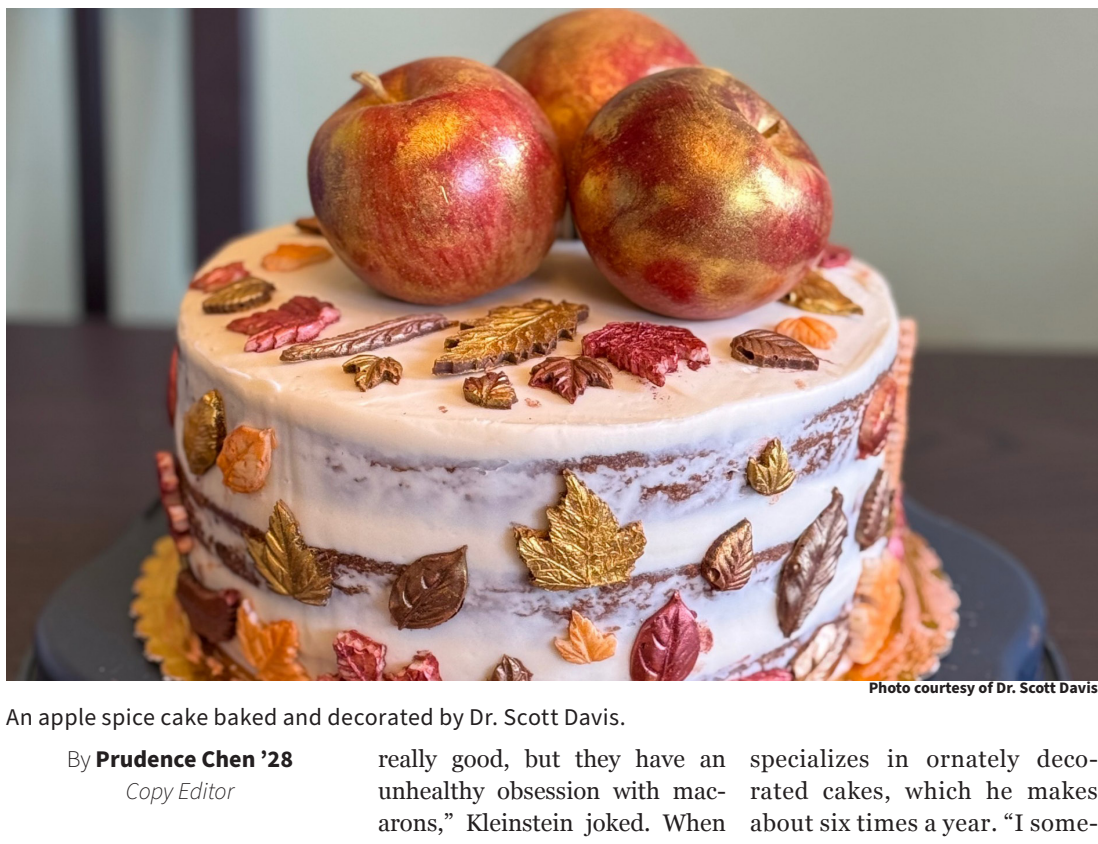

Photo courtesy of Dr. Scott Davis

An apple spice cake baked and decorated by Dr. Scott Davis.

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

Picture this: your alarm rings late. You dash down the paths, barely making it to the dining hall, where you snatch a bagel with two minutes left before class. It seems unlikely that anyone on this campus has time to eat a leisurely meal — much less make one — but there are several culinary enthusiasts on campus that find time to spend in the kitchen.

Benoit Bracey '28 spent his childhood in the kitchen and now bakes for friends at Choate. "My mom was under the firm belief that all her children should learn to cook and/or bake ... I was always sort of involved with the kitchen," Bracey said. He started out with boxed cake mix, but soon began experimenting with bread desserts, such as cinnamon rolls. "I really like working with yeast ... the process of kneading a dough, it's very hands-on," he said.

The SAC kitchen is his happy place, where he often stays late to finish baking goods for his friends."Baking for myself is cool and all, but ... food is one of the things that can bring anybody together," Bracey said.

Fellow bread enthusiast Jake Kleinstein '29 began baking when "everyone started their new hobbies during Covid." He utilizes his home kitchen to bring in treats for his classmates. "My physics class really loves macarons ... I mean, macarons are really good, but they have an unhealthy obsession with macarons," Kleinstein joked. When baking, he has a very specific process. "I am very particular; I need everything to be in the right place," he said, explaining how all his materials and ingredients must be correctly placed in his kitchen space.

For the third-former, baking isn't just about the final product. "Obviously after you bake something, you get the enjoyment of eating it ... but I also feel that the process of making food, using the ingredients and putting them together to form something bigger and delicious, it's very satisfying," he said.

Fifth-form Dean and History teacher Ms. Amy Howland lives in McCook and frequently bakes cookies and other desserts for the students that live in the dorm. She enjoys providing baked goods as "the catalyst that brings people together."

In the fall, she dabbled with apple-based recipes, and spring brought lavender to her kitchen counter. Her weapon of choice, a KitchenAid standing mixer, has made a huge difference in her cookie game. "Creaming sugar and butter by hand is a total pain in the butt. But if you use the KitchenAid mixer, it creams really fast," she said.

Dr. Scott Davis, a Language and English teacher, has been baking since graduate school. What began as a stress outlet became a passion for creating edible pieces of art. Dr. Davis specializes in ornately decorated cakes, which he makes about six times a year. "I sometimes get asked, is it sad to destroy a cake after making it?" he said. "When I think about art [I ask myself,] is it meant to be immortal? Is it meant to last forever? Or is the joy of art the enjoyment that people get out of it? And so for me, that sort of washes any feelings of losing the cake."

It's not uncommon for Dr. Davis to tweak his recipes — he "tests different iterations of [them] with substitutions and changes, usually just adding different spices to the mix." His current project is a recipe for ginger snaps, which he has "been tinkering with ... for many years."

For anyone looking to start baking, Choate's current chefs have some tips. Dr. Davis emphasized that first tries will likely be disasters, and Bracey, albeit jokingly, said, "Don't take away from my time in the kitchen." Ms. Howland recommended starting with cookies, as they "are pretty simple, and you can't go too wrong." As further inspiration for aspiring bakers, she also shared why she believes baking is important in the Choate community: "We all like to gather around food ... when I can provide the medium ... that brings people together, that feels really good."

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THE CHOATE NEWS

SPORTS

VOL. CXX • NO. 2

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2026

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Choate Fall Record

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Doors Finally Fall in Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Victory

By **Elliot Sun '28**
Copy Editor

For the Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Team, some victories mean more than a spot in the standings. On April 11, 2026, Boys' Varsity Lacrosse players and coaches made Choate history when the Wild Boars defeated Deerfield Academy 11-10 on their Senior Day. This was the program's first home win over its rival since 2005.

"Last time we beat Deerfield … I was three years old," Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Assistant Coach Mr. Tom Cottle said. Coach Cottle compared the matchup to the Army-Navy game, an annual college football game between rivals. "I think our guys came out and battled, never let their foot off the gas, and just for the whole time … we were ready to go. And at the end of the day, we just battled a little bit harder than Deerfield," he said. The team's intensity was also amplified because the game took place on Senior Day, giving the team an additional layer of motivation to win. "This is a historic rivalry, it just means a lot, not only to the team, but to the school as a whole. You could feel it after we had that victory," Coach Cottle said.

The game was anything but easy. "Deerfield is a really, really competitive team, and they're really skilled and hard working, and we knew that they weren't going to give up," Captain Joey Swan '26 said. Choate surged on to a 5-1 lead in the first quarter, but Deerfield bridged the gap and made a comeback to make it a one-goal game. Swan credited his team's composure for ensuring the lead. "We knew they would come calling back. We kept our poise throughout the game and kept fighting," he said.

Several players made crucial decisions during critical moments in the game. Goalkeeper Mac Privateer '28 delivered a series of key saves in the game's final five minutes, helping secure the win at the end. Coach Cottle commended Johnny Sippel '26 on a "breakout game," scoring important goals while energizing his teammates. "Every time he scored, he was just turning to the bench and getting everyone fired up," Coach Cottle said.

For Privateer, the win was defined less by individual effort but by their performance as a team. "We finally figured out what we need to do together as a team, instead of individually," he said. Privateer added that the triumph gave the team a "taste of victory" and a hunger to win more. "We always talk about a championship culture," he said. "Getting that first taste of what that feels like drives us closer to that."



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Boys' Varsity Lacrosse team members huddle before a game.

Looking ahead for the rest of the season, the team has a clear vision for what comes next. Both Swan and Privateer mentioned a Founders League championship as the program's primary objective, emphasizing that the win over Deerfield is only the first step before multiple hurdles. "We want to win a Founders League championship," Swan said. "There are a lot of steps along the way that will take us there."

Coach Cottle emphasized a similar message, urging his players to enjoy and savor what remains of the season. "You only get a few lacrosse seasons in your entire life," he said. "So let's enjoy it, and let's play hard while we've got the time."

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Wrestling Boars Expand the Girls' Program

By **Norah Wang '27**
Staff Contributor

Over the past four years, the girls' wrestling program at Choate has grown from a small group into a competitive and established team. What began with only a few athletes training alongside the boys has developed into a structured program with its own identity and increasing recognition.

When captain Leanne La '26 first joined the team, the program was just beginning. "There was only Sachi [Mehra '23] and Gabby [Nirmal '23] … they were the only girls on the team," she said. That year, only four additional girls joined, including herself. There was no separate girls' coach, and the athletes practiced with the boys' team. Despite these challenges, the group built a foundation that allowed the program to expand.

Now, the team looks very different. "We have 18 girls on our team now," La explained. The addition of Girls' Varsity Wrestling Assistant Coach Ms. Katie Moore, has helped create a stronger, more organized environment. With more structured practices and occasional separate sessions before tournaments, the team feels "more like a cohesive team than it was before."

Coach Moore's first year at Choate has already brought recognition. She was named Assistant Wrestling Coach of the Year at the 2026 National Prep Wrestling Championships, an achievement she did not expect. "I was completely surprised … I did not see it coming at all," she said. The award is especially significant because it was her first time coaching at a national tournament and her first time working with a girls' team. "It's pretty cool … to get recognized for all the work I put in," said Coach Moore. Her arrival reflects the program's broader growth. She was drawn to Choate not only because girls' wrestling opportunities "were starting to build up and really take off," but also because of "the amount of opportunities that come with going to a boarding school." That progress is visible in competition as well, with the team now challenging more established programs and even "giving them a run for their money all year."

One of the most important milestones this season was having a full team of wrestlers. "We had a full lineup of girls this year, which is really cool and you don't see that in the New England area at all," Coach Moore said. At both the regional and national levels, this level of depth shows how quickly the program has developed.

Looking ahead, both coaches and athletes expect the program to continue to grow. With women's wrestling added as an official event this year by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), recruitment has become a focus. The team itself includes athletes with a wide range of experiences. Team member Chloe Ross '29, the first girl in Rhode Island to ever win the Rhode Island Interscholastic League (RIIL) Middle School Wrestling State Championships, expressed her optimism for future prospects. "Altogether [it would be ideal to] have a solid team in the next two years … we still have to wrestle against boys, so maybe in the future there'd be a lot more girls," Ross added.

La also said, "the girls … [are] all incredible, and they're all passionate … some of them, it's their first year wrestling. Some of them, they've been wrestling their whole life, and I think it's a really great combination, because everyone's at different skill sets, but [here] for the same mission."

In just four years, girls' wrestling at Choate has transformed into a strong and unified program. With increasing numbers, dedicated coaching, and continued enthusiasm from its athletes, the program is positioned to keep expanding in the years ahead.

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Nothing But Net: Kim '26 Wins Honor



Photo courtesy of @choateathletics on Instagram

Abby Kim '26 receives the JCC Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award.

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

On March 28, Choate Girls' Varsity Basketball Captain Abby Kim '26 was awarded the Bridgeport Jewish Community Center (JCC) Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award at the Schoolboy/Schoolgirl Basketball Classic, the oldest running all-star game in the nation. "It was really special, I just don't really have many words to describe it — just grateful," she said.

For Kim, though the award was individual, she also credited her coaches, teammates, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) teams she played for, and the close-knit atmosphere of Choate Girls Varsity Basketball, who have collectively shaped her development. She emphasized that the team's chemistry allowed her to perform skillfully."I think this year we've been probably the closest off the court … and I think that was really influential for all of us," Kim said.

Kim also commended the Girls' Varsity Basketball team culture. "There's a lot of … different obstacles that we face as a team," she said, adding that teammates' collaboration skills helped them improve. Kim noted that above all, the sport reminded her about "the value of teamwork and struggle."

Kim was grateful that her efforts were validated through this award. "It was really cool that a lot of [my] work paid off, and that people recognize that," she said. "Though in season that's where the glory and the games are, I think the offseason is where the most [of my] improvement comes from."

Kim's primary takeaway from receiving the award was the power of self-confidence and a strong support system. "I think that sustaining confidence in yourself and surround[ing] yourself with people who will support you in all your aspirations … really help[s]," she said.

Next year, Kim will continue her academic and athletic career at Williams College. "I'm hoping to be the leading three-point-scorer … my goal is to dream big," she said.

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From Student Athletes to Spring Sport Coaches

By **Taehee Kim '29**
and **Gaby Yeung '29**
Reporters

With the snow cleared and the temperature on the rise, Choate's spring athletes and coaches have finally broken out of hibernation. The spring sports season has officially started, led by experienced coaches who make the shift from classrooms to the fields, court, or water after school to guide each team to victory.

English and Humanities teacher Mr. Ned Gallagher currently serves as the Boys' Varsity Tennis Head Coach. He was an active student-athlete throughout his high school and college career, primarily playing tennis. "I was used to spending my afternoons doing things associated with physical activity … coaching is another form of teaching, so it just seemed like a different way to do the same job," he said. Reflecting on his time as a student athlete, Mr. Gallagher talked about the importance of coaches. "I think one learns as an athlete from role models, so I've had good coaches and then I've had coaches that I didn't want to be like. Both of those are helpful, whether it's a positive or negative role model," Mr. Gallagher said. "I was fortunate that I had good coaches that I could emulate and take important lessons away from." Mr. Gallagher has also realized that coaching a sport goes beyond winning, emphasizing that "when focused on improvement, the winning takes care of itself." Instead of the outcomes of their games, Mr. Gallagher believes the foundation of his team is built on the athletes' connections with one another. "The relationships endure more than the wins and losses," he said.

Though U.S. History and Contemporary Issues teacher Mr. Tom Cottle dabbled in hockey, track and field, basketball, and football in his high school years, he found his passion in lacrosse. Mr. Cottle currently coaches the Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Team. "It is really fun, and a blessing, to be able to go outside and be part of a team for a couple of hours every day," Mr. Cottle said. As a particularly timid kid in the beginning of his high school career, sports was his main avenue that enabled him to begin "making friends and [become] more confident." Mr. Cottle played lacrosse throughout high school and played for Vassar College. "I fell in love with a lot of the nuances of the game … as I got older in my career, I really enjoyed being more of a leader," he added. Mr. Cottle described his players' progress over the years as an "incredibly fulfilling moment," experiencing first-hand the growth of his students as people and athletes. "I think the full circle moment is just seeing a lot of guys come out of their shell too, through sports," he said. He also hopes that his students learn how to effectively contribute as members of a large, diverse team, where they hone skills that they can "take into every single area of life, family, workplace, and social settings."

Girls' Varsity Crew Head Coach Ms. Stephanie Neul, also a Mathematics and Computer Science teacher, found the sport to be an essential part of her college experience. Although she deeply cares about both coaching crew and teaching statistics, balancing such commitments have made her feel especially torn in the spring. She overcomes this adversity by upholding separate "modes" in the different settings, to ensure she can fully immerse herself in each activity. "When it's practice time, I don't really think about anything that's happening in the classroom … I keep them separate so that I can put my full energy into both." Ms. Neul mentioned that she had witnessed some of her athletes struggle with similar feelings, many of whom struggled to find time to sleep and eat due to their overwhelming schedules. To combat this, Ms. Neul consistently reminds them that rest and recovery are just as important as working.

All coaches at Choate put forth their lifelong passions into nurturing their athletes, new and old, all in hopes that they discover and grow the same passion for the sport. Mr. Gallagher emphasized the value of spending time with students beyond an academic setting. "I think the most rewarding thing is you get to know your students outside the classroom … we coaches spend more time with the kids on our teams [than other students] … those are some of the most impactful relationships between adults and kids in the school," he said.

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