The Choate News

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Keeping the Torch Lit: Choate Welcomes Olympians

By **Reinah Lee '26**
Sports Editor

On January 25, the School hosted its 34th annual Diversity Day, welcoming keynote speakers and American Olympic Gold Medalists Ms. Tara Davis-Woodhall and Mr. Hunter Woodhall to campus. The power couple, who went viral at the 2024 Paris Olympics, spoke to the Choate community through the lens of this year's theme: "Keeping the Torch Lit: Athletes and Advocates for Justice," curated by the Equity and Inclusion (E&I) team.



Photo by Emily Ma '25/*The Choate News*
The Woodhalls address the Choate community on January 25.



Photo by Emily Ma '25/*The Choate News*
Choate students converse with Ms. Davis-Woodhall and Mr. Woodhall.

"Today's theme builds on the work of Dr. [Martin Luther King Jr.], Bill Russell, and countless other athletes who have used and continue to use their platform to fight for a better world. It reminds us that the fight for justice is ongoing and that we all have a role to play in carrying the torch forward," Dean of E&I Dr. Rachel Myers said. Thanks to the dedication of Dr. Myers and her team, along with contributions from Facilities, SAGE Dining Services, American Building Maintenance (ABM), Athletics, and the Andrew Mellon Library, this year's program featured an all-school Q&A with the Woodhalls, workshops, and film screenings.

Alia Rasheed '25 introduced Ms. Davis-Woodhall and Mr. Woodhall, who then participated in an engaging discussion in Ann and George Colony Hall, moderated by student-athletes Mia Bratti '25 and Kino Liu '26. Ms. Davis-Woodhall, the fourth American woman to win gold in the long jump at Paris 2024, and Mr. Woodhall, who took home gold in the Paralympic 400M T62 event, have become advocates for diversity and inclusion in athletics. They have used their platforms to speak on social media and now to the Choate community.

A major focus of their discussion was mental health in athletics. While many athletes are expected and encouraged to endure their mental roadblocks, the Woodhalls' work focuses on reversing this harmful narrative and sharing personal strategies to address and alleviate it. Ms. Davis-Woodhall spoke to the School about her experience with mental health struggles and the ways it impacted her athletic career. "It took a toll on everything I did ... I couldn't do it alone," she said. Ms. Davis-Woodhall shared advice on facing difficult mental battles, recommending journaling as a tool to express her anxieties and be "free of those words."

The Woodhalls also emphasized the pivotal role that social media has played in serving as a platform to voice their concerns and redefine what it means to be an athlete. Ms. Davis-Woodhall believes that if sharing her story can help one person, it is valuable. "With me voicing my thoughts and how I feel about track and field or how I've struggled mentally, I feel like I've helped someone," she said. Mr. Woodhall also appreciated how using social media can help inspire others in their own pursuits. "Even if they're not atheletes, [other people] can find parallels between what athletes do and what they do in their daily life — because it's an exact transaction of how much work you put in," he said. Mr. Woodhall credits his success to the countless others who took a chance on him when he was working his way through college athletics, especially as a Paralympic athlete. "The reason I'm here today is because of those who took a chance on me for being different. ... So for us, social media is how we can give back to that and connect with people."

Students appreciated hearing the advice from the Woodhalls and empathized with the obstacles the Woodhalls faced. Juju Iannace '27 said, "Having the Woodhalls visit and share their challenges with us felt incredibly rewarding. It was comforting to realize that athletes are not alone in facing similar problems that even gold medalists have gone through."

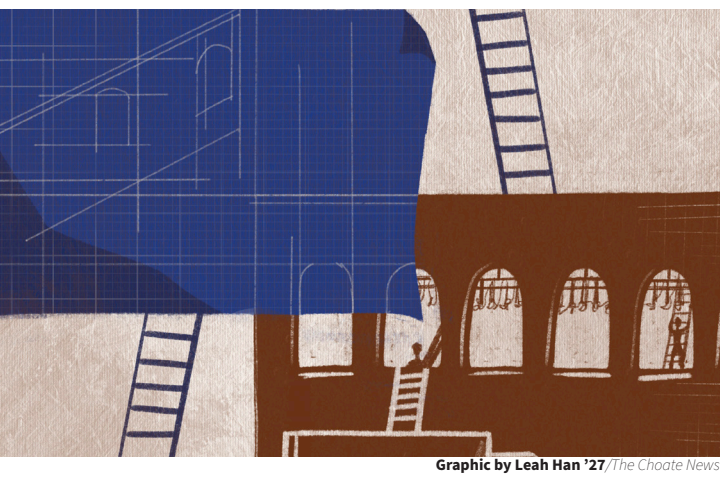
Diversity Day provided students with the opportunity to explore a variety of topics through student- and faculty-led workshops and screenings. Rodrigo Chon Him '25 collaborated with Squash program coaches Mr. Will Morris, Ms. Jenny Elliott, and Mr. Michael Rodriguez to lead a workshop examining a case study on the non-profit Squash and Education Alliance. Participants discussed the ways in which institutions can promote equity through access to sports, academic resources, and long-term student development. "Especially in New England, squash is a very popular sport, so I think it's really important to prioritize equality when it comes to having enough resources," Chon Him said.

Students who opted for afternoon sessions were similarly immersed in learning opportunities surrounding the intersection of diversity and athletics. Hosted by Associate Dean of College Counseling Ms. Michelle Thompson-Taylor in Getz Auditorium, 20 students engaged in a dual movie screening and reflection workshop for *The Real Mo Farah*. The documentary followed British long-distance gold medalist, Mohammad Farah, who was illegally trafficked to be a domestic servant from Somalia, as he opened up about his struggles with his identity as an athlete. After the showing, students were given three choices to reflect on: silent journaling, a sticky-note Q&A, or an active open discussion. Fernanda Opazo Aravena '25, a participant in the Q&A session, appreciated how the activity supplemented the screening. "The reality of athletes who have experienced human trafficking is a major issue that is not addressed often ... it really gave me a new perspective of what some athletes go through," Opazo Aravena said.

In addition to fostering positive discussions around campus, the Woodhalls also inspired different ways communities like Choate can make improvements for all-around wellness. "Create spaces where you can talk about things and be nonjudgmental," Ms. Davis-Woodhall said. The couple left Choate with the message of showing up for each other and encouraged the School to continue to host school-wide wellness forums and discussions. "Lead with empathy ... You're either winning, or you're learning," Mr. Woodhall said. Ms. Davis-Woodhall added, "I think that the most important thing is just being there for each other, even through the hardest days, even through the best days."

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Dining Hall Renovation and Carr Hall Building: Campus Construction Updates



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

By **David Ionescu '27**
Reporter

This year, Choate's campus has experienced ongoing disruptions from two major construction projects: the construction of Carr Hall, which will serve as the new Admission Office, and the expansion of the Hill House dining hall. Both projects have generated anticipation among students eager to see the final results.

According to Director of Facilities Mr. Stephen Harrison, the construction of Carr Hall is well underway and is scheduled to open in the fall of 2025. Gold Key Leader Natalie Yuh '26 shared her excitement for the new building: "I think that building Carr Hall is a great investment for Choate. It provides a big center to campus that will be great for Gold Key Leaders and Ambassadors," she said. With admission tours moving to Carr Hall, "It will be a positive addition to campus for our prospective [families] to be in when they first arrive at Choate," Yuh added.

The newly expanded dining hall is expected to be ready for use in the spring of 2025, although an exact opening date has yet to be announced. According to Mr. Harrison, "Once the roof is fully installed and weather-tight, we can announce the details about a reopening date." Reflecting on the dining hall renovation, Andy Stahlman '26 said, "The new and improved look of the dining hall will be incredibly refreshing compared to the current dining hall situation. The blueprints that [Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis] showed us during the School Meeting looked really nice." The revamped servery will be three times larger than the original floor plan, allowing for more space to accommodate Choate community members. "I'm excited for the reduced wait time to get food, especially on rush days like Wednesday," Stahlman said. "The larger servery will reduce the dining hall crowded-ness around the seating areas."

Mr. Harrison also noted his excitement about the renovation of the dining hall: "[The] increased size combined with efficient food station flow should really enhance the dining experience for our students and faculty by cutting down on lines and pinch points," he said.

However, there have also been several challenges surrounding both construction projects. "Renovations can be tricky due to unknowns," Mr. Harrison said. "Some examples of unforeseen conditions may be building utilities and infrastructure that are in unexpected locations, structural components that prevent routing of new utilities, and unknown soil conditions for times when excavation is needed." Furthermore, older buildings may contain components with little documentation to support their function. As a result, "This can take time and effort to properly understand during a project," Mr. Harrison said. Despite these obstacles, progress with both buildings continues steadily.

As the dining hall renovation nears completion, students and faculty can look forward to a new dining experience that prioritizes both space and efficiency. Meanwhile, the construction of Carr Hall will provide the Admission Office with more space and the student body with a newly restored football field. Although some challenges have arisen during the construction process, the steady progress and commitment from the construction team will ensure that both facilities are worth the wait.

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Wellness Block Gives Students A Chance To Recharge

By **Alexis Lee '28**
Reporter

On January 21, Choate students took the afternoon to unwind with an activity of their choice during the designated hour-and-a-half wellness block. Students were able to choose between offerings such as free skate in the Remsen Arena, free swim at the Larry Hart Pool, and snacks and board games in the Student Activities Center (SAC).

The purpose of wellness blocks, which usually occur around the middle of each term, is to "give students and faculty a chance to pause and engage should they choose," Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 said. This initiative stemmed from community feedback about the need for unstructured time during the school day. "Because students are often stretched so thin, giving them this time provides a little bit of peace of mind," Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long said. Unlike previous years, when students had to sign up in advance and be at designated activities during the block, students were given more flexibility this year and did not have to sign up for specific activities.

Ms. Long shared the benefits of this change: "Sometimes there's stress in making sure [students] sign up for the activity that they want or [finding another activity] if it gets full. So taking that piece away for the winter term just adds another layer of relaxation for students to be able to go where they want," she said. Dana Chung '26 enjoyed this transition and said, "It gave me a lot of peace of mind to not have an obligation at a certain time and just be able to do whatever I wanted to do. It was also nice that I didn't have to stress about signing up for the same activities as my friends before it filled up."

One of the most popular activities was the free skate session, organized by Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life Mr. Pat Dennehy. "Since skating is a classic winter activity, I thought this was something we should offer," he said. However, he acknowledged the challenge of limited rental skates. "I would like to see us have more resources for students to borrow skates because not everybody has their own," Mr. Dennehy said. Despite this limitation, students emphasized that the people, not just the activity, made their time at the rink enjoyable. Gabi Gigliani-Alcantarilla '28 said, "They were out of skates when I got there, but I just went on the ice with my shoes. My friends also carried me across the ice while I sat in a chair. It was so much fun being with my friends, even though I wasn't skating the whole time."

Free swim was also offered during the wellness block for the first time. Many students took advantage of the opportunity by setting up water polo nets, swimming laps, or just floating around. "It was fun watching kids in three different sections doing their own thing," Assistant Director of Athletics and Aquatics Director Mr. Nolan Silbernagel said. "I loved seeing kids bonding over swimming."

Regardless of how students chose to spend their time, this term's wellness block gave the community a moment to pause. Mr. Gilyard hopes that students were able to use the time to step away from their usual routines and enjoy a well-deserved break. "Hopefully, students engaged in an activity they hadn't had the chance to enjoy for a while," he said. "But most importantly, I hope they were able to decompress."

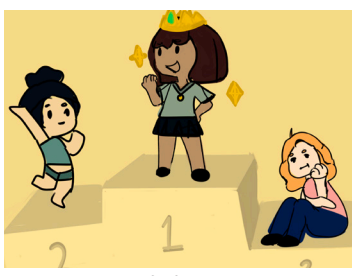
Alexis Lee *may be reached at alee28@choate.edu.*



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos
Choate students enjoy the wellness block at free skate.

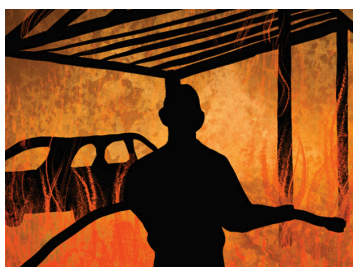
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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Sabrina Liu '28, Rielle Reyes '27, and Leah Han '27.



SCHOOL NEWS

Students Attend Yale MUN

By **Hiyab Mebrahtu '27**
Reporter

From January 23-26, over 2000 students from more than 40 countries gathered for the 51st annual Yale Model United Nations (YMUN) conference. During the conference, delegates engaged in intense debates, drafted resolutions, and built strategic alliances in a fast-paced and high-energy environment simulating the actual United Nations. Each year, a select group of Choate students attend YMUN for the opportunity to enhance their public speaking, cooperation, and negotiation skills.

Delegates were assigned to committees based on their interests and experience levels. General Assembly (GA) committees, the largest group, each consisted of around 70 delegates and were catered to newer participants. Delegates in GA committees focused on broader and more applicable topics, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, and they took part in more basic and structured discussions. Delegates interested in more specialized discussions could join Economic and Social Councils (ECOSOCs) with around 35 participants and engage in topics such as the World Bank and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. More experienced delegates participated in Crisis committees, which consist of around 15 delegates and require more fast-paced decision-making and problem-solving skills. This year's Crisis topics included the Chinese Communist Party in 1933 and current challenges on the Arctic Frontier.

In preparation, Choate's delegates attended pod sessions led by seasoned Choate delegates. There, they learned how MUN works and mastered various strategies for success at a conference. Delegates also researched their assigned countries, wrote a position paper summarizing their country's stance prior to the first session, and crafted two opening speeches. Furthermore, delegates participated in mock moderated caucuses and received feedback from their pod leaders to ensure they were prepared for the large amount of impromptu speaking required at a MUN conference.

Throughout seven committee sessions, delegates debated two topics. Representing their assigned nations, they delivered speeches and collaborated with other delegates to draft resolutions.

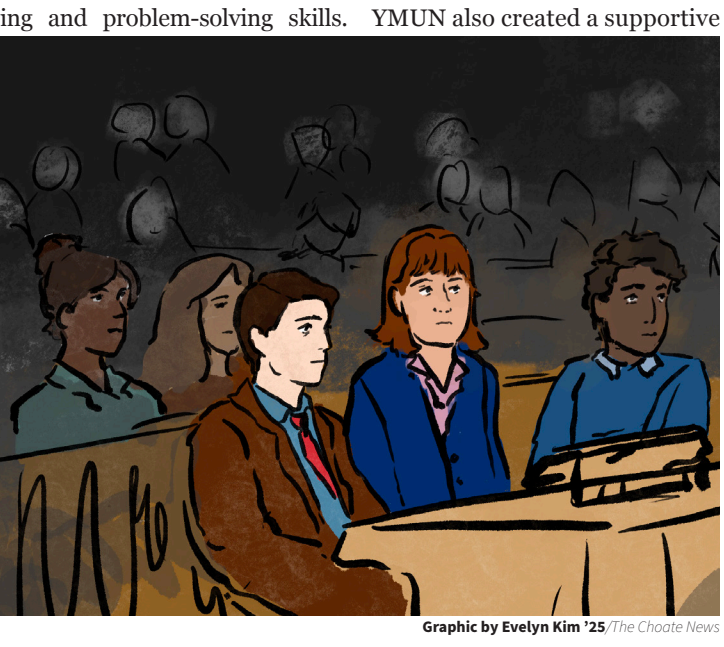
"This was my first MUN conference, and I had a great time," Victoria DeVito '27, who represented Burkina Faso in a UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction GA committee, said. "The pods were definitely helpful to practice with, but [at] the conference, it was a lot more thinking on your feet, and it moved pretty quick. But once you caught on and started learning, I definitely was able to speak on my feet faster."

While each MUN conference is considered a competition, YMUN also created a supportive learning environment for delegates to grow. "One thing that I really love is when people are speaking for the first time, and they're typically really nervous, but everybody is cheering them on, even people [who] don't necessarily agree with their stance," General Secretary of Choate MUN Honmi Oshe '26 said.

Outside of formal sessions, delegates took breaks to explore Yale University's campus and build global connections. "I've always had a fun time with it because I make lifelong friends ... it's such a fun way to meet and interact with new people outside of the School," Oshe explained. Echoing this sentiment, DeVito said, "[I] got to meet a lot of really cool people from all over the world from places like Pakistan, China, and Brazil." A highlight of the conference was FUNMUN, which occurred during the last committee session. Delegates were able to discuss less formal topics without strictly following procedure, allowing participants to become closer to each other. Oshe said, "It's really nice just to see how everybody bonded."

History Teacher and Model UN Adviser Ms. Cindy Okrah emphasized the benefits of attending conferences like YMUN. "It provides a great experiential learning experience, and students that historically have been part of the MUN have always given us great feedback," she said.

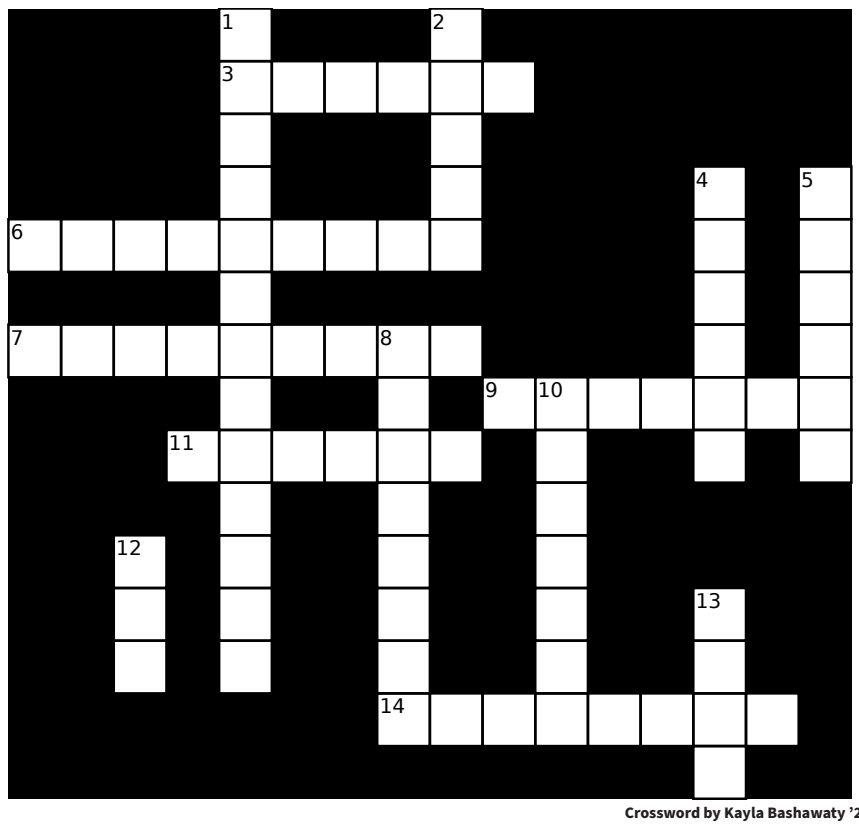
YMUN was an opportunity for delegates to learn about global issues while reinforcing their public speaking and collaboration skills. "I chose YMUN because of the culmination of different topics that are discussable, and also just because I felt like it would best demonstrate my personal skills," Oshe said. Although the major MUN conferences have concluded for this season, Choate MUN remains active, with opportunities for members to attend more minor events. Choate will host a joint MUN conference on February 16 with the Taft School, offering another opportunity for students to engage in debate and diplomacy.



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

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Cozy Up With This Crossword!



Crossword by Kayla Bashawaty '26/*The Choate News*

Across

3. Choate art class said to boost confidence.
6. Hit Netflix show directed by Dong-hyuk Hwang
7. Youtuber's Dream game?
9. Secretary of Defense Pete
11. Take editor Fu to this musicans concert ... or church
14. Choate's oldest a cappella group

Down

1. One graduating top of their class
2. Year of the ____ (Lunar New Year 2025)
4. "U" of MUN
5. "The Early Bird" study spot
8. Choate wellness activity offered for the first time this year.
10. "Lead with ___ ... You're either winning or you're learning.
12. Choate team that played its 1,000th game on 1/25/25.
13. Recommended winter reading: The ___ Child

Hanukkah Latke Party Lights Up Campus

By **Matthew Zhang '28**
Reporter

As students settled back into campus life after winter break, Choate's community spirit shone brightly at the Hanukkah Latke Party on Friday, January 17. Hosted by Rabbi Barbara Paris, the evening was filled with delicious food and festive traditions to celebrate the Jewish holiday, Hanukkah.

Although Hanukkah officially ended in December, the Choate community celebrated in January as students and faculty were away from campus for winter break. Regardless, this year's belated celebration carried the same message of light, laughter, and love.

Rabbi Paris said, "We are calling it a Belated Latke party because students don't celebrate before leaving. Therefore, it is a combination [of sharing] tradition and having fun with friends."

The star of the evening was latkes — crispy, golden potato pancakes made with onions, flour, and eggs and fried in oil. These treats hold a deep cultural significance, symbolizing the miracle of the menorah in the ancient temple of Jerusalem, where a single flask of oil burned for eight days. Alongside latkes, students enjoyed another beloved Hanukkah treat, sufganiyot, or jelly-filled donuts.

Beyond enjoying food, the event also allowed students to get involved in the kitchen. Hillel President Emily Levin '25 said, "Cooking the latkes was really fun. Everyone was either crying from the onions, struggling with somewhat faulty potato peelers, or making a mess flipping the latkes in the pan."

The evening also featured music, games, and traditional Hanukkah stories. Rabbi Paris said, "A lot of the fun happens spontaneously, people jump in to help cook, set up tables, or share stories. It's all about being together."

With a strong turnout, the Hanukkah Latke Party offered Jewish students a chance to celebrate their heritage while welcoming others to learn about Jewish traditions. Rabbi Paris summed up the event's significance: "My goal is always to bring light into the world. I want students to walk away with feelings of community, happiness, and connection," she said.

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Choate Fundraises for LA Wildfires

By **Bella Welch '26**
Associate Editor

After devastating wildfires struck Los Angeles (LA), Camdyn Naficy '28 and Davis Linardos '27 were compelled to take action and support impacted families. Naficy and Linardos met with Director of Community Service Ms. Melissa Koomson about organizing a fundraising drive to support California residents affected by the fires. "It was quite meaningful, especially after hearing Mr. Gilyard talk about it at School Meeting," Community Service Club President Dana Tan '25 said.

With the help of Tan and Community Service Club Vice President Annie Coady '26, Naficy and Linardos launched a three-day fundraiser with the Red Cross in the Student Activities Center (SAC) main space from January 17-21. Students were able to donate money either through their Choate IDs or cash, and all proceeds went towards supporting those affected by the fires.

In order to find an organization that could directly assist affected families, Tan, Coady, Linardos, and Naficy worked closely with Ms. Koomson. Coady said, "We wanted to support an organization that sends 100% of donations to the community and firefighters." Ms. Koomson and the students were initially considering the California Community Foundation, which focuses on the productivity, health, and well-being of the LA region. However, they ultimately decided on the Red Cross, recognizing that larger organizations often attract more attention and resources for relief efforts. Furthermore, Coady said, "With the larger organization, there is a lot more information online, so it was much easier to ensure that the donations were going to the actual cause and not used for profit."

With more than 60 California residents on campus, many members of the Choate community were directly impacted by the fires. Reflecting on her involvement with the fundraiser, Coady said, "We thought this issue was important because it affected people in our very own community. We felt like we needed to do something about it."

The drive not only provided financial support but also raised awareness among the Choate community about the devastating effects of the LA wildfires. "Hopefully the drive inspired students to try and make an impact, whether it was through Choate or donating online," Coady said. Ms. Koomson added, "There's an element of responsibility that humans have for creating a better world and supporting our neighbors in need, whether we know [the] people or not."

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CELEBRATING THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE AT LUNAR BANQUET

By **Maia Shah '27**
Associate Editor

Crepe paper lanterns and vibrant Chinese tapestries adorned the walls of Ruutz-Rees on January 31 as the Chinese Club and Choate Korean Friendship Association (CKFA) hosted their annual Lunar New Year celebration commemorating the Year of the Snake. Weeks of planning by both student leaders and faculty advisors, including Chinese Club President Dana Tan '25, CKFA President Lindsay Hong '25, History teacher Mr. Timothy Yun, Chinese teacher Dr. Carol Chen-Lin, Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long, and Director of Global Engagement Ms. Ashley Sinclair, culminated in a successful event.

The evening included cultural displays, entertainment, and food. Attendees enjoyed various student performances that showcased the talent within the Choate community. These ranged from musical performances featuring both instrumental and vocal arrangements to lively dance routines that captured the spirit of the New Year.

For many participants, however, the highlight of the evening was the food. Hong said, "The food is always delicious, but the boba is my favorite." Each year, organizers devote significant time and effort to creating an appetizing and culturally authentic menu while also being mindful of dietary restrictions and allergies. This year, the buffet featured an assortment of traditional dishes, including fried rice, dumplings, gyoza, stir-fried noodles, and bubble tea.

While guests savored the food, the atmosphere was one of camaraderie and joy, as students and faculty alike came together to celebrate. Attendees engaged in traditional games like Mahjong, offering seasoned players and newcomers a chance to engage in the popular East Asian pastime. Tan said, "My personal highlight of the event [was] playing Mahjong, especially teaching students who don't know how to play. It's a fun, community-building event, and once they get the hang of it, it can get really competitive."

While Lunar New Year at Choate provides students the opportunity to indulge in good food and spend time with their friends, it is also an important time to remind students of the bonds they have fostered at School. Even though being away from loved ones during a celebration that emphasizes togetherness can place emotional strain on students, Nicole Wu '27 shared how the event helped her feel connected to her family and heritage at Choate. "It brings me comfort knowing that I've found a group of people here who celebrate the same festivals as me," Wu said. "I can still be close to my heritage by celebrating it with people who care as much as I do — it's a way to still be close to my family without having to be actually physically near them."

Dr. Chen-Lin also stressed that honoring family is the most important part of the celebration: "The family gathering holds immense significance. And so since we are in boarding school, I hope we can recreate that feeling because it is essential to have a sense of family through a community gathering," she said "Students must learn how to respect different cultures and how to help each other, especially when we are in boarding school. We celebrate this place as a home away from home, and we help each other during festivals not to feel very homesick."

The event's success was a testament to the dedication of the student organizers, who spent weeks planning this memorable celebration with the guidance of faculty advisors. Attendee Sophie Chung '27 said, "Going [to the Lunar Banquet] really helped me see how big and supportive the Asian community at Choate is. The number of people who were willing to come and learn about the Lunar New Year was really cool."

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

Choate students enjoy a dinner during lunar banquet.

New Haven Authorities and Residents Respond to Hateful Anti-Immigrant Flyers

By **Kaitlyn Yu '27**
Associate Editor

On January 23, hateful flyers attacking immigrants were found throughout the East Rock Neighborhood in New Haven. The words "Deportation Now" were printed in bold on the front side of the paper, and messages threatening immigrants with the words "Get out; nobody wants you here" were printed in 10 different languages on the back.

"[The flyers] were pretty small," Reporter Mr. Matt McFarland from Eyewitness News said. "They were probably about the size of a ... business card ... with the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)] tip line number on one side." The flyers also read: "Mayor Elicker and Attorney General Tong can't protect you and your family from being locked up in jail."

The elected Alder of New Haven's ninth ward, which includes East Rock, Ms. Caroline Tanbee Smith, felt "a tremendous amount of pride" for the neighborhood's response to the distribution of the hateful flyers.

Ms. Smith also said that the community has actively tried to get rid of the flyers. "Many neighbors took it upon themselves to pick up the flyers ... there was one high school student who lives in the neighborhood who picked up 30 of the flyers by himself and threw them away," she said.

The city's administration was notified of this issue, and authorities assisted residents in the removal of the flyers from the street. "The mayor told us that the police were there ... They responded, along with the Department of Public Works, to help the neighbors pick up the flyers and ... get rid of them," Mr. McFarland said.

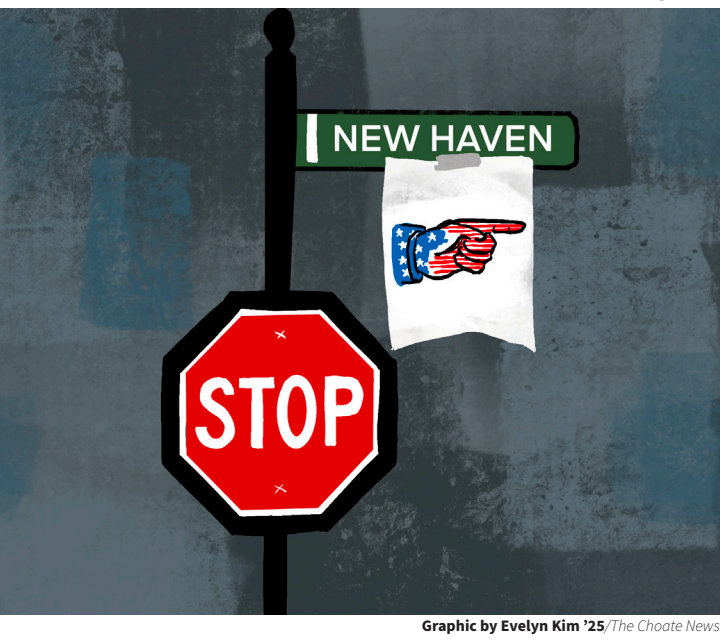
However, no steps were taken to prosecute the people who created the flyers. "It didn't rise to the level of a criminal investigation because ... while it's hate speech, it's also free speech: it's protected," Mr. McFarland explained. "[But] you could take ... pride in the way people responded, saying, 'We're not going to let this define our neighborhood. ... We're going to come together, we're going to throw this out, and we're going to take a stand.'"

The area has also been impacted in other ways due to the recent inauguration of President Donald Trump P'00. Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS) is a major nonprofit organization in New Haven that focuses on helping refugees get on their feet in New Haven County. The organization typically welcomes and supports hundreds of refugees each year. "One major change in the neighborhood has been ... having IRIS in a challenging situation, given the federal administration's decisions," Ms. Smith said. Since President Trump's decision to stop sending federal funding to recently arrived refugees, IRIS has laid off 20% of its staff.

The organization now has to rely on financial support from donations in the community and federal funding. "I've heard ... neighbors being interested in increasing their level of donations and contributions to IRIS to help fill in the gap [of less federal funding]," Ms. Smith said.

Ms. Smith encouraged young people to continue speaking up against hate. "I think the best way to respond to the feeling of wanting to shut your door a little more is to actually open it," she said.

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Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

Severe Weather Protocol Enacted for Connecticut's Unhoused Population



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

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Reporter

On January 16, Governor Ned Lamont activated Connecticut's severe cold weather protocol. Through collaboration with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the protocol ensures that vulnerable and unhoused populations have access to shelter during Connecticut's harsh winter months.

Vice President of Economic Mobility at United Way of Greater New Haven Ms. Kelly Fitzgerald explained the impact of the winter months on United Way's resource management. "There are additional funds that get put into the system so that we can pop up overnight resources to ensure that nobody dies during the really cold winter months," she said. For example, United Way, part of a greater non-profit organization, is dedicated to providing shelter, food, and financial support to people in need.

In Connecticut, the cost of living outpacing wages has led to significant increases in unhoused people. "As a state, we saw a 13% increase in homelessness ... Since the pandemic, we have seen the numbers increase, and in Greater New Haven, that number is actually a 38% increase for those that are unsheltered," Ms. Fitzgerald said.

Hundreds of people experiencing homelessness in Connecticut need places to stay, especially during dangerous, below-freezing weather conditions in the winter. "Every shelter around the state and in our region is working to ensure that every space that they have available is full," Ms. Fitzgerald said.

In addition to shelters, Connecticut has a 2-1-1 hotline coordinated by United Way, which anyone can call if they need support or shelter anytime during the year. Ms. Laura Bailey, Managing Editor of The Bristol Edition, explained how the 2-1-1 hotline is critical for unhoused people. "All the municipalities [of Connecticut] coordinate with United Way with a 2-1-1 system," she said. "It's a really great thing that we have here in Connecticut to help people during the cold." Ms. Fitzgerald further explained: "When the governor enacts severe cold weather [protocol], that is a time that 2-1-1 has increased staffing to be able to field calls for people who are in crisis."

As for what the Connecticut community can do to help unhoused people this winter, Ms. Bailey emphasized the importance of informing people about the available support systems. "Just letting people know that 2-1-1 exists is one of the best things we can do," she said. Similarly, Ms. Fitzgerald explained how educating oneself and increasing awareness about this issue is critical. "People are experiencing homelessness — those are our neighbors, and those are our brothers and sisters," she said.

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Ketamine-Assisted Therapy Introduced to the Wallingford Community

By **Eliana Li '26**
Associate Editor

On January 25, Wallingford opened its first ketamine-assisted therapy clinic at Centerpiece Behavioral Health Services. In partnership with Wholistic Perspective, a virtual mental health practice, the clinic seeks to provide an alternative treatment option for individuals struggling with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other related mental health conditions. This clinic becomes the third of its kind in Connecticut, joining two other locations in Farmington and Milford.

Centerpiece Behavioral Health Services is a full-service mental health practice that provides counseling and therapeutic services for children over five years old and their families. Recently, the clinic has expanded its services to include ketamine-assisted therapy, specifically Spravato, to offer support for those who have not responded well to traditional treatments.

Spravato, a ketamine nasal spray, has recently gained attention within the medical community for its potential benefits in mental health treatment. Director of the Division of Psychiatry Products in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research Ms. Tiffany Farchione said, "There has been a long-standing need for additional effective treatments for treatment-resistant depression, a serious and life-threatening condition." Spravato works by increasing the activity of glutamate, a neurotransmitter involved in learning and memory, and stimulating the growth of new neural connections in the brain, which may help alleviate symptoms of depression.

One of the most touted advantages of ketamine therapy is its rapid onset of alleviation. Unlike traditional antidepressants, which can take weeks to show effects, ketamine has been observed to produce improvements in mood, motivation, and overall well-being within a couple of hours. "It provides a faster-acting alternative for individuals who need more immediate relief," Centerpiece Behavioral Health Services writes.

Before beginning Spravato treatment, patients must undergo a series of evaluations to determine their eligibility for ketamine-assisted therapy. Once approved, they receive the treatment in a carefully monitored clinical environment. "Patients will be monitored closely throughout the process to ensure their safety and comfort. ... We are committed to helping you achieve the best possible outcomes," Founder of Wholistic Perspective and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Ms. Esha Bhardwaj wrote.

Due to severe risks of sedation and dissociation, the FDA requires Spravato to be dispensed and administered in medically supervised healthcare settings certified in the Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS). Patients must be monitored for a minimum of two hours following administration.

Although not many people in Wallingford have used Centerpiece Behavioral Health Service's ketamine-assisted therapy clinic yet, there have been positive reviews about similar therapies. "After just one treatment, I noticed a significant decrease in anxiety. By the third session, I noticed my depression started feeling better, and by the time I finished my sixth session, my suicidal thoughts had completely gone away. ... This treatment, along with therapy, has changed my life," Mark C. wrote in a review of the Ketamine Infusion Clinic located in Spokane, WA.

However, there have also been concerns surrounding the therapy. While the FDA has approved Spravato for treatment-resistant depression, further research is needed to fully understand its long-term effects, which may include psychological dependency and cognitive decline.

Nonetheless, the introduction of ketamine-assisted therapy at Centerpiece Behavioral Health Services in a closely monitored clinical environment offers an alternative mental health treatment option for those in need. Centerpiece Behavioral Health Services will continue to partner with Wholistic Perspective to offer support for individuals in Wallingford, providing hope to those in the community struggling with treatment-resistant mental health disorders.

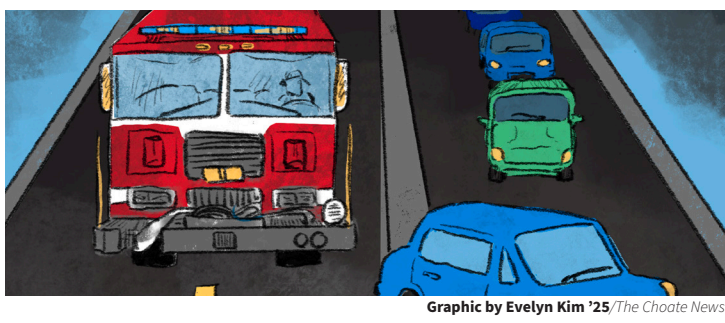
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Photo by Sabrina Liu '26/*The Choate News*

Outside view of Centerpiece Behavior Health Services.

Wallingford Fire Department Implements Safety Cloud



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

By **Max Garsten '27**
Reporter

The Wallingford Fire Department has recently implemented Safety Cloud by HAAS Alert, a new system that alerts drivers of fire trucks heading their way to ensure they move over.

Previously, fire trucks were equipped with sirens, lights, and horns to warn drivers of their approach. However, the Wallingford Fire Department has worked with the company HAAS Alert and Wallingford Public Works to add the Safety Cloud software to their alerting arsenal.

Another feature of Safety Cloud is its ability to allow departments to track the location of every vehicle in their fleet. With fire trucks already switching their sirens on because of an incident, the Safety Cloud is designed to prevent another tragedy from occurring on the streets of Wallingford.

Safety Cloud can be utilized after installing a small HA-7 transponder, a device that receives radio signals and responds with different signals, on a vehicle's emergency lights. When the emergency lights on a fire truck are on, Safety Cloud automatically sends out an Emergency Vehicle Ahead notice through on-screen dashboards in many car brands, such as Ram, Volkswagen, and Jeep. In addition, Safety Cloud's agreements with navigation companies like Waze and Google Maps create a "real-time communication network," allowing drivers to be notified via these apps. The technology alerts drivers up to 30 seconds before the responders approach their vehicle, and it also shows their live location on the car's dashboard.

According to Wallingford Fire Chief Mr. Jim Buck, Safety Cloud is another way to get drivers to "slow down, move over," he shared in a FOX61 interview. Recent studies have shown that 97% of drivers pull over seconds after getting the Safety Cloud alert. Not only does it get drivers to react safely when first responders approach, but it also prevents accidents between first responders by keeping both vehicles informed when another first responder is approaching.

In another interview with FOX61, Wallingford Mayor Mr. Vincent Cervoni explained why this new method would prove effective. He highlighted how most drivers are already distracted by the screens in their cars, so, as Mayor Cervoni explained, "We're going to turn the distraction into an important alert."

Mr. Buck commented on why this change needed to be made. "You see the trends nationwide ... with injuries and fatalities for responders who are operating on our roadways ... it's really a dangerous place for us to operate," he said. According to Pierce Manufacturing, emergency responses have cost the United States $35 billion in insurance, litigations, and vehicle repairs. To combat this problem, Safety Cloud was installed in over 3,000 U.S. departments, and Wallingford is hoping to embrace the technology's benefits as well.

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Fries without Fear: The Case for a Gluten-Free Fryer

By **Sofia Fronzi '26**
Opinions Writer

Imagine having to avoid pasta, fries, and bread at restaurants out of fear of an allergic reaction. This is a struggle I am unfortunately familiar with. Those with gluten sensitivity problems, like myself, can't eat at most restaurants; even a single crumb of contamination can turn a delicious snack into a nightmare. This fear is present on campus as well.

At Choate, the Tuck Shop is a familiar place for students to enjoy food ranging from hamburgers to quesadillas. As an active spot in a central campus location, it's a go-to option for students looking for a quick bite or alternative from the dining hall. However, for those with gluten sensitivities, it's often frustrating because many menu items contain gluten. Even foods that don't contain gluten, such as fries, are cooked in the same fryer as breaded items, making them unsafe for consumption.

In order to accommodate dietary needs on campus, the Tuck Shop should set a precedent by implementing a gluten-free fryer to provide safe food options. As someone with celiac disease, I've experienced the limited food choices around campus first-hand. After a late-night study session or game, I always think of how easy it would be for me to go to the Tuck Shop and grab something quick, but this simply isn't a possibility.



Graphic by Cora Slowe '26/*The Choate News*

Looking over the menu as a celiac, the only thing I can safely consume is soda due to the unsafe kitchen environment and the cross-contamination present. Ultimately, I often resort to ordering Uber Eats, paying four times as much for a safe meal. It's exhausting to constantly check if a restaurant has safe options for me. I've gotten sick from cross-contamination before, and it makes me anxious about eating out at all.

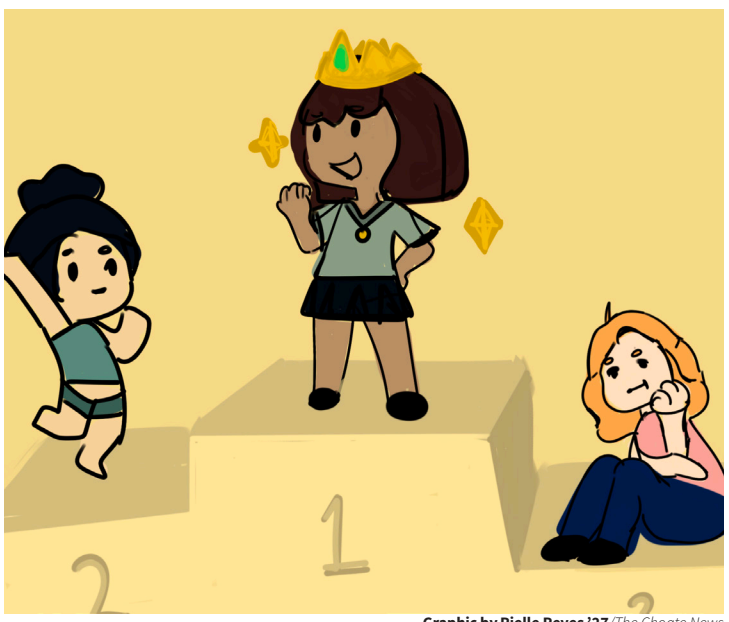
Adding a separate fryer may be unnecessary since it would initially only allow access to fries. However, this would be just the beginning. With a gluten-free fryer, the Tuck Shop could expand its menu to include gluten-free chicken nuggets, mozzarella sticks, or even onion rings, making it a game-changer for students with gluten dietary restrictions. This could change the dynamic on campus and inspire places like Lanphier Café, a popular grab-and-go option for students, to offer gluten-free pastries as well.

Implementing a gluten-free fryer isn't just about adding one more option; it's about inclusivity and accessibility for people with gluten dietary restrictions. These individuals deserve safe and convenient food choices on campus, just like everyone else. The Tuck Shop has the opportunity to change and lead by example, taking the first step to make campus dining more encompassing for all individuals. It's time to take the initiative and push for change because everyone deserves to enjoy a plate of fries without fear.

Sofia Fronzi *is a fifth-former from Fairfield, CT. She may be reached at sfronzi26@choate.edu.*

First to Finish: Why Having Valedictorians Would Encourage Excellence

By **Deyi Meng '26**
Associate Editor


Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/*The Choate News*

Imagine spending four years of your life tirelessly trying to excel in your classes and studying late into the night, only to discover that your school won't formally recognize your achievements with Latin honors, class rankings, or a valedictorian title. In a world where academic excellence is so prioritized and emphasized, this reality is disheartening.

The idea of a valedictorian or class rank system has been a staple in American high schools for decades. The method of selection is simple: students' grade point averages (GPAs) are compiled into a list and ordered from highest to lowest. Often, the student with the highest GPA is selected as "valedictorian."

Many schools, including Choate, have abolished this system, with dissidents arguing that ranking students promotes unnecessary stress and unhealthy competition, ultimately detracting from a quintessential high school experience. However, I believe that the benefits of having a valedictorian and class rank system outweigh the drawbacks because it fosters motivation, properly rewards hard work, and provides tangible advantages for students in future academic and professional endeavors.

High school can often feel like an endless stream of assignments and exams, with no purpose in pushing oneself, especially if students' hard work is never acknowledged. Having a valedictorian position solves this problem by being a clear incentive for students to strive for excellence. Although classmates must compete with each other to achieve the top few spots in their school, a moderate dose of competition can be beneficial rather than detrimental. In fact, a study conducted on 129 undergraduate students by researchers in the Department of Psychology at Rutgers University in 2015 has shown that healthy competition can drive success by enhancing attention, physical effort, and learning.

Additionally, avoiding competition during high school does not eliminate it later in life. When we grow older and enter the workforce, we will inevitably have to compete with our coworkers to secure a promotion or land a job offer. Having students participate in structured academic competition when they are young allows them to develop important skills such as resilience, time management, and handling pressure in a controlled environment — skills that will serve them well in their future careers.

A valedictorian system also serves as a concrete measure of success in high school and a reliable metric to compare students. Many existing school awards commend students for their leadership, contribution to the school community, and generosity of spirit, but these measures are subjective and open to interpretation. In contrast, GPA and class rank are clear systems of pure fact and objectivity that properly ensure success is accredited — after all, no one can debate a student winning valedictorian with a perfect 4.30 unweighted GPA over a student with a 2.70.

This metric is directly applicable in terms of college admissions. GPA and grading systems are not standardized across different high schools and are therefore unreliable. However, by ranking students in a school numerically based on their academic performance, it's easy for admissions officers to clearly distinguish between them and to see how an individual compares relative to their classmates.

Numerous arguments exist against installing a valedictorian and class rank system, with people contending that it introduces a toxic learning environment where students become hostile toward each other, sacrificing their health and well-being for a superficial title. Additionally, some argue that having a valedictorian puts the spotlight solely on one person and completely disregards the assiduous efforts of others.

However, Choate's existing Prize Day ameliorates this issue by giving multiple awards, rewarding excellence in each department, inducting students to the Cum Laude Society and still recognizing the valuable character traits of leadership and spirit. Thus, having a valedictorian system would not diminish student achievement.

Ultimately, the absence of a valedictorian and class rank system sends the false message that striving for high academic achievement is not worth the effort. If students who continuously dedicate themselves to academic excellence are not recognized, what message are we sending to future generations? Maintaining a valedictorian system not only rewards hard work but also prepares students for the realities of life beyond high school where achievement and ranking are paramount. In the end, success is not just about participation and effort, but also about performance and results.

If we reward the fastest runner in a track meet, why not also the brightest mind? After all, in the race for knowledge, the valedictorian is the person who crosses the finish line first.

Deyi Meng *is a fifth-former from Orange, CT. He may be reached at dmeng26@choate.edu.*

ADDRESSING BOARPEN'S GENDER BIAS

By **Bella Welch '26**
Associate Editor

Choate's Varsity Girls' teams deserve a student section to cheer them on to victory, not an empty crowd. Glancing up at the stands at a Saturday night home game, I mostly see my friends — because Boarpen is nowhere to be found. As soon as the girls' game ends, Boarpen and enthusiastic fans will show up to cheer for the boys.

It is clear that Boarpen struggles with balancing attendance when girls' games are empty and boys' games fill the stands. Reflecting on this disparity, Boarpen member Nao Murata '25 said, "I do believe the boys' games get more people to come, which I personally think is very unfortunate because they both work hard and they both have very exciting games."

The role of Boarpen is to encourage members of the community to support their peers in athletic competitions and other student engagements while boosting school spirit and player morale. As a member of the Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey team, I expect the atmosphere of a Friday or Saturday night home game to be electric.

This season, Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey has had two back-to-back home game weekends, and it was fairly disappointing to look into the stands expecting to see Boarpen and energetic classmates, only to see empty stands with a few families. Crowds of students show up to watch the boys' team lose 4-2 against our long-time rival Deerfield Academy when they could have also watched the girls win by six goals.

Boarpen's presence on social media aims to be captivating with photos, videos, and interviews of players all over Choate, reflecting their commitment to engaging with the community and showing up to support athletes at games around campus.

Murata said, "I try to do themes for both of them to encourage people to come to games because I think those things are key to motivating people to come and make it an event worthwhile. I think we can continue to promote both games equally and maybe even more for girls because those sometimes get cast in the shadows of the boys' game."

Boarpen generates strong social media engagement but struggles to proportionally promote boys' and girls' games. At times, Boarpen's social media posts reflect more effort and advertisement for boys' games; hence, the boys have a better turnout.

By equally distributing promotion tactics throughout social media platforms, Boarpen can shine a brighter light on the Girls' games and even the playing field. This way Boarpen can play a crucial role in reinforcing that the atmosphere of girls' games is a fun place to be on a Friday or Saturday night and combat the harmful narrative that boys' athletics are "more fun" or "more important" than girls.

Bella Welch *is a fifth-former from Scottsdale, AZ. She may be reached at bwelch26@choate.edu.*

Reflections from the Early Stages of the College Process

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**
Associate Editor

I have been thinking about applying to college since my brother got into Cornell when I was seven years old. My sister similarly left for college when I was ten years old, and since then, everyone in my family has been anticipating where I will end up.

Naturally, my parents started preparing me for the college process early in my Choate career. They bought me The Fiske Guide to Colleges my sophomore winter, beginning a countdown to the moment I got assigned my college counselor a whole year later. Since then, I've had strong expectations about what the college process will entail: some turned out to be true, whereas some differ. In the end, I have realized that this process is at its core introspective, and Choate's counselors are there to guide us through how to learn about ourselves.

Initially, the thought of sitting in a room with 30 other clueless juniors to talk about college every other Wednesday horrified me. I've always enjoyed group discussions, but have never had the desire to talk to anyone about college. However, after a couple of sessions, I realized that there is a unique comfort in sitting with people equally as clueless as you: they ask the same questions that you have, and you don't have to learn lecture-based material in a void of unfamiliarity.

I didn't expect to walk out of the first college counseling seminar realizing that I had friends in my counseling group, nor did I anticipate homework on the first day. I also did not expect the college counseling process to have already become a routine by my junior winter; something unlike any other class at Choate, yet equally



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

structured. But instead of learning about various subject matters, the college counseling course is designed to help Choate students discover more about themselves.

The junior class collectively groaned at the grade-wide email announcing a five-page questionnaire featuring multiple essays. After filling out summer applications for the past few years, the questionnaire wasn't the most daunting aspect, especially after I saw the next assignment in the college counseling process: write a three-paragraph description of yourself in the third person.

After the first seminars, and pushing through the arduous process of writing my personal narrative, I looked forward to my one-on-one meeting. I already knew my college counselor, Mr. Eric Stahura, through the golf program and because he was my sister's college counselor. I thought that because of my few conversations with Mr. Stahura, I would be able to jump right into the research process. However, to my dismay, the first meeting was discussing the personal narrative assignment for thirty minutes.

I swore to myself that I would never ask one of my siblings or an upperclassman at Choate about the college process, which made my initial experiences with the college process much more surprising. In some ways, I had no expectations at all. I came from an academically competitive middle school that was attached to a high school. Even during the pandemic, I was forced to be invested in the college acceptances and rejections of seniors I hardly knew because, even in sixth grade, everyone was already focused on college.

My first impressions of this entire process are fairly simple. Choate does advertise the beginning of the college process accurately — they preface that they have a set curriculum, but that the individual meetings can move into more or less depth based on your level of comfort in the process. The College Counseling Office is forthcoming about the fact that they will assign active work in between almost all sessions, but if you put in an extra 30 minutes every two weeks, you will be in a good place. I'm excited to get to know the people in Mr. Stahura's counseling group more, but even more so, I do think that I have been forced to ask questions about how well I know myself.

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The Other Side of the Flames: What the Tabloids Don't Tell You About the LA Wildfires

By **Anya Shah '25**
Local News Editor



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

I scroll through the news, searching for updates on my hometown. "The celebrity homes that burned in the L.A. fires," reads one Washington Post headline. "Hollywood stars share devastation from California fires," says ABC News. Forbes extends its condolences to Paris Hilton and Billy Crystal for their lost homes.

Losing a home is devastating. Seeing the empathy and kindness that L.A. residents are extending toward one another warms my heart, and I'm glad to see people supporting one another and receiving the aid they deserve. But not everyone is receiving quite the same amount.

Wildfires haven't just burned down mansions; they have also set ablaze the livelihoods of the people who keep those mansions running. Housekeepers, landscapers, nannies, gardeners — many of them immigrants — have lost their jobs, incomes, and homes. Unlike Hollywood's elite, they don't have the luxury of a second (or third) house to retreat to. Thousands of vulnerable Angelenos are losing everything, unsure if they'll ever build it back.

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Labor Center reports that over 80% of housekeepers in California are immigrants. As a result, many families in Los Angeles have not only lost their own homes but also the homes that they work in, leaving them unemployed. Domestic workers, many of whom are working paycheck to paycheck, are now deeply vulnerable. Many of their abilities to afford healthcare, buy groceries, or recover in any way from the wildfires were consumed by the very flames that made front-page news.

The Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs recorded that the city of Los Angeles has over 100,000 domestic workers, many of whom recently lost their only sources of income. For undocumented workers, the future looks even more uncertain, because they cannot apply for federal aid or unemployment benefits. With the recent inauguration of President Donald Trump P'00, the increased presence of immigration enforcement and growing fears of deportation will likely make it even harder for undocumented families to seek assistance. And yet, news reports have largely ignored their struggles.

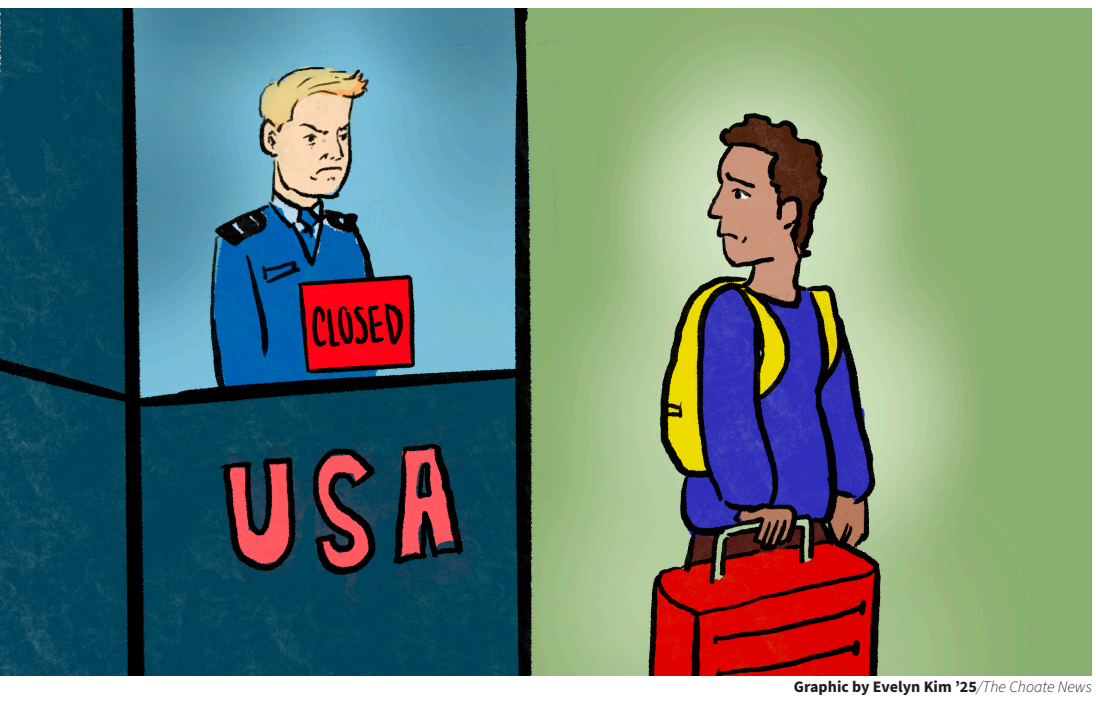
This isn't to say that celebrities don't deserve the sympathy they are receiving; losing a home is devastating, no matter who you are. However, the disproportionate focus on the famous and wealthy means that the struggles of lower-income and immigrant workers, especially those who are undocumented, are left underrepresented in the news.

Some organizations, like the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights and the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), are working to provide disaster relief to impacted low-income and immigrant families. However, this aid is often in the form of temporary items such as deodorant, diapers, and non-perishables, which fall short compared to the federal assistance the rest of the city receives.

The way headlines and news stories are presented shapes the distribution of disaster relief allocation, which can result in the most vulnerable populations not receiving the assistance they truly require and deserve. News coverage — and, by extension, disaster relief — must expand to include and uplift low-income and undocumented workers. The people who make our city function are not invisible, and they shouldn't be treated as such.

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America Broke These Countries. Now It Blames Their People.



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

By **Zaki Shamsi '26**
Associate Editor

For decades, America has created the very immigration crisis it now pretends to solve. Decades of political interference, economic strangulation, and military intervention have left entire nations in turmoil. And now, as thousands arrive seeking safety and work, the U.S. government's response isn't to fix the system that failed them but to toss them in detention centers.

Trump's immigration policies — mass deportations, Guantánamo detention plans, and military crackdowns — are as aggressive as they are performative. Former President Joe Biden may not have placed such a heavy emphasis on invasions, but he expanded border detention and deported record numbers. Neither side wants to fix immigration, because if they did, they'd lose one of their most reliable political weapons.

America Created the Crisis

Look at some of the top countries sending migrants to the southern border. These aren't just places in crisis; they are places where foreign intervention, especially from the United States, has left nations politically and economically shattered.

Haiti has not had a stable government in decades, in part because of the U.S.-backed coups that toppled democratically elected leaders. In 1954, a coup sponsored by the U.S. in Guatemala led to the overthrow of a president. The result? A civil war that lasted decades, leaving over 200,000 dead and creating a corrupt system that is still driving people out today.

And then there's Venezuela, a country suffering from an economic collapse exacerbated by U.S. sanctions. For years, the American government has blocked Venezuela from selling oil — its primary source of revenue — on the global market. The idea was to weaken the Venezuelan government, but in practice, it led to severe food and medicine shortages, economic devastation, and a mass exodus of over seven million people. Instead of acknowledging this, the response is to punish the people suffering from the consequences.

And when those same people arrive at the border, desperate for safety or work, they aren't met with a process that treats them like human beings. Instead, they are crammed into overcrowded detention centers, funneled through an asylum system designed to fail, or deported back. America helped create this instability but refused to take responsibility for the people forced to escape from it.

"Just Come Legally!"

One of the most common arguments against undocumented immigration is that people should "come the right way." The problem is that the right way doesn't exist for most people.

The waitlist for a green card can take over 20 years. Asylum seekers must navigate a legal system so backlogged that their cases often remain undecided for a decade. Work visas exist, but only in limited numbers and mainly for industries that rely on migrant labor while refusing to acknowledge its necessity. The idea that migrants could simply "do it legally" assumes that the system is designed to let them in. It isn't.

If a family is being hunted by gangs or struggling to find food, they don't have decades to wait. They aren't going to file paperwork and wait patiently while their children starve. They will run because survival doesn't come with a processing time.

The Economic Case for Immigration

Beyond the humanitarian crisis, there's a practical problem with deporting millions of people: it doesn't make economic sense. Each Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention bed costs tens of thousands of dollars per year, adding up to billions in taxpayer spending. If the government put that money toward immigration courts, legal pathways, and work programs instead of detention centers, the border wouldn't be the crisis it is today.

Then there's the labor shortage. Farms are desperate for workers. Construction companies can't find enough hands. Migrants aren't taking jobs away; they're filling the ones that too few want. And when given work permits, they contribute more in taxes than they take in public benefits.

A Real Solution

The immigration crisis isn't about border security. It's about refusing to acknowledge why people come to this country in the first place. Expanding asylum courts, creating more work visas, and addressing decades-long waitlists would do far more to address the problem than any wall or deportation squad. However, that would require treating migrants as human beings rather than political props.

Instead, leaders cycle through the exact tired solutions — more arrests, more troops, and more fences — knowing that the crisis will be right back where it started in a few years. Fixing immigration doesn't get votes; keeping it broken does.

People don't want to leave their homes. But when their homes are no longer livable because of foreign policies they have no control over, what choices do they have? The least that can be done is to stop punishing migrants for simply trying to survive.

Zaki Shamsi *is a fifth-former from Glastonbury, CT. He may be reached at zshamsi26@choate.edu.*

Pete Hegseth is Dangerously Unqualified

By **Steven Kee '27**
Associate Editor

On January 24, former Fox News host Pete Hegseth was confirmed as the 29th United States Secretary of Defense after Vice President JD Vance broke a 50-50 vote in the U.S. Senate. Three Republican senators, including former Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, voted against his confirmation. Hegseth is the second-ever American cabinet member to be confirmed through a Vice Presidential tie-breaker. A survey conducted by the Associated Press showed that only two in 10 Americans supported his confirmation. Hegseth's lack of support from both sides of the aisle and the wider population — due to his lack of knowledge, experience, and professionalism — makes it abundantly clear that he is dangerously unqualified for the position and should be replaced by a more suitable candidate to restore confidence in American military leadership.

As the second-most senior leader of the most powerful military in the world, the Secretary of Defense should be well-versed in the political state of the world, as they represent the United States' influence in global conflicts and military alliances. Hegseth lacks this knowledge, and his incompetence was on full display during his confirmation hearing.

During his confirmation hearing, Senator Tammy Duckworth of Illinois tested Hegseth by asking him to name the importance of a nation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an organization crucial to the U.S. strategy of deterring Chinese military influence in the South China Sea. However, Hegseth failed to name a single Southeast Asian nation, instead citing South Korea and Japan — neither of which are part of ASEAN or Southeast Asia. It is gravely concerning that a government official, let alone a cabinet member, is unable to name a single Southeast Asian country. As America has 128,000 military personnel stationed in Asia and military installations across ASEAN nations such as the Philippines and Thailand, Hegseth should have been able to answer this question easily. When America has sent numerous soldiers and invested so heavily in a region, having the Secretary of Defense know what country they've deployed American resources to is a good idea.

Beyond his lack of geopolitical knowledge, Hegseth is also missing the necessary military experience. One of the few leadership roles Hegseth has had is being the Executive Director of the non-profit Concerned Veterans for America (CVA), which, according to Indeed, only has 11-50 employees. He has never had the experience of running an organization anywhere near as large as the Department of Defense (DOD), which has 3.4 million employees.

When taking a closer look at CVA's financial filings under Hegseth's leadership, the facts are even more concerning. Hegseth was removed from his position after he consistently caused deficits in three of the five years that he was in charge. After Hegseth's departure, the CVA was able to cut excess spending by over 70%. If Hegseth cannot even manage a small non-profit's $15 million budget, how can he be trusted to oversee the DOD's $850 billion annual budget?

Hegseth's lack of credentials is even starker when compared to his predecessor, Lloyd Austin. Austin was a four-star General Commander of the United States Central Command who oversaw over 44,000 soldiers during his tenure. Hegseth's expertise is limited to leading groups a fraction of the size of the forces his predecessors and peers have led. His lack of credentials, leadership experience, and ability makes him unfit to lead one of the world's most complex bureaucracies.

Hegseth's behavior and lack of professionalism raise serious concerns. There are many reports of him being hungover on the Fox News set and missing appearances because of his drinking. Reports allege that he was often intoxicated while acting in an official capacity for his non-profit, sometimes so seriously that he needed to be carried out of events. His ex-wife allegedly often feared for her safety due to his drinking habits and would hide in a closet from him. Danielle Hegseth testified that she witnessed Hegseth intoxicated, yelling in her face. His alcohol problem was so severe that he once passed out during a family gathering.

The role of the Secretary of Defense requires around-the-clock attention. America's adversaries will not delay an attack because Hegseth is too hungover to go to work or passed out after having too many drinks. Hegseth's past of alcohol abuse is a threat to American national security and further proves he's incapable of leading the world's most powerful military.

In most positions, you won't be hired if you are known (or even rumored) to be an alcoholic and woefully unqualified. However, in the United States Government, these qualities will land you the top job at the Pentagon. Hegseth's lack of basic political knowledge, adequate leadership experience, or professionalism makes him clearly unqualified to be Secretary of Defense. President Donald Trump P'00 must replace him, as he will not only hinder the United States military's operations but also threaten American national security.

Steven Kee *is a fourth-former from Hong Kong, Hong Kong. He may be reached at skee27@choate.edu.*



Graphic by Kate Park '27/*The Choate News*

How To Be A Gamer At Choate: Wild Boars' Favorite Games



Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/*The Choate News*

By **Eliana Li '26**
Associate Editor

Some video games have achieved legendary S-tier status on campus for their ability to keep community members glued to their screens. Here's a list of the most popular video games that keep Choate students entertained.

Minecraft:

Minecraft is an open-world survival game in which the player can mine, farm, build, and kill mobs. Choate students take their "Minecraft-ing" very seriously, with many staying up late on weekends to explore cavernous caves or finish construction on their birch houses.

Minecraft boasts both "survival" and "creative" modes for players to enjoy. While the former pushes the player to explore and slay mobs, the latter provides infinite resources for building and experimentation.

Jeremiah Olubowale '25 enjoys survival mode "because I can build things and manipulate the game to solve problems in my survival world," he said. On the other hand, Chloe Crowell '25 argued that "creative mode is the best because you get to build cool things without having to worry about getting killed."

Whether you're looking for a fun way to pass the time alone or a nice way to bond with friends, Minecraft is the perfect game for you.

Block Blast:

If you've seen someone furiously swiping at their screen in the library, chances are they have been warped into another round of Block Blast, a game that challenges you to fit blocks of various shapes and sizes onto a grid, scoring points when you clear lines.

This highly addictive mobile game has become a go-to stress reliever for many Choate students. "I can't escape it; I have the urge to play it every second of the day," Sofia Fronzi '26 said. Chloe Lee '26 enjoys the game's easy learning curve: "It relieves a lot of stress for me because it is such a simple and fun game," she said.

Roblox:

An online game platform and game creation system, Roblox has allowed for dorm bonding. Whether it's taking part in an ultra-intense competition like "Shrimp Games," expressing your creative liberties in "Dress to Impress," or doing colorful parkour in an "obby," Roblox has a mini-game suitable for anyone and everyone.

Inspired by the TV show *Squid Game*, "Shrimp Games" has become a late-night addiction across campus. "It becomes super intense with ... challenges like 'Dalgona' and 'Red Light, Green Light,'" Bernhard resident Izzy McGehee '27 said.

This winter, try something new and embrace your inner gamer; just remember to watch your screen time and not get too addicted!

Eliana Li *may be reached at eli26@choate.edu.*

An Hour-By-Hour Guide to Choate's Study Spots

By **Reinah Lee '26**
Sports Editor



Photo by Victoria Tang '27/*The Choate News*
Students study in the quiet section of the Andrew Mellon Library, the ideal study spot from 8-10 a.m.

Whether you're a squash player scrambling to finish your precalculus homework on the bus or an editor of *The Choate News* up late in the newsroom, Choaties are always looking for a productive place to work. Taking you through a full school day, here's a guide to a successful study crawl on campus.

6AM-8AM: The Early Bird

If you're up at this hour, there's a good chance that you're attempting to grind out homework for an 8:15 am class. Considering it's still dark out and your roommate is fast asleep, you'll want to find a productive place to work outside your room.

Head to Lanphier Center (Lanphy) or the temporary dining hall to kill two birds with one stone; lock in for an hour and then reward yourself with a delicious omelet from the dining hall or an everything-but-the-procrastination bagel from Lanphy.

8AM-10AM: Free Block Frenzy

If you're lucky enough to have a sleep-in free block in the morning but unlucky enough to have heaps of homework, the Andrew Mellon Library has you covered. For last-minute reading, check out the cozy lounge chairs by the fireplace or the quiet section by the restrooms. And no need to worry about lugging your heavy Calculus textbook to and fro — you can check out any textbook in the Choate curriculum at the help desk.

10AM-12PM: Brunch (vending machine candy bar and soda) with Bae (my iPad)

Though most convenient on Tuesdays directly after School Meeting concludes, the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) is a great place to study. With high ceilings, glass windows, and beautiful artwork on the walls, the PMAC is a tried-and-true spot to crunch Quizlet flashcards for an upcoming assessment.

On the first floor, not only are there a myriad of snug lounge chairs and couches, but there are two vending machines within 15 steps! After all, a Snickers bar and a Coke are the fuel for a quality work session.

12PM-2PM: *Give Me Liberty* From My Homework

With the daily schedule involving two different lunch slots, these hours have noisy students traversing campus and stirring up all your usual study spots ... How audacious!

Ever heard of the Student Activities Center's (SAC) infamous third floor? Rumored to house weird *The Choate News* kids on Sunday and Tuesday evenings and serving as a day student hangout spot, the third floor of the SAC is a phenomenal place to find some peace and quiet in dire times.

Loaded with comfortable chairs and couches as well as individual study rooms, only pure productivity can thrive on the SAC's third floor. There, you can pretend you're Henry David Thoreau abstaining from society and finish reading your assigned *Walden* passages in peace.

2PM-4PM: Resist the Urge to Re-Caffeinate

Messing with your circadian rhythm in the afternoon is a serious no-go, so avoid that second Alani from the Choate Store and opt for a less caffeinated cup of coffee. Lanphy is a hit or miss at this hour, so grab your backpack, headphones, and coat, and stroll down Main Street to Le Jardin Cafe for quiet and a beverage choice for which your prefrontal cortex will thank you.

Arjun Pathy '25, a frequent customer, has tried many of the neighboring cafes but is loyal to Le Jardin for its quiet, spacious atmosphere and good cup of Joe. "I like it because it's nice and spread out with enough space to chill. But, good coffee — that's the main thing that I look for," he said.

4PM-6PM: After (School) Hours

Congratulations, you've made it through the school day! You only have two hours of work time before your late slot athletics practice or orchestra rehearsal. Unfortunately, the article that your English teacher assigned won't read itself.

If you're on upper campus, head to the Humanities Rotunda for some uninterrupted work time. Alternatively, if you had math or science last block, you can usually find a study room open in Lanphy.

However, some student-athletes cut right to the chase, finding study sanctuaries in their very own home court. For Boys' Varsity Squash player Andrew Watcharananan '26, his busy schedule often leads him to crunch numbers on the viewing balcony of Worthington Johnson Athletic Center's Squash Court #8. "I have my pregame ritual up there where I get focused before a challenge match ... It's just as useful to get my homework done," he said.

6PM-8PM: Night-in with Notability

Though dark out, you don't need to be emo. Pause your Phoebe Bridgers and pick up your Apple Pencil! There's a good chance you're on the lower side of campus at this time having just ended sports practice or had dinner in the temporary dining hall. Conveniently, Colony Hall is near, and their couches in the entrance make for a perfect place to finish your American Studies paper.

8PM-10PM: Wait, There's a Meeting Tonight?

Shoot! There's a mandatory Choate C-Proctors meeting that involves 11 discussion questions and another WattWatch Challenge promotion? Now that creates a sense of urgency.

For the next 90 minutes, you're going to give it your all and clear at least two tasks off your Canvas to-do list. During study hours, you are guaranteed to find quiet almost anywhere on campus (except Memorial House and the Library Reading Room). Don't think, just study!

10PM - 12PM: Shooting for 11:59 pm!

You're in a crunch to meet a deadline, and it's past curfew. The common room is going to be your best bet. Be sure to grab your noise-canceling headphones, something warm to sip on, and a cozy blanket to keep you warm; no one can save you now except perhaps the Health Center!

No matter where you are on campus, there's always a spot to get in the zone and tackle your to-do list. From early morning study sessions to late-night deadlines, keep note of these study spots for the next time you need to lock in.

Reinah Lee *may be reached at rlee26@choate.edu.*

The Lonely Hearts Club

This Valentine's Day, the 118th Masthead is looking for love. When they no longer have layout nights and editing sessions to fill their lonely hearts, maybe you can.



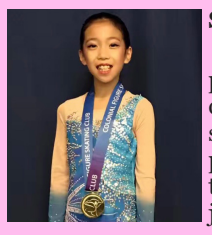
Fiona Fu '25 – Editor-in-Chief

This winter, you may be lucky enough to catch a case of the Fiona F(l)u. Though she may not give you a fever, your face will flush when you see how much this Hozier-loving beachy soul can squat at the gym. And gentlemen, remember that chivalry is key (bonus if you can hold the door and a deep conversation).



Amelia Sipkin '25 – Managing Editor

This actress and Broadway aficionado is looking for the Fiyero to her Elphaba. Try to impress her by belting out a song from *Les Miserables* or with your theater knowledge, whether in the PMAC's costuming room or on the ski slopes. But, apparently, this Juliet may have already found her Romeo...



Sophia Liao '25 – School News Editor

This figure-skating icon will glide right past you ... unless you're a defenseman who can keep up both on and off the ice. She loves somebody who can match her smarts and appetite for tiramisu. Think you've got what it takes? Try entering the *Love Island* villa; you just might be the bombshell she's looking for!



Adrian Torres '25 – School News Editor

You may have seen this School News Editor sporting sunglasses after his Senior Soccer concussion. But, his swag doesn't stop when the sun goes down. Impress this bachelor by taking him to a Warriors game, dropping some astrophysics knowledge, or serenading him with classical music.



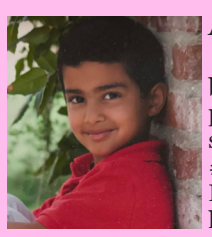
Nilan Kathir '25 – Local News Editor

Want to impress this varsity rowing bachelor? Come prepared with talking points about anything politics (including who's your favorite senator and why). The lucky lady who woos him can expect long car rides with R&B tunes. But if you can't dance, don't bother — you will get left in the dust.



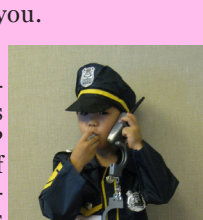
Anya Shah '25 – Local News Editor

Look no further than slightly below eye level for your perfect match. If you follow the trail of Uber receipts and treat her to a Bee's Knees brunch, you can capture the heart of this pancake-loving, rain-dodging Local News legend. Be sure to think fast and walk slow, so you can match her hot takes and leisurely strolling pace.



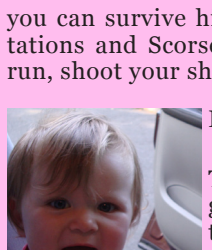
Arjun Pathy '25 – Ops (Campus) Editor

This opinionated editor is seeking a concert buddy (i.e., someone who both appreciates a piano's staccatos and actually uses the venue's seats). Want to catch his eye? Take him to his #1 Beli coffee spot, or help pick out the day's Illy flavor. He might just stick around, or at least get his "Za-Onn" with you.



Stan Cho '25 – Ops (Nation/World) Editor

The man, the myth, the Opinions N/W Editor (so loyal he's doing it again). Don't let this cinephile's weekly 40-mile Strava splits or SRP brains intimidate you; he's just a chill guy. If you can survive his unsolicited Kanye dissertations and Scorsese soliloquies mid-Zeneli's run, shoot your shot (please).



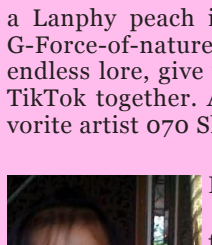
Eva Swanson '25 – Features Editor

This British queen is looking for her king. To win this editor's heart, try joining her for a game of Mario Kart or cranking the volume up to 11 watching *Spinal Tap*. Just make sure not to be a Shy Guy when you see her in the corner of the freshman section — she's not afraid to say what she thinks!



Grace LaPlaca '25 – Arts & Leisure Editor

Look no further than the Colony Dance Studio for this dancing queen, and bring her a Lanphy peach iced tea! Want to win this G-Force-of-nature over? Ask her to drop her endless lore, give you a room tour, or make a TikTok together. And in the words of her favorite artist 070 Shake, *stay* (please).



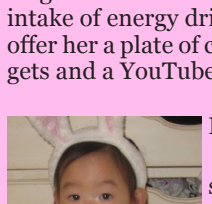
Reinah Lee '26 – Sports Editor

What doesn't this Sports Editor have to offer on and off the courts? Whether she's clocking miles on the StairMaster or going bar-for-bar on Gracie Abrams, she'll take your breath away. If you can keep up with her pace, seal the deal by fueling her addiction to Celsius and spontaneous side quests.



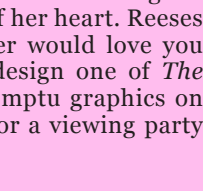
Sarina Fernandez-Grinshpun '25 – Layout Editor

While she might not be loyal to her hair color, you better be loyal to her. Barely clearing five feet, this layout editor compensates for her height with her enthusiasm (and an impressive intake of energy drinks). To win her over, simply offer her a plate of certified gluten-free dino-nuggets and a YouTube marathon of "The Button."



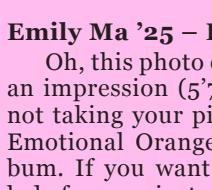
Evelyn Kim '25 – Graphics Editor

This Fringe Festival fanatic is looking for someone to fill the fringes of her heart. Reeses Pieces' most vehement hater would love you forever if you helped her design one of *The Choate News*'s many impromptu graphics on layout night or joined her for a viewing party of *Breaking Bad*.



Emily Ma '25 – Photography Editor

Oh, this photo editor definitely leaves quite an impression (5'7", to be exact). When she's not taking your picture, she's jamming out to Emotional Oranges or the Weeknd's new album. If you want to be with this fine young lady forever, just offer her some boba or green grapes and she will swoon!



Finn Wikstrom '26 – Photography Editor

Ever dream of modeling? This skilled photographer and art history geek can be found at the Tuck Shop, getting a quick bite after snapping shots for *The Choate News*. Like his photos, he's worth a thousand words. Be sure to run, not walk ... this exclusive individual is Finn-ders keepers!

ARTS AND LEISURE

Book Recommendations: A Cure for Your Winter Blues

By **Bridget Rivard '28**
Reporter

Winter term at Choate can be stressful, lonely, and cold. As students avoid the bitter outdoors, many choose to find entertainment and warmth by reading indoors. Whether you're looking to find yourself in a character or step into a whole new world, this list will provide you with some reading recommendations that will have you wanting to read outside of your English classes:

Harry Kim '28 -
***An Impossible Thing to Say* by Arya Shahi**

Harry Kim '28's favorite winter read is *An Impossible Thing to Say* by Arya Shahi. This short novel follows a high school student named Omid through his struggle to grapple with his Iranian Heritage. After losing his ability to speak Farsi during his move to America, Omid and his grandparents face a language barrier, but Omid ultimately finds a way to communicate with them while finding his own identity and culture. A great read for people who hate to see an overcrowded page, *An Impossible Thing to Say* contains manageable verses that create a deep and simple winter vibe we all crave. Kim recommends reading this book snuggled in bed with a pillow and blanket right before you go to sleep, but try not to doze off!

Friday Acuna '26 - *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* by Dave Eggers

In the cold winter months, Friday Acuna '26 recommends *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, a fictionalized memoir by Dave Eggers. Eggers captures a world where he raises his younger brothers after the death of his parents. Acuna said the book is "exactly what you need during the winter." He described the characters as sarcastic and "someone who knows exactly what I'm thinking, and I don't have to put any effort into thinking [about] it." *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* is perfect for people uncertain about where they stand in life and who need a confidant. It is a way to feel seen and escape from your busy thoughts. Acuna recommends reading Eggers's story whenever you get a chance. His favorite time to read is in the morning on the weekends, after which he can start his day feeling a little warmer.

Liana Alkhayer '28 -
***The Snow Child* by Johan Ivy**

Avid reader Liana Alkhayer '28's winter book recommendation is *The Snow Child* by Johan Ivy. Set in the Alaskan wilderness, this magical novel follows an elderly couple who struggle with infertility. One day, the couple builds a snowman that transforms into a young girl who lives in the forest. The stark, Alaskan setting highlights the dual themes of isolation and loss, along with love in unexpected places, capturing the essence of winter perfectly. Alkhayer's favorite time to read is right before bed because she wakes up eager to read more.



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

Marin Wang '27 -
The *Twilight* Series by Stephanie Meyer

Marin Wang '27 recommends the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer. The series follows the love story of a quiet teenage girl, Bella, and her love interest, Edward. The story is set in a reserved town, where sunshine is a rare occurrence. Ultimately, Bella finds out Edward is a vampire, and she deals with the struggles that come with being a human in the world of vampires. Its wintry, dark setting is perfect for a moody, dramatic read. Anyone who loves a good plot twist and romantic novel would enjoy the storyline of this series. Wang recommends reading the books before watching the movies. Additionally, Wang mentioned that the series offers an opportunity to learn new words along with different writing techniques. Wang's favorite time to read is right before bed similar to Alkhayer, which she believes creates a relaxing environment that will make it easy to drift off to sleep.

Long story short, winter months can be cold and stressful. However, even if you aren't a passionate reader, the right book can pull you off your phone and bring you a much-needed sense of warmth. So, take a trek to the library, check out one of the recommended books above, and give yourself some time to disconnect and escape to another world. See what happens!

Bridget Rivard *may be reached at brivard28@choate.edu.*

CHOATE SIBLINGS SHARE THE ENSEMBLE STAGE



Photo by Sabrina Liu '28/*The Choate News*

The Roraback sisters play the French horn together.

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**
Associate Editor

With a busy schedule, it can often be hard to find time to spend with family and friends — but if you are in an ensemble on campus with your sibling, you have an extra two to three hours every week to spend with someone you cherish. Around campus, various sibling duos share a common love for music.

Camila Granda '25 and Ignacio Granda '27: Choate Chorale

The Grandas are both involved with academics and athletics on campus; however, they also recognize the importance of making time for the Arts. Ignacio joined Choate his freshman year and has found it to be a good way to explore his appreciation for music. "We're both having fun [and] we're both enjoying singing. I would say that [being in Choate Chorale together] has brought us closer together because we barely see each other throughout the day," he said.

Overall, the Grandas have appreciated navigating Choate with a sibling. "I [was] encouraged to do choir because of my sister. But she's also a good support person around campus," Ignacio said. He is confident that once Camila graduates this spring, they will remain close, spend time together, and hopefully continue to enjoy their pasion for music.

Claire Roraback '25 and Kate Roraback '26: Symphony Orchestra and Wind Ensemble

The Rorabacks have dominated the French horn section of the Symphony Orchestra for the past two years. The two sisters started playing music together at a very young age and hope to continue playing together after they graduate.

Naturally, playing the same instrument for several years has motivated both of the Rorabacks to strive for excellence. Kate started playing the French horn one year after her sister, so she has always had a strong work ethic to keep up with Claire. "Music is what we spend time doing with each other. We talk during and after rehearsal, about repertoire. It's also [motivated] me because [Claire's always been] more committed and wants to major in music in college," Kate said.

Overall, joining the Symphony Orchestra and Wind Ensemble has helped the Rorabacks to assimilate into Choate life. "We both transferred at the same time, and that has been nice because we have experienced the same things at the same time. It's sad to think about how we won't have that after [Claire] goes to college," Kate said.

Eben Bauman '26 and Jude Bauman '28: Concert Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra

Although the Baumans play instruments in different branches of Choate's instrumental ensembles, they have both shown their dedication to music. Eben has shown interest in the classical violin for the past three years in Concert Orchestra. "We were both encouraged to do music from a young age by our parents," Eben said. "We both took piano lessons with the same teacher and it was nice to do it with [Jude]."

Although some of these sibling pairs pursue music recreationally and others aspire to play after high school, sharing a love of music with a sibling has helped the Grandas, Rorabacks, and Baumans connect.

Elizabeth Burgstahler
may be reached at eburgstahler26@choate.edu.

Exploring Choate's Introductory Arts Programs

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Reporter



Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/*The Choate News*

As course registration for the upcoming year is on the horizon, numerous students will fill their schedules with one of the many arts offerings on campus. Choate offers a wide array of introductory courses for performing and visual arts, ranging from topics in mixed media, ceramics, dance, musicianship, and digital art.

Choate's Choral Director Dr. Julie Hagen teaches Music Fundamentals, a course that introduces students to basic music structure and notation through playing the ukulele. "The accessibility of the ukulele is really great," Dr. Hagen said, explaining how the instruments were affordable and easy to learn how to use.

Dr. Hagen also said that she strives to help her students learn authentically. For instance, students learn rhythms through strumming patterns in songs they choose by themselves. "I always try and make sure that for the students, they know that it's low stakes," Dr. Hagen said. She wants to foster creativity and passion in her students rather than a focus on assignments.

Dr. Hagen finds joy in the fact that her students leave with fundamental musical skills and newfound confidence. "I love the idea that they can leave our 12 weeks together and go, 'I am a musician, I am an artist,'" she said.

Digital Filmmaking I, Digital Media Design I, and Digital Photography I teacher Mr. Matt Kelsey ensures each student can borrow a camera from the school, which they work with throughout the term. Mr. Kelsey explained that in his classes, students not only work on honing their technical skills but also learn how to express themselves. "They're thinking about their identity. They're thinking about how to show, not tell," he said.

Mr. Kelsey values the passion and joy for digital art his students discover in his class. "They found it themselves, I just gave them the space to do it. That's really exciting," he said.

Ms. Pamela Newell, the head of the Dance Program at Choate, teaches Introduction to the Moving Body and Dance. Ms. Newell explained that the class emphasizes how everyone moves in different ways, and how important it is to become more aware of and communicate with one's body.

The class begins with exploring broader topics, such as the fundamentals of shape, space, and time. Students then get to explore specific disciplines in dance, such as jazz or ballet. "Dance is basically movement in space and time with intention," Ms. Newell said. Ms. Newell's main goal is to open students' minds about what dance is and can be, and to inspire students to pursue dance daily.

Bruce van Wingerden '28 is currently taking Drawing I. Until now, his class has mainly focused on observational drawing. Van Wingerden also appreciates how there are opportunities for students to get together and share their artwork. "It's really nice, because no one there is judgy, it's all just constructive feedback," van Wingerden said. "I think it'd be fun to continue drawing," he added. "I definitely want to continue to explore the arts."

Caroline Kim '25 took Mixed Media I as a third-former, and Music Fundamentals as a fourth-former. In these classes, she learned various different skills, such as linoleum printing, painting and collages, and chords and songs on the ukulele.

Kim explained that Mixed Media I was her introduction to the visual arts, and while she had experience in music through piano, Music Fundamentals offered her the opportunity to explore string instruments.

Kim shared that she specifically enjoyed her final unit project in Music Fundamentals. "We got to pick a song of our choice and then learn it," Kim said. "It was fun to see how far I've come by being able to pick up any song that I wanted to do and learning it," she added. Now in her senior year, Kim is thinking of pursuing music through Music Theory classes or other performance opportunities at Choate.

Jocelyn Rivard '28 is currently taking Mixed Media I as her art elective. "We've been going through and learning about the creative process," Rivard said, explaining that her first project was to create an abstract painting out of different paint brushes.

Rivard mentioned that she didn't have the opportunity to take an art class during middle school, so she decided to pursue art at Choate this term. "Mixed Media seemed like a nice way to get introduced to all the different types of art and supplies," she said.

Rivard discovered an interest in linoleum carving that she was introduced to in Mixed Media I. Her current project is transferring a sketch onto linoleum, which would then be carved and turned into a stamp. "It's really therapeutic and really fun to do," Rivard said.

Camila Granda '25 took Digital Photography I in her third-form year. Her photography class involved learning how to use cameras. Granda noted that her main takeaways from photography were that there was so much one could do with a camera and photo editing.

Granda also took Acting I in her fourth-form year. In her acting class, she participated in several in-class exercises. She particularly enjoyed how taking Acting I helped her increase her confidence. "They should call the class 'Confidence 101,'" she joked.

Taking one of Choate's introductory arts classes is a perfect way to discover a new passion or find a creative outlet through the arts. So, bear this advice in mind as you fill out course requests this winter!

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SPORTS

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FIELD REPORT

Choate Winter Record

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Varsity Games

Girls' Hockey (9-7)
vs. Canterbury, 6-0

Boys' Basketball (13-3)
vs. Suffield, 70-63

Girls' Squash (6-1)
vs. Kingswood Oxford, 6-1

Archery (1-0)
vs. Meriden, 1209-1195

Boys' Hockey (4-9-1)
vs. Avon Old Farms, 0-4

Girls' Basketball (10-5)
vs. Suffield, 48-51

Boys' Squash (7-8)
vs. Andover, 0-8

Girls' Swimming (4-2)
vs. Exeter, 80-96

J.V. Games

Boys' Hockey (2-6)
vs. Loomis Chaffee, 3-1

Girls' Basketball (7-0)
vs. Taft, 23-21

Boys' Squash (9-1-1)
vs. Avon Old Farms, 8-2

Girls' Squash (4-0)
vs. Kingswood Oxford, 8-0

Team Managers: The Backbone of Choate Sports Teams

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

At Choate, exceptional athletes often occupy the spotlight. Winning tournaments, sinking buzzer-beater shots, or clinching overtime victories often place them at the center of our attention. These moments of athletic brilliance are thrilling to witness, and the players deserve all the praise they receive. However, the team managers are also behind every victory, successful practice, and team achievement. These dedicated students work tirelessly behind the scenes, ensuring that practices run smoothly, games proceed without problems, and the team dynamic thrives. Their hard work and commitment are vital to the success of Choate's athletic programs.

Alexander Shilling '25, a second-year manager for the Boys' Varsity Ice Hockey Team, has made managing a central part of his life at school. "I started managing at Millbrook [Academy], my previous boarding school, after breaking my arm and being unable to play," he said. "Managing kept me connected to the game, and once I got to Choate, I knew I wanted to keep doing it." Now in his second season as the manager, Shilling plays a key role on the team, helping with everything from organizing gear to capturing action shots for the team's Instagram account. His favorite moment so far was last season's 2-1 win over Deerfield Academy on their ice rink: "Their entire student body was pounding on the glass while we were there, and it was really intimidating," he recalls, "but winning that game has been one of the best moments for me," he said. Shilling advised aspiring managers to "have a strong passion for the sport and be willing to help the players with anything they need."

Sophie Park '25, a second-year manager for the Girls' Varsity Basketball team, has had a unique managing journey. After a health issue prevented her from continuing to play the sport in her junior year, she stepped into the manager role. "I needed a break from sports, and that's when [Head Girls' Varsity Basketball Coach Donta Johnson] offered me the position," she said.

Park is involved in all aspects of practice, from managing the clock and timing drills to even stepping in when players are absent. "Sometimes, because we only have 10 players, he asks me to step in and play, which is very unusual for a manager," she added. Despite the busy team schedule, Park stays active by playing during practices and fitting in workouts during free blocks or weekends. "It's not easy, but I try to manage my time well," she said. Park feels like a true team member and wishes she could continue managing if she didn't have to graduate at the end of the year. "I definitely would do it again because I will say the team has been really encouraging in terms of bringing me into conversations and kind of getting to know me better. It's a very welcoming environment."

Ella Fraser '27 manages both the Boys' and Girls' Varsity Wrestling Teams at Choate, a role she took on after her experience as a wrestler last year. "I was on the team last year, but it wasn't my forté," she said. "Since I understood the sport, I decided to try managing, and I really enjoy it, especially because of the team environment." Her positivity has made a huge difference for the team in the wrestling room., Wrestler Ella Martino '25 said, "She's just a really positive personality to have in the room. She's always smiling, always happy, and she's just a great person to have down there." Fraser's upbeat attitude helps create a supportive atmosphere and motivates players to come to practice and give it their all. Fraser's responsibilities include mopping mats, filling water bottles, taking attendance, assisting with ice packs and bandages, and managing music.

The work of winter athletics managers is not to be overlooked. They are the backbone of Choate's various sports teams, providing logistical support, building team spirit, and ensuring athletes have the resources to succeed. "It's a hefty workload, but I recommend it if you're committed to learning about the sport and joining a community," Fraser said.

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Photo courtesy of Alexander Shilling '25
Manager Alexander Shilling '25 photographed the Boys' Varsity Hockey Team against Lawrence Academy.

Will Black '25 in Navy All-American Bowl



Photo courtesy of Will Black '25
Will Black '25 at the Navy All-American Bowl.

By **Karolina Zaccareo '27**
Reporter

The Navy All-American Bowl is a prestigious high school football All-Star event filled with talent from across the country. The event took place in San Antonio, Texas, this year. Choate Varsity Football linebacker Will Black '25 competed in the game with over a hundred other players from across the country. Black was the second player in Choate Football program history to participate in the game since Will Powers '19.

Though Black is from Canada, he is an ESPN national top 100 player, is rated by sports recruiting service On3 as the 17th best football prospect in the country, and stands as Choate's first-ever 5-Star player. He is also ranked by On3 as the 4th best offensive tackle in the country. Beyond his football talents, in his two years at Choate, Black has made a positive mark as a teammate with "selflessness, a big heart, and care for his teammates," Head Football Coach LJ Spinnato said. Coach Spinnato also spotlighted Black's hard work off the field, how he puts in the extra work to become "the best offensive lineman that you possibly can be." He added that Black's "growth mindset, work ethic, [and] competitiveness" also sets him apart from other players.

Black described receiving his invitation for the game as "a dream come true" and said, "It meant a lot, especially coming from Canada. Not many kids from Canada get this opportunity." Attending Notre Dame University this upcoming fall, Black was especially excited "to play with some of [his] future teammates, against top players in the country, [and], get more exposure before college," he said.

The Navy All-American Bowl Game attracts a lot of publicity. There were 22,000 people at the game and over a million spectators watching on television. Facing the pressure of countless eyes on him, Black did what he would do in any other game and reminded himself to "just focus and play as hard as I can." Black's preparation leading up to the games included a lot of technical work, focusing on footwork, explosiveness, and conditioning — skills essential to football.

Following this experience, Black continues to feel motivated for his future career prospects: "I'm excited to just learn as much as I can, see how much potential I have and just reach my potential in college; and then from there, see where I can go," he said. Black's accomplishments are historical for the Choate Football Program. Coach Spinnato said, "It's been an honor working with [Black] — he embodies what our program tries to be, valuing team over everything else."

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Girls' Ice Hockey: Road to 1000 Games

By **Tori Vollero '27**
Reporter

The Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey team beat The Canterbury School on January 25 at home, on the Remsen Arena, marking 1000 games in the program's history. Established in 1973 under Head Coach Polly Packard, the Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey program has played a critical role in Choate' athletics department's achievements, with numerous alumni going off to compete in the Olympics, such as Angela Ruggiero '98, Julie Chu '01, and Hilary Knight '07. The 2024-2025 team commemorated the program's history with an exhilarating 6-0 game shutout to reach this milestone.

Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Assistant Coach Mr. James Stanley has been with the program for 23 years and expressed his pride in the team's growth. "The girls who come to this school to play hockey are dedicated, hard-working, [and] talented in the ways in which they work together, push each other, and support each other," Coach Stanley said.

Maggie Swanson '26 has been on the team since her freshman year and appreciates uncovering the history behind her winter season passion. "We have been learning more about the history of our team in the past year or two from our coaches, and it's super awesome that we were able to be a part of this achievement." Looking from past to present, Swanson said, "The past teams I know have always been amazing, but it has gotten even more positive and close through my years at Choate."

Coach Stanley does not only credit the girls for the program's success. He noted the impact Former Head Coach Kristen Harder, who coached from 1992 to 2000, has had on cultivating the program's current strength. Coach Harder took "a program that had been around, that had been kind of okay, and turned it into a powerhouse," Mr. Stanley said. In total, there have been 15 coaches who have worked through the Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey program, making it what it is today.

The Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey team's 1000th game was a cumulative effort from the players and coaches over the past 52 years and continues to add to the growing legacy of Choate Athletics.

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Sporting Style: Winter Athletics' Team Items

By **Eliza O'Neill '27**
Reporter



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

Every season, team captains have the opportunity to design an item that reflects their team's identity. This winter, the Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey, Girls' Varsity Squash, and Boys' Varsity Basketball teams, among others, curated new pieces that motivate athletes and bring the teams closer together.

You might have seen the stylish athletes on Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey bundled up in their new parkas this season, a notable shift from previous years when they sported the classic Bauer jacket. Co-captain Nani Keyes '25 explained this transition and said, "We wanted something different. When people see our parkas, they think and know: [that's] Choate Girls' Varsity Hockey." The parka not only offers superior warmth but also symbolizes unity. Its distinctive color palette —a neat gray— sets it apart from other teams on campus, reinforcing the hockey team's unique identity. Co-captain Taylor Rossiter '25 said, "They make us look like a united front, which is one of our core values on the team."

The Girls' Varsity Squash Team chose custom white dresses for their uniforms. Co-captain Charlotte Flynn '25 said, "We wanted something comfortable to play in, and we felt a dress was the best option. It's more functional than a skirt or tank top and reflects our team well." The team worked closely with Assistant Coordinator of Athletic Operations and Head Equipment Manager Mr. Justin Whittaker to create a piece that balances comfort and style. "It's unique to Choate and stands out on the courts," Flynn said. The dresses also hold sentimental value, especially for graduating players. "When we graduate, we'll have this dress to remember our time as a team," Flynn said. The uniform creates a powerful sense of camaraderie, especially on game days when the team shows off their chic.

The Boys' Varsity Basketball team also embraced a new look with custom black warmup sweats. Team Manager Chris Joseph '25 said, "It's not Choate's primary color[s], but it still looks sharp and helps us stand out." These sleek warmup jerseys, which feature the players' names and numbers for the first time, foster a sense of personal pride and belonging. "Having our names on the gear makes us feel part of something bigger," Joseph said. The new gear also serves as a morale booster. "When we get new gear, everyone gets excited — it's like a reminder that we're all part of a high-level program," he added.

These new winter sports team items are more than just clothing—they foster a sense of pride and unity among athletic teams and remind athletes of the memories they've created while wearing them. Whether on the rink or the basketball court, team items play a significant role in the culture of Choate's athletic programs.

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