The Choate News

The official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907

Choate Rosemary Hall
333 Christian Street
Wallingford, CT

Vol. CXIX · No. III | Monday, May 12, 2025 | thechoatenews.choate.edu

THE CHOATE CARNIVAL RETURNS!

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**
Copy Editor

On May 2, the Choate Carnival made its highly anticipated return to campus, transforming the field in front of Colony Hall into a bustling hub of vibrant lights, flashing rides, and food trucks amidst the warm spring breeze. The Carnival attracted many students, faculty, and staff for an evening filled with joy, excitement, and energy.

Planning an event of this scale was no small feat. Director of Student Activities Ms. Alexandra Long shared that one of the biggest challenges was securing a date that would not clash with other campus events. "We also had to be mindful of the weather and have a solid rain plan in place," she added. With the help of Manager of Campus and Community Events Ms. Raquel Simoneau, whom Ms. Long credited with putting in "a tremendous amount of effort," the planning team made sure that everything ran smoothly.

A key goal of the event was to build community spirit, offering the community a chance to connect outside of school-life pressures and spend time solely creating memories. "We hope[d] it [was] a fun opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to connect, unwind, and enjoy an evening together as a community," Ms. Long emphasized. Reflecting on the event, Instrumental Ensembles Director Mr. Gene Wie said, "It was a good stress relief valve for everyone who needed it, and I felt like the Carnival captured a lot of that fun vibe, the great food, and just that time to spend with everybody."

The sense of connection and shared joy was clearly felt by students who attended. Suleika Sandi '26 said, "The actual extent of the Carnival was really mind-blowing for me ... It was really nice to see everyone having fun, even staff and faculty."

A standout feature of the Carnival was the lineup of food trucks, carefully chosen to cater to the diverse tastes and dietary needs of the student body. "We worked with a company called Roaming Hunger. Once we shared the date, they provided us with a list of available trucks," Ms. Long explained. "We made our selections based on menu variety to make sure there was something for everyone."

Mr. Wie was very satisfied with the food trucks, saying, "I thought that the mix and the choices were really, really great ... The selection and the range were just amazing, perfect."

Liam Etienne '26 added, "I think that the food trucks and stands made the Carnival what it was. Part of the joy of carnivals is the fried Oreos, the cotton candy, and the junk food. The rides are amazing and fun, but a carnival needs food, and the selection at this carnival was part of what made it the amazing night that it was."

For returning faculty and staff members who had previously attended the Choate Carnival in 2019, the night was especially meaningful. "There's definitely been some nostalgia and excitement among returning faculty and staff," Ms. Long said. "Many remember the energy and joy of the past Carnival and [were] eager to see it brought to life again."

Although the decision to bring back the Carnival was met with a lot of enthusiasm, the question of whether it will become a Choate tradition remains open. "Depending on how this year goes, we're definitely open to ideas and feedback for the future," Ms. Long said.

Judging by the turnout, the laughter, screams coming from the Zipper, and long lines at every ride and booth, the Choate Carnival's comeback was a huge success. Students, faculty, and staff members will all be looking forward to the next Choate Carnival.

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Photo by Ben Lee '27/*The Choate News*
A group of students having fun at the Choate Carnival.

HPRSS Gets Quacky: The Department Duck Exchange

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

This year in the HPRSS department, rubber ducks have become the most coveted items on campus. In a new tradition known as the "Duck Exchange," every teacher unlocks a randomly-chosen rubber duck that they are able to keep and nurture. The tradition began as a lighthearted countdown to Halloween and has now turned into a full-fledged department ritual, helping faculty members endure the bleak winter months and look forward to the upcoming breaks.

HPRSS teacher Ms. Emily Kaplan, the head organizer, explained the motivation behind its creation. She shared that her goal was simple: "[to] bring a little joy to the department ... I had absolutely no idea that it would generate the excitement that it has."

Ms. Kaplan detailed that every teacher is assigned a day on the calendar. In some cases, they can choose special dates, like birthdays, which she described as a "special addition to their special day." On their designated day, the department gathers for a ceremony, where they select a mystery duck from an advent-style calendar. The ducks come in all shapes and themes: roosters, police officers, dinosaurs, and more.

As part of the ceremony, teachers select walk-up songs, a tradition that began with HPRSS teacher Ms. Voorhees' choice of Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train." Songs have ranged from Kesha to classic rock to *High School Musical* hits.

Ms. Voorhees described the event, saying, "You draw a duck randomly, and then you get your picture taken with the duck while everyone applauds and cheers you on." Afterwards, the duck becomes a permanent and proudly displayed addition to the teacher's desk.



Photo courtesy of Ms. Courtney DeStefano
Ms. Salot with her Koala rubber duck.

However, not everything has been smooth sailing: after spring break, a case of theft rocked the department. "The box had been ripped open, and two ducks had been taken," Kappy revealed. She also highlighted that HPRSS teachers Ms. Cindy Okrah and Ms. Tiffany Rivera, who hadn't yet chosen a duck, were "literally robbed of their joy." HPRSS teacher Ms. Laura Pace said, "This is a case for the FBI."

Yet, despite the duck-napping, the Duck Exchange has done more than just fill desks with rubber ducks. It has helped foster laughter and anticipation, building connections throughout the entire department. "It's really a moment of joy and community," Ms. Voorhees said. Ms. Pace echoed this, saying, "It's really light-hearted and community oriented. It's a fun way to celebrate summer and each other."

Other departments are now eyeing the tradition with curiosity. "There has been a real sense of curiosity from other departments," Kappy said. "Others are hopeful that their department can get on board and create opportunities for camaraderie similar to our duck [exchange]."

The exchange's popularity has even led to plans for a department-wide June outing to watch the Akron RubberDucks minor league baseball game in Hartford. Amidst the chaos of everyday life at Choate, the simple ritual provides the HPRSS department members with unforgettable joy every time.

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Senior JFK Students Host Farewell Presentations

By **Drew Wolfson '27**
Reporter

In what has become an annual rite of passage for the John F. Kennedy Program in Government and Public Service (JFK Program), 18 sixth-formers presented their final projects to the Choate community on April 22, April 29, and May 7. These 10-minute presentations took place in Getz Auditorium and drew strong support from the Choate community, with classmates, teachers, and friends showing up to applaud the presenters.

Established in 2018 and led by HPRSS Teacher Mr. Ned Gallagher, the JFK program is "designed for students who possess a passion for philosophy, politics, and economics." Over a five-term journey combining coursework, experiential learning, and presentations, students develop their skills and knowledge, culminating in these final presentations as they near the program's completion.

The students' final 10-minute presentation is the result of months of preparation. The presentations begin with JFK Tutorials in the winter, which all JFK sixth-formers take with Mr. Gallagher or HPRSS teacher Mr. Jonas Akins. The tutorial group, consisting of three to four students, meets once a week and is centered on several questions that students explore through rigorous essays and discussion. During the last few weeks of the term, their focus shifts fully to the presentations.

Every student selects and develops their topic around government policy. Mr. Gallagher explained, "They have to select what they want to do, which is often the biggest struggle." While the presentations only last 10 minutes, Mr. Gallagher says he strives to ensure that the students know "how to make [the time] count." Nonetheless, the presentation topic guidelines are relatively broad: students choose and shape their own topics, which are often inspired by internships, coursework, or personal interests.

This year's presentations covered a wide range of topics, from Kiran Makam '25 discussing "Books Behind Bars: The Power of Higher Education in Prison" to Simeon Levesque '25 presenting on "The Bro Vote: How Barstool, Theo Von, and the Nelk Boys Transformed American Politics" to Chloe Crowell '25 sharing "Conservatism in the Kitchen: How 'Trad Wives' are Shifting Political Boundaries."

Fernanda Opazo-Aravena '25 presented "From Panama to Washington: The Hunger Games as a Mirror to America's Political Landscape," examining the effects of the U.S. administration on international students, immigrants, green card holders, and low-income families. Opazo-Aravena found the presentation to be a powerful way to educate and engage her audience: "This issue is so much bigger than what most Choate students understand. We live in a bubble where, even though students stay informed, they do not realize how lamentable and damaging is for everyone else. We become unaware of the reality most people live in," she said.

Additionally, Xiu Lim '25 presented "AI Takes Textualism to the Gallows." He explained how a theoretical artificial intelligence judge kills the judicial philosophy of textualism and how that redefines the law. "Presenting itself was pretty fun. The fact that I got the opportunity to explain something I'm really passionate about to a group of peers was a gift," he said.

While reflecting on this year's JFK presentations, Mr. Gallagher praised this year's cohort: "They were really impressive. The kids were well organized; they were articulate. I thought as a group, they were quite strong this year," he said.

The presentations left a positive impression on members who attended. Charlie Mosier '27 said, "My overall reaction was positive. I liked Leon [Zhang '25's] presentation about philosophy, why we live life, and what the purpose is, despite it being so full of challenges. I thought the variation in topics was interesting and a good reflection of what the JFK program can do."

Similarly, JFK program member Max Schoelkopf '26 found the presentations to be insightful. He said, "Arjun [Pathy '25] had a really cool theory about changing elections and changing how voting works within elections ... as was Camila [Granda '25's presentation] about the connection between iron and lead poisoning to ADHD ... They all touched upon very niche subjects that let the audience get a wide range of different subjects."



Photo courtesy of Fernanda Opazo-Aravena '25
JFK students pose after their round of presentations.

This year's JFK presentations closed out another successful cycle, showcasing the intellectual curiosity and analytical skills students developed over two years in the program. Reflecting on the program as a whole, Opazo-Aravena has found a strong sense of community within the JFK program and has enjoyed its supportive environment. "I feel like we're all very, very close to each other now. The program has helped us grow as students and individuals, and we became each other's people in all aspects," she said. Opazo-Aravena reflected, "We are able to rely on each other and be supportive of one another at all times."

Lim also valued his experience partaking in the JFK program. "I loved JFK; [taking classes with] a bunch of philosophy, econ, political science nerds with very strong opinions in an open community... They [helped] me understand that no idea is not worth listening to," Lim concluded.

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Visuals by Kate Park '27, Ann Ma '25, Eliza Aldrich '27, and Choate Photos.



SCHOOL NEWS

Holocaust Survivor Speaks For Yom HaShoah

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



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

The four student moderators listen to Ms. Weiner as she shares her story.

"Storytelling holds immense power. It resists silence; it preserves memory; and most importantly, it combats hatred," Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers said, on April 4, as she introdcued Choate's Yom HaShoah speaker. Also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah commemorates the six million Jews who were murdered under the Nazi regime. Choate welcomed Holocaust survivor Ms. Ruth Weiner to share her story with the community.

Hillel Advisor and Jewish Chaplain Rabbi Barbara Paris, a key organizer of the event, emphasized that planning the programming was a "collaborative effort between students, Dr. Myers, and Spiritual Life."

Partnering with Voices of Hope, a non-profit created by descendants of Holocaust survivors from across Connecticut, the group arranged for Ms. Weiner to speak in front of the School during School Meeting.

Reverend Rathbun highlighted the event's importance, saying, "First, it's important for combating antisemitism and learning about the historical horrors of the Holocaust. Second, it's important for learning about genocide and ethnic cleansing."

The programming began with a video of Ms. Weiner presented by the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). "It is crucial that we continue to talk about the Holocaust and its tragedy so that we never forget what happened and we can stand up to hatred," Legal Director of the CHRO Ms. Kim Jacobsen said.

Ms. Weiner was born in Vienna, Austria, and grew up in a middle-class Jewish family. Her childhood was shattered when Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany, and overnight, Vienna was draped in swastikas and Nazi slogans. Jewish families, including hers, faced escalating violence and exclusion: Jewish stores were looted, public spaces banned Jews, and Hitler Youth groups terrorized people in the streets. On Kristallnacht, also known as the Night of Broken Glass, the Nazi police tried to force entry into her family's house.

Ms. Weiner emphasized that while her story is just one among millions, she chooses to share it "so that the information does not dissipate." She continued, saying, "I'm somebody who believes that the only thing worse than talking about the bad things is not talking about the bad things."

Following the screening, the community welcomed Ms. Weiner on the virtual stage via Zoom to participate in a live Q&A session moderated by Emily Levin '25, Xiu Lim '25, Andrew van Dyke '25, and Vlada Letii '27.

Ms. Weiner began by asking the audience to imagine everyone they know, then everyone in Connecticut, then adding Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, to grasp the scale of the six million Jews murdered. "If you can consider all of those people as having been murdered ... You have a good sense of whom we are commemorating today," she said.

Reflecting on her own experience, Ms. Weiner shared how her early experiences taught her how to handle crisis. "I'm the one who stays calm in an emergency and who remembers where the band aids are when they're needed," she said. "[During the Holocaust], I managed to stay calm for as long as it was necessary."

Ms. Weiner then shared advice to build a more inclusive and compassionate world. She encouraged Choate students to practice kindness every day: "If you can't be anything else, then be nice. Because what the world does not need is nasty, vicious people," she said. Ms. Weiner also stressed the importance of remembering not just the horrors but also those individuals who risked their lives to help others.

Yet, Ms. Weiner did not shy away from addressing the painful truth. "[The Nazi's] got away with it. The rest of the world sat and watched, and nobody made any efforts whatsoever to interfere or put a stop to it," she said, emphasizing that inaction in the face of injustice enables harm to continue. The event concluded with the sounding of a memorial siren, following the Israeli tradition of pausing to honor the Jews who were murdered, as well as individuals being persecuted today.

Rabbi Paris shared that the Choate community can take away Ms. Weiner's lessons of compassion and having the courage to do what is right. "Be an upstander and speak out when you see things that are going on that just aren't right," she said. Similarly, Reverend Rathbun said, "We can [ask ourselves], am I informed, or am I mostly ignoring what's going on in the world? Do I defend what's happening, or am I speaking out against it, or am I standing on the sidelines? We have a voice, we have a role, we can help make change."

A major takeaway for Emerson Renshaw '27 was that acknowledging and learning from history is crucial. "I think part of recognizing tragedies is not to forget them, but to respect them and use them as a guideline for the future," he said.

The lessons the Choate community learned from Ms. Weiner, from striving to be upstanders to learning from historical mistakes, are crucial. For Choate, Yom HaShoah is a time of commemoration, reflection, and learning. "I hope [students] realize the absolute honor and importance of meeting an actual [Holocaust] survivor, because in five [to] ten years, no one will have that opportunity," Rabbi Paris concluded.

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CHOATE LAUNCHES NEW COURSES

By **Asa Gibson '28**
Reporter

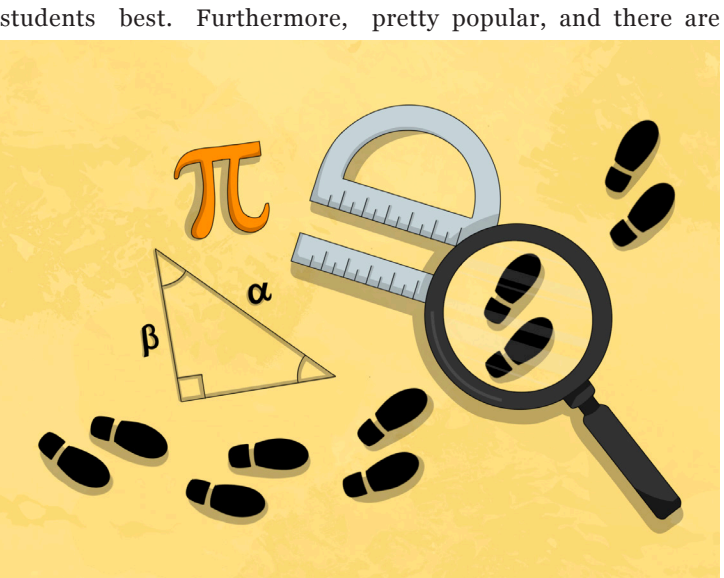
Choate's course catalogue boasts over 300 courses, ranging from the arts to the sciences to multidisciplinary classes. Each year, brand new courses are introduced to the Choate Curriculum, broadening the opportunities and interests students can pursue during the school day. This upcoming school year, the School will be introducing Choate Repertory Dancers, Cinema Studies: Understanding the Moving Image, Popular Culture and Mass Media, and Forensic Science.

In order to create a new course, there is a lengthy process involving the Department Heads, the Registrar, and the integration into the Choate Curriculum. When describing the process of creating a new course, Registrar's Ms. Nancy Matlack said, "All courses are [first] approved within the department ... The department either agrees to put it forward or not, depending on where their holes are in the lineup for all the classes and what [students] might be interested in."

Not all courses can become a part of the Curriculum, so the Department Heads have to be selective on which ones will fit the interests of Choate students best. Furthermore, due to teacher limitations and varying student interest, certain courses may run every other year or be removed from the curriculum.

One of the new courses introduced for the 2025-2026 Curriculum is the Forensic Science course taught by Science teacher Mr. Chris Aguiar. When Mr. Aguiar decided to create the Forensic Science course, he remembered Ms. Matlack asking the questions: "When might it be helpful to propose to run it? When are we missing electives? Who would be ideal to run this for?" Mr. Aguiar described the course as a combination of all sciences. "It's very interdisciplinary, and forensic science involves psychology. It involves anatomy, biology, chemistry, and physics. So there's just a lot of different parts to it," he said.

Mr. Aguiar has many hopes for his forensics class as it continues to be a part of the Choate Curriculum. "I hope for a couple [of] things. One, my goal is always to stimulate curiosity, so [that] students [can] come in and wonder about something and learn something based on their curiosity. I also think there are a lot of misconceptions out there because students watch a lot of crime shows on TV. They're pretty popular, and there are just a lot of things that are incorrect about them," he said.



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

On the other side of the STEM field, the Mathematics and Computer Science Department is changing Advanced Precalculus to a two-term course instead of the current three-term course. The Department chose to make this decision in order to increase the time students have with Calculus. "[The department] has been talking about [this change] for the last two years. The students, due to Covid-19, have not had enough time to do the practice they need to do with the material, and we need more time to give them more practice in Calculus," Mathematics and Computer Science Department Head Ms. Andrea Sorrells said.

In effect, Calculus AB will become a four-term course. As students will be shifting to Calculus AB in the spring term, the Registrar will need to tackle schedule changes between the winter and spring term. Although this change will have an effect on the pace of Precalculus courses as they will be moving through material more quickly, "A lot of Precalculus is review, so we don't need as much time for that new material, and we can take some of that time of the repeat [material] and still repeat it," Ms. Sorrelss said. This will ultimately benefit the students' experience learning Calculus across different levels.

Choate's evolving curriculum, shown through new and modified courses such as Forensic Science and Advanced Precalculus mirrors a thoughtful process that balances student interest, academic priorities, and faculty resources. These new courses are designed to enrich students' education overall and better align with their passions and interests.

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Rebranding the Daily Grind: Bring on Now Boar Bites

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor



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

Every Tuesday morning following School Meeting, the smell of fresh, sweet donuts wafts through the air as the Student Council's donut shop, the Daily Grind, opens for students. The Daily Grind has been a Student Council tradition for more than seven years; however, the newly elected Student Council has decided to redesign this initiative under a new name: Boar Bites.

The Daily Grind was initially a coffee station set up by the Student Council in 2018 in an effort to provide caffeine for students. Sixth-form Student Council Representative Thandiwe Taylor '26 explained, "When Daily Grind first started, it was actually during the Friday conference [block] in the Humanities Rotunda. The Student Council would provide coffee and tea and things of that sort." They also provided other refreshments such as cinnamon rolls, lemonade, croissants, and different kinds of sandwiches. Eventually, the Student Council members shifted to selling donuts after school meetings.

The Daily Grind has remained with several key concerns surrounding donut flavor polls, the unclear name, limited advertising, disorganized lines, and narrow payment options. Recognizing these issues, newly elected Student Body President Zaki Shamsi '26 and Student Body Vice President Max Schoelkopf '26 saw opportunities to improve the initiative. At their first official 2025-2026 Student Council meeting, the members focused on tackling these issues head on and have proposed new implementations that are currently in progress.

To address the unfitting name, the initiative has now been renamed Boar Bites; Daily Grind, while unique, didn't clearly reflect its purpose. "We wanted to rename Daily Grind and call it Boar Bites instead, because it's more specific to the donuts that we're selling," Taylor said.

In order to attract more customers and make purchases easier, the Student Council is hoping to expand its payment options. Previously, students could only pay with cash and or their Choate ID, but the new system gives the student body a say in selecting the beneficiary and gives them insight to where the money from donut sales is going.

This year's 2025-2026 Student Council has already sent out a form to the student body and selected a charity that will receive donations. The proceeds earned until the next Student Council administration will be donated to The Sister's Project, a charity that supports individuals and families who are battling cancer. "I'm glad that we're broadening our horizons beyond donuts and allowing for the student body to have an input in regard to what charity our proceeds go to," van Wingerden said.

Reflecting on the change from an outside-administration perspective, Josh Pan '27 said, "I think Boar Bites is a very welcome change that proves the competency of the new administration. I'm excited to see what other changes the new administration is able to implement in the future."

Boar Bites is more than just selling donuts — it provides students with a snack to fuel for the day, brings the community closer, and gives Choate students a chance to give back to local organizations. "Boar Bites provides a little snack for our amazing students while also giving back to the community," Schoelkopf said. Through these new implementations, the Student Council hopes to preserve the cherished tradition of the Daily Grind while bringing about positive change. The Student Council is always working to improve the student body experience at Choate and Boar Bites is only the beginning for the 2025-2026 Student Council.

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Choate and Wallingford: A Complicated Co-Existence

By **Anya Shah '25 and John Jannotta '25**
Local News Editor of the 118th Masthead and Reporter

Choate may be a historic fixture in Wallingford, but does the town embrace it or simply live alongside it?

There is a popular belief among the student body that Choate students aren't well-received by the local community. And it's no surprise that they might feel that way — students can be spotted from a mile away in their blue and gold, notoriously congesting every crosswalk in town.

"I think Choate students are often thought of as very entitled ... and I do think, unfortunately, that sometimes we do embody that," Cyrus Naficy '25 speculated.

Arjun Pathy '25, who often stops into town for coffee or Thai food, echoed this sentiment. "I think they definitely see us as kind of stuck-up, privileged people," he said.

But after speaking with the people who live and work in town, a different vision of the Choate-Wallingford relationship takes shape. Rather than viewing them as the annoying next-door neighbors, some Wallingford locals actually embrace Choate as part of a mutually uplifting community.

Take Za-Onn, a popular Thai restaurant in downtown Wallingford frequented by Choate students, as an example. The owner, Ms. Miew Mulpurke, loves interacting with diners from Choate.

"I'm always happy to see [students] here," she said. "Every time [they] come, I feel like [they] are my nephew or niece." Her close relationship with students is evidenced by the nickname "Auntie Miew," used by her regular Choate customers.

At Bee's Knees, another local favorite serving up breakfast and brunch, owner Ms. Jena Schlosser shares a similar perception of the Choate community. Having grown up in Wallingford and worked at Half Moon Coffee and Grille Cafe as a teenager, she has always had a positive relationship with Choate students.

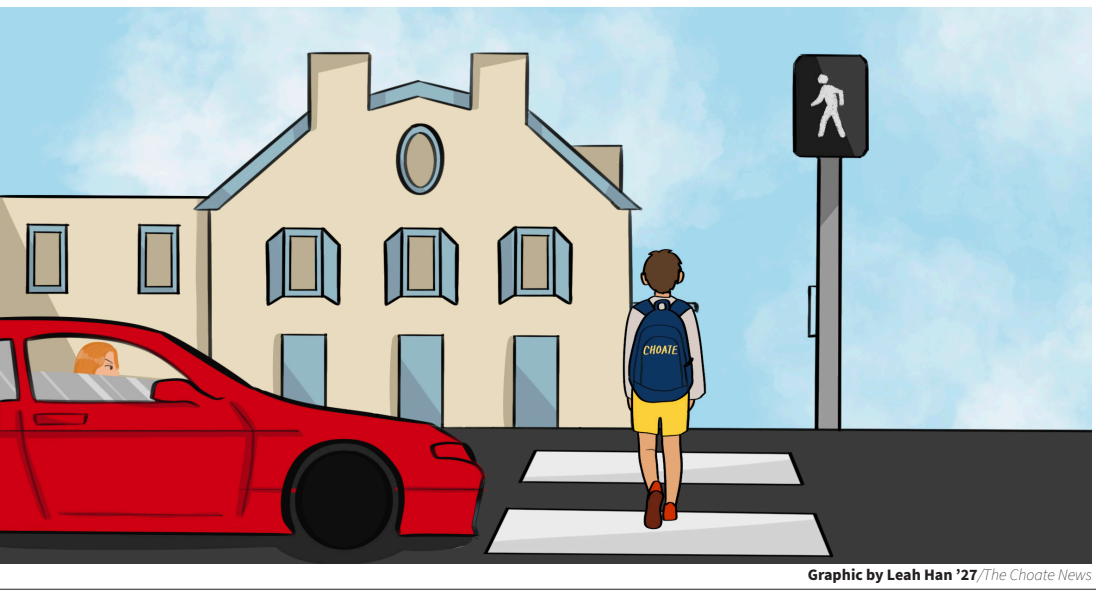
When she was in high school, Ms. Schlosser remembers befriending Choate students in town. Now, as a business owner on the outskirts of campus, she reflects on her current relationship with the School. "I think it brings such diversity to our town ... when you guys have your Alumni Weekends, Parents' Weekends, all of your big sporting events and stuff. It's just so fun because it brings so many different people and families into this room," said.

Ms. Schlosser appreciates getting to know Choate students and faculty, explaining that admissions officers and teachers often come to her restaurant for food. "I love that I have the ones that come in often, who I get to form a relationship with. I'll get to know your coffee order, and it's great," she said.

Outside of food establishments, Wallingford residents just don't really have a solid opinion on Choate students. Ms. Kelly Flynn and Ms. Taylor Culmone, two Wallingford locals who attended Lyman Hall for high school, have always been aware of Choate and its students but never had much interaction with them. "You guys have the skating rink, which has public skate, which I went to and grew up with," Ms. Culmone noted.

While some Choate students may carry the impression that they are seen as outsiders in the town of Wallingford, the reality is that many Wallingford locals love connecting with the Choate community and value their interactions with students and faculty.

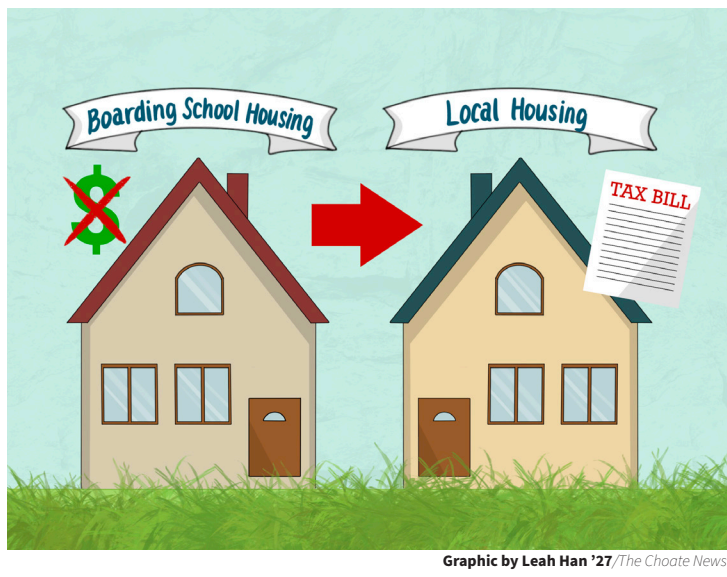
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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

Private Schools Face Financial Threat from Tax Changes

By **Eshana Hora '27**
Copy Editor



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

On January 29, House Bill 6804 was introduced by Connecticut Representative Ms. Mary Muchinsky, which aims to "eliminate any property tax exemption applicable to faculty or staff housing at private secondary educational institutions." Currently, private schools like Choate receive tax exemptions because of their not-for-profit status, which helps save money for faculty housing and other operating costs. Currently, 476 Choate employees live in Wallingford. If this bill passes, it would impact schools across the state. However, responses to the bill are mixed. According to CT Insider, "Of the 133 pieces of submitted testimony for the bill, 88 are against the bill while the remaining 45 are in favor."

Wallingford's Renee's School of Dance owner Ms. Renee Fuhr, believes Bill 6804 is not about attacking schools but instead about fairness. "Choate has annual revenue that is comparable to the entire budget that the Town of Wallingford has for its 12 schools, an endowment that is estimated to be greater than $0.5 billion, and a never-ending stream of donations for large development projects ... With an acceptance rate of below 20% of applicants, the long-term economic position of Choate is sound," she said. From her perspective, private schools like Choate can afford to and should pay property taxes.

Another supporter of Bill 6804, Wallingford resident Mr. John Bau said, "My life and work in my town generates considerable economic activity, but I am taxed for my home. It should be the same for the homes owned by private secondary schools."

In contrast, many private schools across Connecticut feel the bill could lead to major budget cuts and negatively impact their relationships with their respective towns. Furthermore, the bill could impact how schools attract and retain faculty members, as on-campus housing allows faculty to immerse themselves in the school culture. According to Choate's Chief Communications Officer Mrs. Alison Cady, "Residential faculty play a vital role in creating a safe, supportive, and immersive learning environment for our students. By living on campus, they are able to foster close mentoring relationships, supervise student life, and maintain the unique character of a boarding school experience." The proposed bill would put a great strain on the School's ability to have such a robust faculty housing model. "This model is not just a preference—it is a necessity for fulfilling our educational mission," Mrs. Cady said.

Mrs. Cady further explained Choate's already large role in supporting Wallingford. "This new cost would be a hit to our budget, and we would need to find savings to offset that new cost ... Choate's presence in Wallingford is estimated to bring over $43.6 million in annual economic impact to the town and region," she said. In addition, "As a top five employer in the town, we contribute significant payroll taxes and bring spending to town businesses through school operations, employee, and visitor spending ... If HB6804 passes, it will turn what is now a genuine community partnership into a transactional relationship," Mrs. Cady added.

Choate isn't the only school in Connecticut that opposes this bill. Head of School at Avon Old Farms School Mr. Jim Detora said, "Private boarding schools like Avon Old Farms have an incredible impact on the lives of our students and communities because of the all-in commitment of our faculty. This is possible through the on-campus housing provided by schools. House Bill 6804 threatens our educational model, one which has a proven long-standing track record."

As of now, Bill 6804 has not yet been passed, and no decisions have been made since a public hearing in February. Nevertheless, the bill has sparked considerable conversation across Connecticut about the responsibilities of private schools and their responsibility to contribute to the towns and communities that they are part of, especially when it comes to taxes.

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Garden Club Plants Joy

By **Hiyab Mebrahtu '27**
Reporter

With spring in full swing, the Wallingford Garden Club — a close community of plant lovers — has a multitude of fun events planned. Founded from a shared passion for gardening, the club has become a cornerstone of Wallingford's seasonal charm. They maintain four gardens in town and offer scholarships, youth instruction programming, and monthly speakers to the local community. The club is currently anticipating the biggest event of their year: the annual plant sale.

The plant sale is a time for Wallingford community members to explore and observe a wide variety of displayed plants. It is currently scheduled for May 17 at the Historic Railroad Green on Quinnipiac Street, where a diverse range of plants will be available for sale. All proceeds will go to supporting the club in its efforts to work with seniors and youth. The money will also help fund a college scholarship for a Wallingford High School graduate.

In addition to the sale, the Wallingford Garden Club hosts many lively events to educate the public about gardening. On May 13, they plan to hold a program called "Carnivorous Plants," featuring Biomedical Illustrator and Animator Bill Matthews, at the Wallingford Congregational Church. Ms. Bette Zollshan, a member of the club, shared the club's intention behind these events. "We love sharing our knowledge and special plants with other experienced and inexperienced gardeners," Ms. Zollshan said.

The club is also planning a field trip for members to travel to Hamden for a tour of Broken Arrow Nursery. This tour will offer members an educational and fun experience, providing them with the opportunity to learn more about their passion. From little seedlings to giant tulips, there's something for every garden enthusiast to admire.

Whether you're an experienced gardener or simply trying to learn the difference between a dandelion and a daffodil, the Wallingford Garden Club has something for you. It's the perfect place to grow your skills — and your garden.

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Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/The Choate News

Mentorship Project Makes Memories

By **Teniola Obayomi '25**
Reporter



Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27/The Choate News

Every Wednesday afternoon, a group of Choate mentors gathers with local children for the Mentorship Program. During each one-hour session, young elementary and middle school students receive homework help and emotional support in the Wallingford Library. As leadership changes for the 2025 school year are underway, the Mentorship Project is once again looking for new mentors and to expand the scope of the program.

The Mentorship Program was started by Zainab Khokha '24 and Ava McClatchie '24 during their fourth-form year. Khokha recalls that she was inspired to start the project to echo a similar initiative that her old school had done. Her main goal was to develop a program that could integrate Choate with the local community. "We have a lot of great public middle schools around, and I thought it would be really cool if we partnered them up with students at Choate," Khokha said.

After proposing the idea to McClatchie, the two planned and marketed the program with the help of Community Service Director Ms. Melissa Koomson and ESL teacher Ms. Gilthia Coppola. According to Khokha, the program developed slowly due to slow communication with schools: "We had to talk to a teacher, who would then talk for us to the principal, who would then talk back," she explained. Another initial struggle was generating interest. "Our first mentorship meeting, we had two kids and four mentors — [only] two of [the mentors] showed up," Khokha added.

Over Khokha and McClatchie's Choate careers, the Mentorship Project expanded, with mentor and mentee numbers steadily increasing each year. This growth has been observed by the current program leaders, Quinn Farmer '25 and Lara Amer '27. "I'd say we have a lot of returners from the prior years, which is a sign that students are enjoying the program and they're getting a lot from it," Amer said. "We've been having a lot more interest from Choate students to be mentors, which has been really great. The project is slowly expanding as the terms and the years go by, and next year, we're also hoping to include more middle schools."

Mentor-mentee partnerships have a positive impact on the lives of both parties. Zein Kabbani '25 was involved in the project throughout her fourth- and fifth-form years. For Kabbani, the most rewarding part of Mentorship was seeing her mentee's growth. "I've been paired with the same mentee throughout. Just seeing the change in attitude, as well as the change in confidence in his own abilities, has been really meaningful for me to see that my efforts can have a tangible impact on someone's life," Kabbani said.

Before her leadership role, Amer was a mentor, and she experienced a similar success story. "I helped [my mentee] work through his secondary school applications and his schoolwork, and he ended up getting into the secondary school he really wanted to attend. Seeing his excitement and the joy, and helping make that be possible was such an amazing feeling," she said.

Now, as a part of the project's leadership team, Amer reflected on her role managing the event. "Leading the Mentorship Project includes communicating with parents: reaching out, letting them know when we're having our sessions, and sending updates to them about how their kids are doing." Additionally, Amer and Farmer work with the Andrew Mellon Library to reserve a conference space, update local teachers on students' progress, and learn about students' personalities in order to pair them with mentors.

Parents also recognize the value of the Mentorship Project. Mr. Benjamin Marrero is the father of a young mentee, and he believes that "mentorship promotes a means of sharing knowledge and skill to the younger generation." As a result of the project, Mr. Marrero has seen a positive change in his son. "I have seen improvement with my son's focus on his tasks in terms of schoolwork, what needs to be accomplished, and becoming goal-oriented. I've gotten feedback from him that it helps with understanding the process of how to answer certain questions."

Overall, the program has been successful in fulfilling Khokha and McClatchie's mission: connecting Choate with the local community. According to Ms. Koomson, the Mentorship Program is another example of Choate's involvement in Wallingford. "I think, from my perspective, [the biggest success of the program is] reaching out and connecting with families and kiddos in the community and providing intentional space for that cross partnership with Choate students and those beyond the Choate community," she said.

A newer mentor, Parker Jackson '28, echoed this sentiment. "I'm not actually from [Wallingford], so I've never experienced the people from here that much. Being able to see their perspectives and [learn] about their schools and what they're doing is giving [me] a new perspective on life, and it's more fun. It adds to my little Wednesdays." Jackson had some words of advice for new mentors. "Be outgoing because the kid who's going to be younger than you will probably be less likely to open up and talk to you."

Through shared experiences, academic support, and small moments of connection, mentors and mentees learned that small acts of kindness go a long way. What began as a humble student initiative has become a pillar in Choate's community engagement, one Wednesday at a time.

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The Choate News

119th Masthead — VOL. CXIX

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The Choate Athletics Funding Problem

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

We have all been there — you try to get a team uniform at the equipment room in the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC), but by the time you get there, your size is no longer available, with the only other options being two sizes too big or two sizes too small. Perhaps after a particularly rough practice, you find yourself with broken equipment and no way to fix it. I can't help but wonder if our athletic programs and facilities are getting adequate financial support to truly thrive, particularly funding toward equipment and training grounds that athletes need to use to compete and practice.

Choate's Chief Financial Officer Mr. Patrick Durbin explained, "The School has invested tens of millions of dollars in planned maintenance and investment to expand the use and program of athletics and athletics facilities." Recent improvements, such as the new turf field at Maguire North and the resurfaced Class of '76 fields, show progress. Indoors, upgrades to the WJAC, squash courts, and new live-streaming cameras are all also steps in the right direction.

Despite these flashy projects, there's still a popular perception that athletics take a back seat compared to other aspects of Choate student life. I have discussed with many of my peers why our teams don't have the same, high-quality resources as other schools and why many daily challenges athletes face remain unaddressed. For Girls' Varsity Softball Captain Gioia Segui '25, these issues are extremely apparent. She said, "My teammates and I compare our [softball] field to other schools' fields all the time when we travel ... They have really nice fields with tall fences that have the school's name printed across, big brick dugouts, nice dirt, and huge open outfields ... Those are the things we [the softball team] wish our field had."

Its important to note that these disparities also exist within our own teams. As a proud member of the Boys' Varsity Tennis team, I have experienced these shortcomings firsthand. This spring, the tennis team has had to share rackets because we rely on external racket stringing services, which often take multiple days to return our rackets. Meanwhile, the squash program has a stringing machine on site, allowing players to restring rackets whenever necessary. Not only more funding, but equal funding for all teams is what our athetics program needs.

The softball team lacks a dugout, while the baseball team has a much larger playing field. Segui said, "The [lack of] softball dugouts have been a conversation between my teammates and I for years ... When you look across at the [boys'] baseball field, they have these big, beautifully built brick dugouts that are lit and roomy. Meanwhile, we have a bent fence and tiny benches." Overall funding into our atheletics programs would address these inequal conditions as well as provide the support that all athletes need.

Whether it's a small detail or a major disparity, the discrepancies in resource distribution among sports teams are rampant. While making major improvements to football fields and high-tech management systems is meaningful, the lack of investment compared to other schools and even other teams within Choate must be resolved. How can we expect our teams to compete at the highest level when we don't even have the basic tools or facilities to support them?

Choate's athletic teams are very successful — we have thrived, but in order for them to continue to do so, there must be more focus on funding to solve the everyday difficulties students face.

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We Need Mandatory On-Campus Long Weekends

By **Sophie Chung '27**
Opinions Writer

Weekends — for many, just hearing this word elicits relaxation. Long Weekends, specifically, are highly anticipated times for Choate students to visit nearby cities and leave Wallingford. While the Student Committee on Programming and Engagement (SCOPE) hosts various weekend activities on campus for students who stay over during long weekends, I believe the School can enhance the Choate experience by implementing one mandatory on-campus long weekend per year.

At first, the idea of mandatory on-campus long weekends may sound awful. After a stretch of classes, it's natural for students to want an escape. Being told you have to stay on campus can be frustrating, but setting aside a long weekend each year where boarders remain on campus for some fun activities and community bonding could be the highlight of the year.

One of the biggest reasons why mandatory on-campus long weekends could be beneficial is that it would promote community bonding. While boarders live and learn at Choate together, it is easy to get caught up in busy routines due to academics and extracurriculars, making it challenging to find time to connect with people outside of our usual social circles. Long weekends with School-scheduled student activities, such as ice cream socials and Spikeball tournaments, would give us the opportunity to really bond with other students we might not normally interact with.

These long weekends do not have to be packed with intense schedules. Simple bonding activities, such as movie nights, sports tournaments, cooking contests, or bonfires, would bring people together in a way that regular weekdays and weekends can't. It would give students the additional time needed to meet new people. Veronique de Vries '26 suggested that on-campus long weekends, particularly in the spring, would be an excellent opportunity to facilitate outdoor community bonding. "On a nice spring day, you could get the people to compete in some type of game on the lawn. That would be fun," she said.

In addition to offering social opportunities, these weekends would give students a chance to relax in a healthy way. Between the pressure of academics, extracurriculars, and being away from home, having a designated, long period of time to unwind is something we all need. Wellness activities like yoga sessions, art workshops, or even themed dress-up dinners offer a good balance of fun and rest.

Furthermore, mandatory on-campus long weekends can enhance the sense of belonging within the community. During long weekends, not everyone has the opportunity to leave campus. Some international students and students who live farther away from Choate have no choice but to stay on campus. For many, long weekends can get boring, lonely, and quiet, and it is easy for people to feel excluded. Thailand native Pete Areewong '27, who often stays on campus over long weekends, expressed, "To be honest, I do get a little bit lonely. You know, some of my friends do stay on campus, but a lot of them do leave. So it's a little bit quiet and sad in the dorms." By creating mandatory on-campus long weekends, we can ensure no one is left behind and build a stronger sense of belonging in the School community.

Mandatory on-campus long weekends could make the Choate experience more fun, more connected, and a lot more memorable — that is something definitely worth considering.

Sophie Chung *is a fourth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at schung27@choate.edu.*



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

GIVE ME THE RICE COOKERS NOW!

By **Kaitlyn Yu '27**
Sports Section Editor



Graphic by Kiki Wenren '28/The Choate News

The best reminders of home are often the most simple — for some, a good bowl of rice usually takes the homesickness away. Yet, instead of enjoying the white rice served in the dining hall, I don't even opt for it. Frankly, the quality of the rice disappoints, and I'm relieved to know I'm not alone in how I feel. The frequency and consistency of the white rice in the dining hall are two major issues that have students talking and, in many cases, complaining. However, a simple solution could drastically improve the dining experience at Choate — a rice cooker. It's time for the School's caterer, SAGE Dining Services, to invest in rice cookers to serve quality white rice daily.

For many students, white rice isn't just a side dish. As an essential part of her meal and irreplaceable part of their lifestyle, Norah Wang '27 said, "I've grown up with rice ... [We] would eat it with every meal. And I've had to give up [this habit] at Choate just because ... [the rice] isn't cooked through sometimes."

Other students expressed similar sentiments. Jun Wong '27 said, "The rice is usually either way overcooked and has way too little water in it or way undercooked and has too much water in it." Fe Yuen '28, similar to Wang, stays away from the white rice most days. "I skip [the rice options] because I personally prefer short-grain and stickier rice. But ... a lot of times they serve long grain, which is drier," she said. Since they've arrived at Choate, many students have had to sacrifice rice from their diet simply because of its poor quality in the dining hall.

It's evident that the quality of the white rice in the dining hall must improve, but what makes it so inconsistent in the first place?

Assistant Food Service Director of SAGE Dining Services Mr. Andrew Welle explained how their current steaming method produces large quantities of rice efficiently. "Most of the time we [cook] the white rice ... in a steamer," he said. This allows for a large amount of rice to be cooked at the same time without the size constraints that a normal-sized rice cooker has. However, the large amount of rice cooked at once often leads to its inconsistent quality, leaving many students dissatisfied with the rice.

This is where commercial rice cookers come in — they're large enough to support the size of the Choate community and will be able to keep the quality of the rice consistent. The price range for a 45-liter rice cooker? The cheapest goes for around $20 and the most expensive at around $300. Furthermore, many other educational institutions near us, like the University of Connecticut, have used rice cookers in their dining halls since 2016. If other catering services have used a rice cooker to enhance the students' dining experiences, I'm confident SAGE will be able to do the same as well.

If the quality of the white rice improved in the dining hall, we'd also see an increase in community members opting for it, allowing SAGE to explore the option of serving white rice daily. Mr. Welle pointed out that there were no logistical constraints to serving the white rice more frequently. "If [serving rice every day] is a thing that students want, we can definitely do that," he said. Wang supported Mr. Welle's idea and added that she supports having rice in the dining hall daily. "You don't need rice for 800 people," she said. "But ... [a lot of] people do eat rice on a daily basis, and a big pot of rice will last. Everybody's only going to take a scoop or two ... [so] that's a fully achievable option."

Furthermore, improving the quality of the rice could reduce food waste in the dining hall. "I think it would lead to less waste if you had a rice [cooker] with a higher quality of rice," Gopika Sheth '27 said. The better the rice, the more likely students are willing to finish their portions, meaning less rice would go to waste at the end of the day.

And there is hope for improvement — the renovated Hill House dining hall may be able to include commercial rice cookers in the kitchen to serve white rice daily. "There's going to be new [machinery], and [with an upgraded meal plan], there's going to be more options every day," Thandiwe Taylor '26, a member of the dining hall Committee, shared. Hopefully, once the Hill House dining hall opens its doors once again, this feedback will turn into reality, offering students a consistent and high-quality white rice option.

With a new dining hall experience on the horizon, it's time to provide the community with a rice cooker to step up the quality, consistency, and frequency of white rice at Choate. The improved white rice would undoubtedly bring comfort to many students and reduce food waste. Buying rice cookers is not just a wise investment; it is a necessary one.

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A Human World Is a Natural World

By **Levi York '26**
Opinions Writer



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

Rhetoric surrounding climate change often paints a picture of a world tumbling from an Edenic state into one riddled with destruction. There are cries to save the planet and return it to an ecological state unmarked by human activity. While climate change threatens to transform the world as we know it, the language our society uses to talk about the environment solidifies a misleading idea: that a "natural" world exists outside of human intervention and that we should strive to return to it.

The concept of an untouched environment is purely a feature of human romanticism. Believing that a world unaffected by human actions is "natural" reflects the mindset seen in campaigns like "Leave No Trace" or national park promotions that portray humans as outsiders in wilderness spaces. These efforts suggest that true nature exists only in our absence.

But calling a world with humans "unnatural" raises the question: are humans not natural? As a species, we tend to see ourselves as separate, even superior. We call other living beings animals, forgetting that we, too, are animals. Our language around the environment reinforces this divide. This mindset frames human activity as inherently disruptive, even though we have always been part of ecosystems.

The idea and necessity of returning to a so-called "natural" world implies that humans are inherently destructive, which is not only reductive but contrary to the truth. Humans have coexisted with nature for millions of years. Communities, particularly indigenous ones, have developed ways to live sustainably and support ecosystems. Robin Wall Kimmerer's work in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, for example, explores how Indigenous practices like controlled burnings promote new wildlife growth and prevent devastating wildfires. Such traditions reveal that human presence can help, not harm, the land. Even if a "natural world" existed to return to, the desire to do so rests on a flawed understanding of our role in the environment.

Humans have already made a significant and lasting impact on Earth. Climate change is not just coming, it is already here, and some of its effects are irreversible. We are living in the Anthropocene, an era defined by human influence on the planet. Yet, public discourse often underplays this reality. Perhaps it's because media attention lags or because climate change still feels abstract to some. But the truth remains: environmental transformation is happening now, and our response must match its urgency.

Climate change is not the first human-caused environmental shift. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s — a devastating crisis in the U.S. Great Plains — was fueled by intensive farming practices that stripped the soil of nutrients, leading to vast dust storms, crop failure, and suffering. But human impact on nature isn't always destructive. We've also altered environments in positive ways. Cherry trees in Washington, D.C., for example, were imported from Eurasia and now support pollinators and provide nesting spots for birds. Humans have also created wetlands to filter pollution and reduce flood risks. While we may imagine some parts of the world as relatively untouched, in truth, every landscape has been shaped by people.

There are numerous consequences of clinging to an idealized notion of a pristine past. First, clinging to the idea of a "natural world" can lead to unrealistic and demotivating goals. The concept of reversing all human impact is practically impossible and fails to recognize the nuanced relationship between humans and the environment.

Second, focusing exclusively on preventing change overshadows the need to address our current environmental challenges. Millions are already experiencing the impacts of climate change in the form of stronger hurricanes, increased flooding, and extreme heat. By focusing only on a mythical "return," we risk ignoring the crises unfolding around us.

We must adapt — not just reduce emissions, but rethink how we live with environmental change. Adaptation means more than building sea walls or developing drought-resistant crops; it means redesigning infrastructure, reshaping policies, and reframing the public conversation. This includes acknowledging that we are not here to "save the Earth" in some abstract sense, but to protect life on it — ourselves included.

Climate change impacts people, animals, and plants the most. This shift in mindset, from saving the Earth to saving ourselves, is crucial. Ecological changes must be made, and we must focus our resources on tangible, realistic efforts. While the urgency to combat climate change remains paramount, our understanding must evolve to reflect the current reality of our altered world.

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Keep ChatGPT Out of the Classroom



Graphic by Xyla Kiang '26/*The Choate News*

By **Andy Stahlman '26**
Opinions Writer

ChatGPT has opened a box that we can no longer close. While artificial intelligence (AI) is here to stay, we don't have to accept its creeping influence in education. AI tools like ChatGPT should be recognized as harmful and prohibited in schools and universities: they weaken students' ability to think independently, create unfair advantages, and make teachers' jobs harder.

Let's start with the students. AI has been shown to degrade the critical thinking levels of young students who rely on ChatGPT frequently for their work. While AI certainly can improve the quality of work students produce, the fundamental purpose of learning stands at risk if we overvalue that quality. In their study, The Effects of Over-Reliance on AI Dialogue Systems on Students' Cognitive Abilities, researchers Chunpeng Zhai, Santoso Wibowo, and Lily D. L. from Central Queensland University in Australia concluded that although AI tools can "aid decision-making and improve efficiency, they often lead to reduced critical and analytical thinking skills."

The erosion of student learning is where I draw the most concern. When students write, study, and test rigorously, the goal is not to produce a flawless piece, but to deepen understanding. We must incentivize students to further their learning and skills instead of simply maximizing efficiency or perfection. If these skills diminish due to AI usage, there is no meaningful gain — only a shortcut that comes at the cost of true education.

However, the use of AI impacts students beyond just the user. It raises the standard and diminishes personality within academic work. When enough students use AI to complete their assignments, the average standard of expected output is raised. While higher standards aren't inherently bad, students should not be pressured to use AI in order to compete with their peers. AI will negatively affect students' developing brains, which removes other students' autonomy in whether to use or not use AI.

AI-generated work might initially seem better, but if we use it too early in our writing and thinking development, we never get the chance to build our own voice. While ChatGPT might write better than the average new writer, the process of developing an individual voice through experience cannot be replaced. When one student starts using AI, others follow, and eventually, this habit can lead to the erasure of personality.

Lastly, teachers suffer due to expanded AI usage. As they grade papers and labs, AI reduces the variation and voice that make each assignment unique. While grammar and spelling might be perfect, there is very little difference between any two AI-produced works. This makes grading difficult and disrupts standard grading curves, often leading to inflated scores. For students, this means we have a more difficult time standing out. If our academic work becomes indistinguishable, the only things left to set us apart are standardized test scores and extracurriculars.

This raises one fundamental question: what is the purpose of education? I believe, as we perhaps all do, that we study to learn and grow. If AI can make papers faster and better, we need to ask: why? Why do we need "better" papers or "better" labs? We don't. What matters is being human — that's what makes us special.

AI can do many incredible things, but when it comes to education, learning should be done by people, not machines. Despite perfect grammar and structure, students' use of AI in the classroom causes us to lose the development of a genuine human voice — the ultimate goal of education.

Andy Stahlman *is a fifth-former from Austin, TX. He may be reached at astahlman26@choate.edu.*

The UN is Due for a Change

By **Josh Pan '27**
Opinions Writer

The United Nations (UN), once hailed as the pinnacle of post-war diplomacy and a testament to the lessons learned from the League of Nations, has become a relic of the twentieth century — a well-intentioned institution struggling to keep pace with a rapidly evolving world. Though its mission remains dignified, its inability to act decisively in a world filled with conflict, crisis, and geopolitical maneuvering renders it increasingly obsolete.

The problem lies within the structure of the United Nations itself. Created in 1945, in the aftermath of humanity's bloodiest war, the UN is constrained by its Security Council, the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It is paralyzed by the veto power of its five permanent members, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia. This outdated privilege granted power to the major allied powers of World War II, allowing these states to block and dictate any action that threatens their interests. Whether it's Russia vetoing resolutions on Ukraine or the U.S. shielding Israel from accountability in Gaza, the result is the same: paralysis in the face of humanitarian catastrophe.

Those who argue in favor of the existence of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) often cite the Council as responsible for preventing the outbreak of another global conflict. Some argue that it deters unilateral action by individual countries. But the record tells a different story. The Council's structure doesn't prevent conflict — it delays responses and enables obstruction.

In theory, the UNSC is designed to maintain international peace and security, but the Council has failed multiple times to do so in areas such as Ukraine, Syria, and Gaza. Furthermore, the veto system does not ensure peace; it invites political gridlock. The Big Five — the U.S., the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia — often utilize the UNSC to pursue their national interests. Instead of swift international action, we get stalled debates and symbolic resolutions.

Consider Sudan: in June 2004, the UN finally passed a resolution to deploy peacekeeping forces, almost a year after the outbreak of systematic violence in Darfur. By then, tens of thousands had been killed and over a million displaced. This system's inefficiency is not just a drawback but a complete moral failure that cripples the UN's operational capacity and undermines its legitimacy on the global stage.

Thankfully, there may be a way forward. French diplomats and advocacy groups like The Elders, founded by Nelson Mandela, have championed a proposal known as conditional veto reform. This idea would prevent any one country from blocking action in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes. Under this plan, Russia would not be able to veto action on Ukraine-related atrocities if two-thirds of the Council were in agreement. The veto wouldn't disappear, but it would be curtailed in urgent, life-threatening cases — especially those involving civilian massacres or war crimes.

Many countries also back the "Responsibility Not to Veto" rule, which encourages restraint when civilian lives are at stake. Over 100 countries, including key Global South states, have voiced support. If adopted, this reform could breathe new life into the UN, restoring its credibility and empowering it to act when it matters most.

Without reform, the Security Council risks becoming irrelevant, stuck in political deadlock, while people suffer worldwide. As global tensions escalate and humanitarian crises mount, the UN drifts closer to obscurity by the day. In the face of mass atrocity, the world needs action, not silence.

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

FEATURES

A GLIMPSE INTO THE DIVERSE WILDLIFE ON CAMPUS

By **Maddy Childs '26**
Reporter

Every day on campus, while walking to a class or activity, it's easy to overlook the natural world around us. From the lush trees that line our walkways to the adorable creatures that appear, Choate Rosemary Hall is home to a diverse array of plants and animals. Learn more about these species and their role in the ecosystem!



Photo by Maddy Childs '26/*The Choate News*

Often considered to be some of the most beautiful flowers, the daffodils you see around campus are far from wild. They have been domesticated to meet the needs and wants of humans, resulting in flowers that lack pollination. These daffodils should continue to be in bloom for about six more weeks, giving you plenty of time to enjoy their wonderful colors, specifically designed for human admiration.



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/*The Choate News*

If you see any squirrels running around, you are most likely looking at an Eastern Gray Squirrel, native to Eastern and Midwestern U.S., as well as Southern Canada. They communicate through sound and body movement, so when you hear shrieking squirrels, it could be because they were alerting other squirrels to danger present nearby.



Photo by Maddy Childs '26/*The Choate News*

The largest deciduous tree in the United States is the American Sycamore, known for its size, peeling bark, and distinctive appearance. They are native to Connecticut, and on campus, you can find one next to Clinton Knight House along Christian Street. Sycamore trees are significant to many indigenous cultures, who use their bark for making baskets and tools, as well as their wood for carving.



Photo courtesy of Rella Wang '26

Honey bees, often mistaken for aggressive insects, are actually docile creatures that sting only when they feel threatened. They are among the most vital pollinators in Connecticut, responsible for pollinating approximately 75% of the fruits and vegetables we consume. Despite their importance, honey bee populations are unfortunately facing challenges due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and disease.



Photo by Maddy Childs '26/*The Choate News*

Many people view dandelions as pesky weeds, often pulling them from lawns and gardens without realizing their value. In reality, every part of a dandelion is edible, from root to flower, and the plant offers various health benefits. Not only do they provide essential nutrients like vitamins and minerals, but they also help enrich the soil by deepening the root system, bringing up nutrients that benefit other plants around them.



Photo by Maddy Childs '26/*The Choate News*

Although they are slightly less noticed, red-tailed hawks are among the most commonly seen raptors in Connecticut. One of the most fascinating things about them is that they often mate for life, returning to the same nesting area year after year with their partner. These hawks play a crucial role in the ecosystem by controlling populations of small mammals like rodents and rabbits, which prevents overgrazing and damage to local vegetation.

Whether it be the flash of red-tailed hawks flying overhead, the hum of a honeybee, or attractive dandelions swaying in the grass, the eclectic wildlife on campus reminds us of how big of an impact nature has on us. By taking time to notice the small things around us, we can all develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the environment we share.

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Teachers Become Students

By **Eason Ni '27**
Reporter

At Choate, teachers aren't just teaching — they're learning. Across various academic departments, teachers are taking advantage of the many educational opportunities offered by auditing classes. Math teacher Mr. Jeremy Oliver and English teacher Mr. Ned Gallagher have both chosen to participate in classes with students, which has allowed them to expand their knowledge and gain valuable insights into the student experience at Choate.

Mr. Oliver sat in with Language teacher Dr. Maria Ghiggia's Spanish 100 class for half a term last year. "I already had some facility with Spanish, because I took Spanish in high school, I've watched TV shows in Spanish, and I've used Spanish in travel. It was after taking a trip to Seville, [Spain], that I thought I would like to have a context in which I can regularly practice Spanish," he said.

Through this experience, Mr. Oliver experienced various hurdles of being a Choate student that are easily overlooked, such as the stress of hiking up the hill from Lanphier Center to Steele Hall during the 10-minute passing period. "Changing buildings is a big deal," he said. "You have a sense of hurry that, as teachers, when we're teaching in the same building, don't necessarily have."

The changes also include shifting mindsets when attending different classes. Mr. Oliver said, "To go from teaching math to sitting in on a Spanish class, there's a sort of latency period." Auditing the class also taught Mr. Oliver about student preferences, such as having assessments at the beginning of class rather than at the end. "I wanted to pay attention to the rest of the lesson that was happening, but it was really hard because I needed to make sure I maintain the information that's going to be on the quiz [later]," he said. As a result, Mr. Oliver has begun to incorporate assessments at the start of his class periods to help keep students more focused.

Mr. Gallagher has also spent several years balancing teacher and student roles, participating in three years of French and one year of Art History. During his audits, students were surprised to see a teacher taking a class. Mr. Gallagher said, "They might have been curious at first, but then they got used to it, and it just became a natural part of the class."

Mr. Gallagher appreciated the teaching style that was used in his language class. "In French, the class was really interactive because we were constantly doing group exercises — it was always fun just to do activities [like that]," he said.

Mr. Gallagher also emphasized how his presence as an adult in the room made the atmosphere more lighthearted. "One of the things about taking a foreign language is you have to be willing to kind of make a fool of yourself and make a lot of mistakes," he said. "So it was kind of fun for [the students] to see another adult kind of in that role, rather than as the person in charge of the class."

By auditing classes and stepping into the shoes of students, teachers like Mr. Oliver and Mr. Gallagher have gained new skills and a deeper understanding of the various challenges that define the Choate experience.

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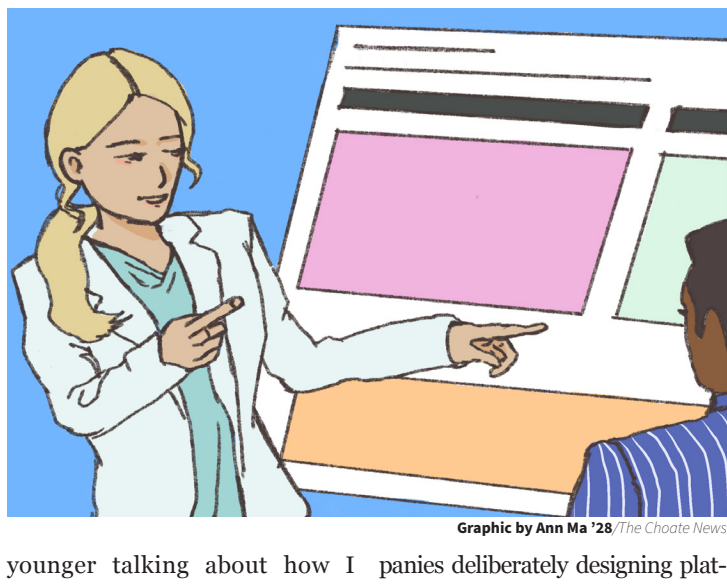


Photo by Bowen Jin '26/*The Choate News*

Mr. Oliver poses as a student taking notes in class.

Seniors Show Off Capstone Projects

By **Rhea Doshi '27**
Copy Editor



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

Every year, Choate Rosemary Hall's Capstone Program allows sixth-form students to embark on a unique academic journey where they can pursue their passions through extensive research. Working alongside a faculty advisor, seniors are able to explore a topic that interests them, culminating in a final project presented during the spring term. From transportation to genetics to sports analysis, here are some student capstones from the Class of 2025.

Sustainable Transportation

Dana Tan '25 examined sustainable forms of transportation through the lenses of both policy and economics, drawing inspiration from her own background and an environmental science class she took at Choate. "I wanted to look at the present state of transportation in the U.S., how current policies have shaped it, and where transportation might be going in the future," Tan said.

Reflecting on her research, Tan noted the lasting impact of political decisions on the nation's transportation landscape. Tan said, "It's interesting to see how easily decisions by a president can influence the long-term trajectory of transportation, especially since a lot of the policies are meant to be carried out over 20, 30 years." Tan plans to continue studying economics and environmental science in college, especially how the two disciplines intersect in real-world situations.

Genetics and Personality

Jeffery Ikele-Uwukhor '25 examined the influence of genetics and the environment on personality — a subject that he has a personal connection with. "I was inspired by the conversation I used to have with my grandma about who I was most similar to. She and I would spend a lot of time when I was younger talking about how I was most similar to my grandpa in terms of the way I act and think about stuff," he said.

In particular, Ikele-Uwukhor focused on the human epigenome, the layer of chemical modifications that influences gene expression and how the epigenome is maintained over generations. Reflecting on his project, Ikele-Uwukhor said, "What surprised me most was learning how much of our genetic code is regulated by outside factors — not the DNA sequence itself, but how it's expressed. It confirmed for me that we really are shaped by both nature and nurture."

Psychology and Economics

Grace LaPlaca '25 combined her passion for psychology and economics to explore the effects that targeted marketing has on children and younger users. "I volunteered at an elementary school for a couple of years, and it was interesting to see what references the children there made to the internet," LaPlaca said, explaining her motivation for the project.

Through her research, LaPlaca highlighted the importance of understanding that marketing strategies are a lot more manipulative than we would like to believe. "It's not just about kids using their phones too much; it's about companies deliberately designing platforms to keep them online longer. I wanted to shift that narrative from blaming users to holding companies accountable," she said.

Statistical Analysis in Soccer

Joe Moon '25 applied statistical analysis to examine the Choate Boys' Varsity Soccer team's dynamics. Using heat maps and game footage to extract coordinates of the playing field, Moon analyzed patterns of player movement and interactions. "At first, I didn't realize how much insight you could get just from watching and mapping games," he said. "The more I worked on it, the more I kept discovering new metrics and analyses to explore."

Every senior who is a part of The Capstone Program is doing more than just finishing diploma requirements — they are creating a solid foundation and gaining skills that last well beyond graduation. "I think the best part is discovering new things about yourself ... You start with one idea, and by the end, you've grown not just intellectually but personally," LaPlaca said. Students' hard work will culminate in the Capstone presentations, taking place in the Andrew Mellon Library Reading Room on May 26.

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Transitioning Leadership: An Inside Look At Acapella's Next Steps

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26 and Alexis Lee '28**
Arts and Leisure Section Editor and Reporter



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

As one of the most influential communities on campus, acapella has added spirited and joyful events to the Arts Department's concert schedule. The diversity among Choate's five acapella groups has allowed seasoned singers and beginners to get involved in music and have fun. With only two performances left in the 2024-2025 academic year, acapella members and leaders reflect on their experiences and future plans.

Bellacanto

Bellacanto encompasses a diverse co-ed group of singers ready to experiment with new pieces of music. Co-President Piper Cameron '25 is a committed dual-varsity athlete on campus, but she appreciates the artistic opportunity that acapella has given her. For her last term, Cameron hopes to honor Bellacanto's founding statement: performing songs in different languages. But last year's Garden Party performance of "Remember Me" from Coco reignited their motivation to bring its initial purpose back.

Bellacanto is also known for its creative mashups, something Co-President Amelia Sipkin '25 hopes to focus more on for the upcoming events. "For Acapalooza, we're doing a really challenging arrangement, probably our hardest one yet. It's the Northeastern [University] acapella group' s arrangement called "The End of Love." And then we're also doing a mashup from Pitch Perfect Three, which will be really cute [and] a lot easier."

Junior officer Isabelle Jiao '26 said, "We all vibe together, and we all respect each other and care for each other so much." She added, "The leaders have been an essential part of our cohesion and our vibe as a group, as well as our success. Even the seniors who aren't technically in leadership positions are leaders for us."

Lilith

Lilith, an all-female group known for its ensemble-based performance style and democratic voting process for song selection, stands out for its collaborative and friendly spirit.

Incoming Co-Presidents Savannah Emery '26 and Elizabeth Burgstahler '26 emphasized Lilith's unique qualities. Emery said, "When Lilith was founded, the girls made it with the idea that it wasn' t going to be a generic acapella group. I think they wanted to appreciate the quirkiness of the different singers and not conform to standard acapella."

Three-year member Talia Bourdon '25 reflected on the tight-knit nature of the all-female acapella group. "We're all genuinely friends outside of acapella, and I say 'hi' to everyone on the paths between classes," she said. "At the start of rehearsals, we chat about how our weekends were before we lock in. It's the small things like that that keep the energy up."

Having been in the group for three years, Emery described receiving the position as exciting and rewarding. She explained, "I always have song ideas, or a vision for what I want us to do, but didn't have that [say in the group.] So, I think I'll be able to voice my opinion more but also make sure I incorporate everyone's voices."

The Whimawehs

Although the Whimawehs (Whims) are considered "classic and traditional," they are always open to trying new arrangements and styles of music. Junior Officer Maddy Childs '26 said, "For the most part, we don't use sheet music. We put out song options to the group, and we learn the songs in parts, but most of our decisions are group decisions."

For Ameya Patel '26, joining the Whims was a way to reconnect with her love of music. "I was able to expand into a new form of singing. I feel more confident and have found a stronger voice," she said. "Whims has just become a little family for me. Sometimes we'll just play songs on the piano, and we'll sing along."

Maiyeros

Maiyeros, founded in 1945, is Choate's oldest and only all-male acapella group. With its long history, it has undergone several evolutions. Co-President Adam Fleischman '25 reflected, "After last year, we only had four or five people. And so, I look at this process as almost a new era [for the Maiyeros]." In this new era, Fleischman has helped cultivate a relaxed atmosphere with a larger group of singers to ensure a more expansive community for the next few years.

With Acapalooza and Garden Party approaching quickly, Fleischman mentioned how he is looking forward to their final performances. He said, "I'm really looking forward to our performance at Garden Party. That's always a fun thing. And also because it's like the big final." Joseph, on the other hand, is excited about Acapalooza, stating, "It's the best concert." He also explained how the group decides the songs: "Adam and I decide on the concert's vibe or the performance, what we want. And then from there, we'll look at different variations of tenor bass music or take suggestions."

The Melatones

The Melatones, established in 2016, are one of the newest acapella groups on campus. Members pride themselves on being a diverse group of singers who feature music from underrepresented artists. Co-President Jordan Dodd elaborated on their mission, stating, "We perform songs from [artists of] color. But also, we're a very fun and diverse group. We learn something new about each other every week." Dodd and Beverly emphasized that joy is the most important element in singing. "Forget about whatever perfection you're trying to adhere to, and you're just singing to sing, and you're singing to have fun. You try to keep that element alive," Co-President Candace Beverly '25 said.

As the two prepare to graduate, Dodd shared some bittersweet thoughts about leaving the group he helped shape. "I'm excited to take a step back from the group and see the work we've done, but also the work that other people are able to put into the group, and what the group will become. So I'm excited to see new voices loud and proud and in charge," he said.

As the end of the school year arrives, all five acapella groups are beginning the leadership transition. Senior members offer advice and encouragement as they pass the torch to the next generation. This passionate community of singers is always eager to innovate, learn, and embrace new challenges. Their upcoming performances are more than just showcasing months of preparation, but also allow the groups to reflect and celebrate all of their dedication and growth.

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The Wallingford Symphony Celebrates 50 Years of Music

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Copy Editor

Live tunes by the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra (WSO) chased away the gloomy clouds and turned its 50th anniversary concert into a memorable night. Held at Ann and George Colony Hall (Colony Hall) on April 19, the milestone concert wasn't just a performance but a celebration of legacy and WSO's longtime partnership with the School. The evening opened with Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man," a bold and brassy opener that sent ripples through Colony Hall.

Co-founded by three-time Grammy Award-winning conductor Phillip T. Ventre and the late Terrence Netter, WSO has enhanced local cultural life through music since its establishment. Under Maestro Ventre's leadership and the support from Choate, the orchestra evolved into a professional symphony orchestra. It draws talented musicians from both the New Haven and the Hartford Symphony Orchestras, private music instructors, and high school students to play four concerts every year. They have also collaborated with other organizations such as the Elizabeth Mitchell String Concerto Competition, the Hartford Chorale, the New Haven Chorale, and ballet dances, growing an artistic community. This concert was the summary of all of that: showcasing and celebrating 50 years of progress. With its mission "to enrich the cultural lives of nearby residents through music," the WSO has united the community with performances that not only entertain but also make classical music accessible and enjoyable to audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Among the audience was Earl Page, a local music fan who regularly sings in church choirs and comes from a musical family. His father a Broadway actor, and his younger brother trained a vocalist, Page grew up surrounded by music. Page noticed posters for the event during his Sunday morning drive to church and decided to attend. He immediately connected with the opening piece, "Fanfare for the Common Man." "It's always nice to hear something you like, especially the "Fanfare,"" he said. "When it started off, I knew that one right away, so I was pleased [they started] off with that one."

George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" closed off the first half of the program, featuring pianist Kariné Poghosyan, who was accompanied by the WSO. Ms. Poghosyan, a frequent soloist with the WSO since 2018, shared that she started playing the piano at seven years old. "People think that classical music is stuffy and boring. I don't think it is. These sorts of things for a musician are like a gold mine, and the orchestra has so much art," she said.

Ms. Poghosyan mentioned that playing with a live orchestra is very different from playing solo. The presence of 5,000 people challenges her to rise to a higher standard. Though she has limited time rehearsing with the orchestra, she relies on mental preparation and visualization to anticipate her cues and transitions. "I literally just arrived. We had like five minutes to just touch little spots," she said. "I just need to visualize, for example, 'this is where the clarinet comes in' and all those sorts of stuff."

To Ms. Poghosyan, music is a language that expresses what words cannot. Her advice to students pursuing music is to know that music has a big role to play, for both the performer and the audience. "The several hundred people here could have been anywhere. But in this icky, rainy weather, they have left their comfortable houses and have come because they need something. They need some inspiration, some joy," she said. "If music is something that you cannot live without and is your passion, go as far as you can. You won't regret it."

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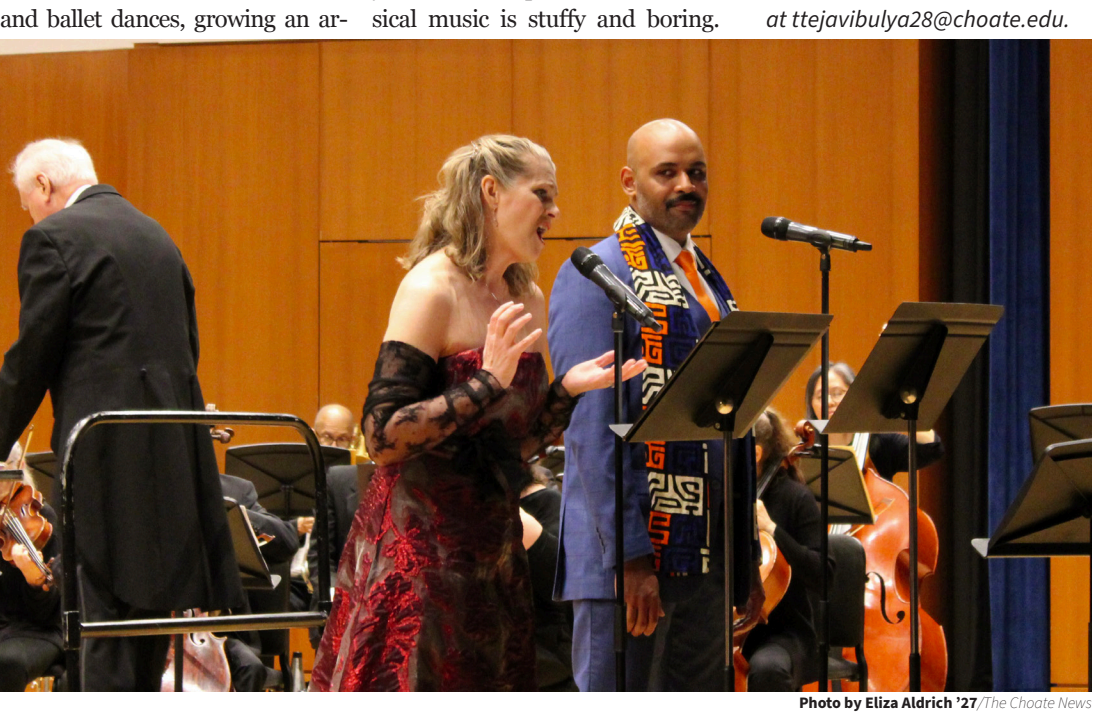


Photo by Eliza Aldrich '27/*The Choate News*

Guest artists Susan Yankee and Miguel Angel Vasquez perform "Duke Ellington" with the WSO.

James III Brings Personality and Laughter to Choate

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Reporter



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

James III glances up in thought during his performance of *Junior*.

On May 2 in Gelb Theater, Choate welcomed James Smith III — comedian, writer, and co-creator of Netflix's Astronomy Club known as James III — to perform a one-man show that wove stand-up comedy, storytelling, impressions, and deeply personal reflections.

James' creative path has spanned nearly every corner of the entertainment industry. He has written for shows like *All That* and *Young Dylan* on Nickelodeon, co-hosted the long-running podcast *Black Men Can't Jump [In Hollywood],* and continues to develop independent projects through his comic book company, Rule of Three Comics. James, who has built a successful career in the industry, traces his roots back to performing arts middle and high school, where he first discovered improvisation.

"I went to [a] performing arts middle and high school, and so I started doing improv back then," James said. "When I looked for colleges, I looked for ... cities that had Second City and other ... improv training programs." Inspired by performers like Mike Myers and cast members of *The Simpsons*, who often credited improv institutions, James studied comedy at the Upright Citizens Brigade in New York.

The show was brought to campus by Mr. Bari Robinson, a teacher in the Arts Department, who has collaborated with James for a long time. "We've known each other since 2008, and we did a training program together," Mr. Robinson said. "He's been a very successful comedian, improviser, and writer ... and I thought with the combination of all of those things, he could be a really great resource for the students to meet."

James' performance — centered on his relationship with his father — was deeply personal and reflective, layered with humor and theatricality. His show consisted of several small acts, including stand-up comedy and poetry readings.

The evening also supported the Arts Department's broader goal. "We are determined to give students unique and exciting opportunities to learn from professional people who are in the industry right now," Mr. Robinson said.

Audience member Max Leventon '25 shared, "I really appreciate how Choate does make an effort to get mixed media and all different types of art onto campus. I thought that [he] did a really excellent job ... He made the audience laugh ... [and] hit hard with some really deep messages. The poetry was beautiful. The bits were funny. I definitely enjoyed it ... I would see it again if I had the opportunity."

For students pursuing the arts, James encouraged authenticity over rigid career paths. "There's no one path anymore ... Follow your strengths and challenge yourself to go outside your comfort zone," he said. "Sometimes pushing yourself to those scary places can be where the fun really is."

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119 Presents ...

Tune into The 119 Masthead's favorite springtime study songs!

THE CHOATE NEWS

VOL. CXIX• No. III

SPORTS

MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025

FIELD REPORT

Choate Spring Record
17 - 8 - 0

Varsity Games

Girls' Golf (11-0)
vs. Loomis, 3.5-1.5

Ultimate Frisbee (6-6)
vs. Deerfield, 8-5

Girls' Track & Field (5-3)
vs. Miss Porters, 65.5-37.5

Boys' Golf (5-4)
vs. Pomfret, 6.5-2.5

Girls' Softball (11-1)
vs. St. Pauls, 3-4

Boys' Lacrosse (8-2)
vs. Salisbury, 11-12

Girls' Water Polo (6-1)
vs. Greenwich, 9-13

Sailing (2-4)
vs. Hotchkiss, 0-3

J.V. Games

Girls' Tennis (2-0)
vs. Kent, 8-1

Boys' Golf (4-3)
vs. Kingswood-Oxford, 180-217

Girls' Lacrosse (5-0)
vs. Ethel Walker, 12-0

Boys' Tennis (4-1)
vs. Deerfield, 3-4

Discovering Intramural Sports: Choate's Hidden Gems



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

By **Laveenya Seenivasagam '27**
Reporter

Beyond the competitive spotlight of interscholastic athletics and Choate's varsity sports teams, intramural sports also deserve to share the stage. Some of these sports include jiu-jitsu, rock climbing, and hiking, which occur two to three times per week. They play an important role in providing students with a space to connect, move, and grow.

Jiu-Jitsu

Offered in the fall term, jiu-jitsu introduces students to the fundamentals of the martial art, combining physical fitness and mental discipline to build confidence, strength, and focus.

For Connor Zeitlin '25, jiu-jitsu was a way for him to rediscover martial arts. "About four years ago, the dojo that I went to to study Japanese mixed martial arts ... closed down. Jiu-jitsu was a great way to reconnect to that."

The typical jiu-jitsu workout consists of warmups, learning new moves, and sparring with others. Zeitlin recommends the sport because it is "an incredible art."

Rock Climbing

Offered in both the winter and spring terms, Choate's intramural rock climbing program is a community-driven afternoon activity that takes students to the Rock Spot Climbing gym in Wallingford where various levels of climbing difficulty are offered.

Leanna Robie '25 was first introduced to rock climbing by her friends. "It's a good workout but also just really fun," Robie reflected. "[I'm] always [surrounded by] a good group of people."

For Robie, who competes on the Girls' Varsity Squash team in the winter, climbing offers a change of pace. "Squash is intense — practices and games were a stressful time. But climbing is chill. It's still active but more relaxed," she said. Her favorite memory is tackling a difficult climbing route with a friend. "We took turns belaying each other," she explained. The blend of challenge and camaraderie made the experience more rewarding. As Robie wraps up her last term at Choate, rock climbing with her friends remains a highlight of her senior spring.

Hiking

Hiking is a sport where students can explore gorgeous campus trails or local nature spots after a long day of classes while staying active and having fun.

As a member of the Boys' Varsity Swim team, Andrew Furtado '27 appreciates the low time commitment, allowing him to pursue swimming during the off-season. "If you're looking for something where you can still be committed but also balance [relaxation and athleticism], hiking is a great yet fun choice."

Most days, students hike on or near campus, but they occasionally travel to other places nearby. "We went to Middlefield on the bus [to hike] a small trail," Furtado shared. "You find ... joy out of hiking," he added. "It's also a good way to clear my head."

Choate's intramural sports provide a space for movement and community without the competitiveness or rigor of varsity sports. Whether you're looking to explore or take a break, these sports offer new experiences and learning opportunities for all students.

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Draghi Pitches Into National Recognition

By **Norah Wang '27**
Reporter

This spring, Choate Girls' Varsity Softball player Natalia Draghi '27 achieved a major milestone in her softball career: 250 strikeouts. She was also recognized as Diamond Elite's National High School Pitcher of the Week, an honor given to the best high school pitchers across the country.

"It's pretty incredible," Draghi said, reflecting on her achievements. "I feel like I've grown so much as a player, and I'm very proud of myself and how far I've come ... I put in so much work, and I'm finally seeing it pay off."

This growth didn't happen in isolation — Draghi credits her teammates, coaches, and family for helping her stay motivated and push through challenges. "Without the people who support me, I don't have as much motivation to work. Our team this year is very supportive. They all celebrate my wins ... if they weren't as supportive, I wouldn't be able to get to where I am," she said.

By far, Draghi's biggest influences are her teammates. "My teammates ... are my best friends," she said. "Being surrounded by people who have the same love for the sport that I do ... makes me want to push myself even more."

At Choate, Draghi learned the importance of resilience and uplifting others. "I feel like being able to learn from our mistakes and grow really helps us as a team," she shared.

Aside from talent, Draghi's success is mapped out by intense discipline. "I have all my goals laid out, and I know what I need to do to accomplish them," Draghi said. "I want to find the school strikeout record and double it or break it. I want to set a [new] standard and help us win a NEPSAC [Championship]," Draghi said.

Receiving a National Pitcher of the Week title has only fueled Draghi's motivation. After overcoming an injury last year, the recognition was a powerful reminder of how far she's come and what to look forward to. "It helped me build back the confidence I lost," she said. "Now, going into the summer travel season, I feel like ... I'm [going to] have that confidence that I was missing."

With relentless determination, clear-cut goals, and growing recognition, Draghi's softball career is just getting started.

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Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Natalia Draghi '27 in her element on the softball field.

Equipment Managers: The Backbone of Choate Athletics

By **Eshana Hora '27 and Sophie Chung '27**
Copy Editor and Reporter



Photo by Ben Lee '27/*The Choate News*

Ms. McGrath in the Equipment Room, the heart of Choate athletics.

At Choate, athletes tend to get the spotlight, and many often overlook the efforts of athletic equipment managers. The work done behind the scenes is critical, and to ensure that all games and practices run smoothly. Assistant Coordinator of Athletic Operations and Head Equipment Manager Mr. Justin Whittaker, and Assistant Equipment Room Managers Ms. Dawn McGrath and Ms. Carol Cuomo-Lewia are all members of the powerhouse that help support Choate's athletics every day.

A typical day for equipment managers is filled with a variety of responsibilities such as laundering athletic uniforms, which are washed and redistributed conveniently to students' lockers before every game. "We ... turn over all the laundry for practices and games," Mr. Whittaker explained. Equipment managers also ensure athletes are hydrated, obtain team merchandise, and organize access to facilities and equipment. "We put water out for the teams, and then just make sure that all our facilities and equipment are up to date ... I work with all the coaches and the athletes to create specialty items for the teams and then work with external vendors to order equipment," Mr. Whittaker added.

Starting at Choate as a Community Safety guard, Ms. McGrath was asked to assist the Equipment Room. Since her switch, Ms. McGrath has worked at the Equipment Room for 17 years.

Despite the challenges of being an equipment manager and helping students get what they need, Ms. McGrath finds her work to be "most rewarding, particularly when kids [come] in saying they won and watching their smiles."

With the recent retirement of Mr. John Paleski earlier this year, Ms. Carol Cuomo-Lewia took over his role as an Assistant Equipment Room Manager. When asked about her expectations before starting at the Equipment Room, Ms. Cuomo-Lewia shared, "[I didn't realize that] there [are] a lot of one-on-one [interactions] with the students. You're really in a responsible role to help the students ... because it's part of their everyday [routine] coming in to see you, whether they're interested in a new sport ... [or if] they just want advice." Previously a soccer coach, Ms. Cuomo-Lewia enjoys how the job brings her closer to athletes.

The equipment managers help every Choate athlete perform at their best level, running the Equipment Room so that our athletic programs function smoothly.

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Wild Boars Run the Brooklyn Half Marathon

By **Tori Vollero '27**
Reporter

Over Spring Long Weekend, a few Choate students took on the NYCRUNS Brooklyn Experience Half Marathon. This annual race in Brooklyn, New York, attracts runners from across the world, including Choate athletes Mira Gilchrist '25, Elisabeth Hargett '25, Alia Rasheed '25, Arjun Pathy '25 and Jei Han Hall '25. Beginning at 7 a.m. in McCarren Park, the half marathon finished in Prospect Park.

This year, just under 25,000 runners participated in the event. Gilchrist, Hargett, and Rasheed finished 22nd, 25th, and 38th out of 173 runners in the Female Ages 1-19 category, respectively, while Pathy and Hall finished 78th and 127th out of 146 runners in the Male Ages 1-19 category.

Hargett, Gilchrist, and Rasheed were among the first to suggest and sign up to run the Brooklyn Half Marathon. Pathy explained that while he and a friend were on the train to New York City, Gilchrist mentioned her plan to run the Brooklyn Half Marathon over Spring Long Weekend. Pathy was inspired and decided to join in and promptly begin training for the event.

The athletes tested their physical and mental endurance on practice runs to prepare for the Brooklyn Half Marathon. "I think a lot of running is mental. You have to tell yourself to keep going and finish," Gilchrist shared, explaining how practicing running long distances was integral to her preparation. She also trained her mental endurance by working with her friends. "We would go on long runs together or separately," she said. "[If I saw that] they were going to keep going, [it made me think,] 'I should keep going.'"

Along with cheers and support from close friends, the race environment also kept the runners going. For Hargett, seeing her family members supporting and encouraging her throughout the race was valuable. "I saw my brother and my mom holding up big signs ... [and I] got a big surge of energy," she said. For Gilchrist, the friendly atmosphere of the race motivated her. "The [race] environment is a lot of fun and everyone ... was really upbeat," she said.

After their own experiences running the half marathon, the three students shared how they believe anyone interested should try the race, as it is fun and a challenging yet attainable goal. "Just go for it ... I think I did a lot better than I was expecting," Pathy said. "It [was] just a ton of fun."

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