



# THE CHOATE NEWS

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## JFK SENIORS SHARE INSIGHTS IN CULMINATING PRESENTATIONS

By **Francesca Howard '26**  
Copy Editor

Each spring, seniors in the John F. Kennedy '35 Program in Government and Public Service (JFK) deliver a 10-minute TED Talk-style presentation on a topic of interest after taking several related courses and participating in various off-campus endeavors. This year throughout April and May, 18 presentations were held over the course of three evenings. These talks tackled a range of issues from restrictive zoning laws to the potential drawbacks of a post-work world.

Lily Hrazdira '24's presentation, "The Genius of Donald Trump and MAGA," analyzed political slogans and their capacity to engage and motivate the electorate. She opted to take a closer look at Former President Donald Trump P'oo's infamous "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) slogan, as its popularity would make it a more accessible and relatable example for audience members. Hrazdira illustrated that although catchy phrases such as MAGA can increase political participation and voter turnout, they tend to oversimplify hefty political issues and mislead Americans.

Hrazdira enjoyed bonding with her peers throughout the research process. "Having everyone workshop their ideas and seeing what everyone else was interested in and seeing how our ideas could bounce off of each other, getting feedback from everyone [was my favorite part]," she explained. However, Hrazdira noted the challenge of



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Melody Qian '24 gives her JFK presentation on restrictive zoning laws.

condensing her extensive research into a brief presentation and admitted, "Ten minutes can seem like a long presentation, but all topics were very relevant and very important, so it was a challenge."

Melody Qian '24's presentation, "America: Life in the Dreamhouse," delved into how restrictive zoning laws in the U.S. affect the makeup of neighborhoods and their socioeconomic disparities, focusing on Connecticut as a case study. Throughout her research process, she was intrigued by the current manifestations of restrictive zoning that often go unnoticed by the public eye. "It's one of those things that sort of flies under the radar in terms of how much it determines and what happens to people in life," Qian said.

Throughout her presentation, she connected the dots between previously established discriminatory housing practices, such as redlining, and current zoning practices. She urged her listeners to stay hopeful and not be bystanders. "Just because discrimination

is systematic doesn't mean we can never get rid of it," Qian said. "It's not easy, and it's not quick work. There definitely will be a lot of pushback, but it is possible."

Looking back on her presentation, Qian reflected, "What's really important to me is not only the research and information I find — it's also in the way I present this to people." Qian aimed to break down some of the complex jargon in political discourse by appealing to people's visual senses and involving the audience in the presentation, getting them to role-play scenarios of house hunting in restrictive markets like Connecticut's.

Sunny Vo '24 presented "Does Post-Work Work?" which explored how artificial intelligence and other technological advancements could fundamentally shift our concept of work and liberate humans from labor-intensive tasks. Though it was largely an independent process, Vo found peer feedback to be incredibly valuable as they compiled their research into a



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Cassatt Boatwright '24 presents about flawed education systems.

coherent presentation. "Having those other sets of eyes gave me a different perspective on my work. How comprehensible it is, how accessible it is — [the feedback] was really helpful in helping me communicate about an academic interest," they said.

Vo's presentation was centered around an idea of what our political future might look like. Still, they emphasized that "I presented an argument, but I want the audience to know that that's not the end all be all, and there are a lot of different perspectives out there. It's always important to critically examine them yourself and come to your own conclusions about their viability."

Nick Aldrich '24 spoke to audiences about the story and evolution of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) federal law being used to convict different kinds of criminals, integrating history with contemporary issues, pop culture, and legal theory in his

presentation, "RICO Prosecution: From the Mafia to Young Thug." "It's an underdog story. It's a nobody law professor [that] came up with this idea, and 10 years after he came up with it, it was used to bring down some of the most significant crime families in the world," Aldrich explained. "And now, 50 years later, it's still being used to bring down some of the most significant crime organizations in the world."

Some other presentations included Elia Ahmadi '24's "Siding with the Oppressor: How the Left Wing Went Blind to Islamic Terrorism," Cassatt Boatwright '24's "Education or Incarceration? Decoding the School-to-Prison Pipeline," Leye Dai '24's "Contemporary Whistleblower Journalism: The Case of Julian Assange," Toni Idowu '24's "The Death of Alexy Navalny," Aiden Geaney '24's "The Televised Political Debate: An American Institution in Despair," and Tess Taetle '24's

"Online Extremist: Misogyny and the Rise of Incel Culture."

Reflecting on the overall experience, Hrazdira appreciated the creative liberty JFK participants were able to exercise. "People get so much freedom when making decisions about what we want to do our presentation on and what kind of format we want to do," she said. "Because we have so much freedom, people have been super creative in delving into specific topics that really interest them."

The presentations this year inspired many audience members. Elle Hardy '26, who watched the talks, appreciated how unique each topic was. "It's always more interesting to watch a presentation when it seems like the person presenting wants to be there and is excited," she said. "Sometimes, Choate students can be stuck in their own bubble, and I think these presentations were a small glimpse into the important current events and past events as well."

The JFK presentations allowed program participants to think critically about what they learned and share their wealth of knowledge with their peers, providing a rewarding culmination of two years worth of academic rigor. "You never know a subject as well as when you have to teach it to other people," JFK program Director and Humanities teacher Mr. Ned Gallagher said. "The process itself is the reward of the process."

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## "WHAT AN ODD THOUGHT:" THE LAST TEDxCHOATE



Photo courtesy of Yoyo Zhang '24

TEDx speakers and committee members celebrate the TEDx event on April 21.

By **Deyi Meng '26**  
Copy Editor

Created in the spirit of TED's mission to discover and research "ideas worth spreading," the TEDxChoate Rosemary Hall Youth program (TEDx) allows passionate individuals to share their ideas with their local community. On April 21, Choate hosted its third and final annual TEDx event in Getz Auditorium, featuring five student speakers: Ethan Sun '27, Suleika Sandi '26, Camila Granda '25, Francesca Howard '26, and Sophia Liao '25. From their initial research to their final presentations, the speakers developed their ideas based on this year's theme: "What an Odd Thought?"

Yoyo Zhang '24 and Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar founded TEDx in 2021. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, Zhang hoped to bring the community together with TEDx in her fourth-form year. "I felt like there was a lot of isolation, both physical and social, within the community. I wanted to build a platform where people could reconnect," Zhang said.

TEDx ran its first event in April 2022, when Choate welcomed six alumni speakers. The following year, however, the organization switched to highlighting student speakers "because we wanted our event to reflect the community at Choate," Assistant Director of this year's TEDx, Sunny Vo '24, said.

Before the speakers selected their topics of interest, the TEDx committee gathered in the fall to choose an attention-grabbing theme. Some of the ideas considered this year were "Kaleidoscopes," "Through the Looking Glass," and "Changing Leaves."

Zhang said, "We wanted to make sure that the themes were eye-catching but abstract enough to allow for a diverse range of topics."

Once the theme was decided, the committee selected speakers who they felt had engaging ideas and were passionate about their topics. Over the span of a few months, with the help of a committee mentor, speakers conducted research on their respective topics, developed a presentation, and mastered their delivery — ultimately culminating in a memorized 15-minute speech. "Everyone was just so supportive of each other," Zhang reflected. "I think we've all grown a lot throughout the months of working together."

Ethan Sun '27 delivered a talk entitled "The Boy Who Counted

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## CHOATE DISCUSSES ARAB AND MIDDLE EASTERN IDENTITY

By **Victoria DeVito '27**  
Reporter

On April 30, the Choate community discussed Arab and Middle Eastern Identity during this year's fourth and final Community Conversation. The conversation covered topics ranging from various holiday celebrations to common misconceptions to cultural traditions and was an affinity conversation in which students who identified as Arab or Middle Eastern could respond to questions sourced from the community.

The first question, pre-selected by the Office of Equity and Inclusion, invited students to share details about their family gatherings. Valentina Askar '25 described her fun-filled family gatherings, emphasizing the importance of spending time with her relatives. "In our culture, we prioritize family over anything," she said. When Askar and her loved ones come together, music fills the room, and delicious food cooked by her grandmother is free for everyone to enjoy.

Other students depicted similar experiences when asked about their favorite cultural traditions. Kadija Benzinane '27 and Samia Mowafi '27 shared their favorite memories of Ramadan and Eid, two Islamic spiritual holidays. After completing Ramadan, a month of fasting from sunrise to sunset, Muslims acknowledge their achievement by celebrating Eid, the "festival of breaking the fast." For Benzinane, Eid is a way to say to yourself, "You did this, and you deserve it." Mowafi also

talked about her family's way of commemorating the journey: a communal prayer in the morning with relatives and friends and a festive party that lasts for the rest of the day.

During the conversation, several Arab and Middle Eastern students also discussed common misconceptions surrounding their identity. Monicke Costa '25, Vice-President of Choate's Middle Eastern and North African Club (MENA), spoke about the incorrect assumption that Middle Eastern people can only be found in the Middle East. Coming from Brazil with Lebanese ancestry, Costa reflected on her own experiences and commented that identity is not "all or nothing."

Additionally, Maya Basha-waty '24, former President of MENA, shed light on how generalizations about the Arab and Middle Eastern communities can impact individuals. "I think it is really valuable for people to sort of have an awareness, especially with the ongoing conflict, that ... throwing out general statements is really targeting a small group of students," she said.

Arabic teacher and Muslim Chaplain Mr. Yassine Benzinane provided an educator's perspective during the Community Conversation. He discussed the diversity of the Middle East, warning students and faculty to be wary of the stereotypes about the region perpetrated by the media. He debunked the myth that the Middle East is a "bastion of dictatorships" by offering listeners historical examples of where democracy was valued and attempted by Arabs and Middle Easterners but destroyed by other powers.

Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion Ms. Jillian Forge shared that the Equity and Inclusion Office plans to facilitate even more conversations like this one. She encourages anyone and everyone to provide feedback on this year's community conversations, with hopes that the community can continue to learn from new perspectives and explore Choate's diverse cultural experiences in the coming academic years.

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Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Choate community members gather for the community conversation.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Lauren Kee '24, Evelyn Kim '25, Amelia Sipkin '25, and Choate Flickr.

**THE PHYSICS PHLOTILLA**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 4:00 PM**



## ETHICS BOWL COMPETES AT NATIONALS

By **Sophie Chung '27**  
Reporter

With impressive wins at the Connecticut Regional Competition on January 27 and the Divisional Competition on February 7 under their belt, the Choate Ethics Bowl Team was well equipped to prove their prowess at the National High School Ethics Bowl National Championship (NHSEB). From April 12-14, the team traveled to North Carolina for the first time in five years to attend the NHSEB National Championship at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The team consisted of Ethics Bowl President Ava McClatchie '24, Vice President Celeste Shattuck '25, Racquel Welcome '24, Mira Gilchrist '25, Anne Coady '26, and Isa Marvin '26. After competing against 24 other teams in the championship, they finished ranked 15th nationally.

Once the team arrived at the competition, they toured the facilities and attended a welcome banquet. On April 13, the competition officially commenced with four preliminary rounds, followed by elimination rounds the next day. For each round of competition, the teams delivered six-minute presentations in response to a question proposed by the judge before engaging in a debate-style crossfire with the opposing team. From there, the judge granted points to the team with the most thorough arguments.



Choate's Ethics Bowl Team bonds at NHSEB National Championship. Photo courtesy of Anne Coady '26

Two months prior to the competition, Ethics Bowl Team members began preparing 15 ethics cases on a myriad of topics, ranging from whether human beings have free will to the role of parents in the public schooling system. According to McClatchie, the team's preparation focused on "understanding the underlying moral framework of each case."

A unique aspect of Choate's Ethics Bowl Team that sets them apart from other teams is that it is completely student-run. "Many other schools have coaches who work much more closely with the teams and help them practice the cases and set up how they're going to speak and what positions they are going to take and so

forth," French teacher and faculty chaperone Dr. Katie Jewett explained. "[But Choate's Ethics Bowl Team is] completely student coached. They are very strong, well spoken people who really like to think about challenging issues."

The NHSEB competition attracted Ethics Bowl teams from across the nation, which made for lively and engaging rounds. McClatchie greatly appreciated the diversity of teams. "It was incredible to try to understand other teams' strategies because we're coming from across the United States. So, of course, people have different ways of thinking about problems, different ways of going about their presentation styles," McClatchie said. "All of the

teams that went were incredibly brilliant ... Every time they presented, I just felt like I was learning something."

As it was the first time in five years that the team has qualified for NHSEB, the experience was both nerve-wracking and exciting. "It was a little bit intimidating especially because of how much we prepared for it, [and] it felt like a really big deal," Coady said. Despite the initial nerves, the group found the camaraderie among teams to be comforting. "Going into Nationals [was] completely new territory. We were in a new state, there were people from around the country, and I just remember being very excited to meet new people," McClatchie said. "There's just this incredible sense of 'we all really care about what we're doing, [and] we're all really excited to be there.' Everyone was making friends and trading Instagrams by the end of the day."

Choate's Ethics Bowl Team has made significant strides in recent years, and the team's hard work and dedication brought the team closer. "We were on the flight together and we were walking around campus together and whatnot ... I really got to know [my teammates] better and become closer friends with them," Coady said.

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## Choate Students Practice Wellness

By **Matt Trudell '25**  
Reporter

Wellness Day, a recent addition to Choate life, gives students a chance to disconnect from their work-filled lives and recharge by participating in a relaxing activity of their choice. This year, Choate held its annual spring term Wellness Day on April 23. From Zumba Fusion to Quandary Escape Rooms to cooking and baking, students could try something new or let loose with an activity that they already know and love.

Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long, who organized Wellness Day, helped run a nail painting session that was particularly popular among students. Ms. Long explained that nail painting is her "own form of self-care and [she] loved sharing [her] personal collection of over 100 colors with students."

Another popular activity, organized by the Wellness Committee, was the virtual sports psychology workshop led by licensed professional counselor Mr. Max Groen '15, who used his expertise in mental wellness to supply student-athletes with a toolbox of tips and tricks to manage stress and anxiety when competing in their respective sports.

Wellness Committee Leader Kiran Makam '25 said that the workshop was significant for students because "there has been a high demand for a sports psychologist on campus to help athletes manage high-pressure moments and optimize their mental performance." He added, "Anxiety can present itself differently in sports, so giving athletes the tools and resources to manage stress and anxiety in that specific environment is important."

Workshop attendee and Varsity Lacrosse player Alex Krusko '24 found the session to be very applicable to his own athletic pursuits. "I chose [this] event because sports are such an impactful aspect of my life. The mental side of sports has always been a struggle for me, so

learning how to control my emotions and responses to parts of the game was a skill I coveted for years," he shared. "Learning how I can respond from mistakes, either bad plays or overall bad games, gave me a lot of confidence moving forward."

Many students found themselves outside enjoying the sunny weather through wellness activities such as spikeball, hacky sack, and lawn games. "I loved the breeze and warm weather while kicking the sack around with my good friends," Gordie Leary '25 said, who participated in the hacky sack activity. Leanna Robie '25 agreed, "Because of our busy Choate schedules, I rarely get to go outside and just enjoy the weather, but [the wellness activities] let me put schoolwork and sports on pause and just get fresh air and spend quality time with my friends."

While some students were outdoors enjoying the warm weather, many were indoors whipping up delicious treats. Kaylin Lam '27, who baked cookies for her wellness activity, said, "I just enjoy the idea of baking because I feel like it's such a simple activity, but it's also so rewarding. You get to actually eat something delicious after and the process is pretty fun."

Whether students practiced an old hobby or tried something new, Wellness Day offered the Choate community a chance to rejuvenate. According to Lam, in order to make the most out of Wellness Day, it is crucial to "go into it with an open mind." Rather than viewing it as an inconvenience, she recommended students engage proactively in their activities and take advantage of the opportunity to unwind. "If you have the expectation that it's going to be something you can at least enjoy for the moment, then I think [your overall experience] improves," Lam said. "It [Wellness Day] really accomplished its goal: to make your experience just a little less stressful."

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## Rhythm for Refugees Supports CIRC



T!LT lights up the stage at Rhythm for Refugees. Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

By **Chelsea Branch '25**  
Copy Editor

Flashing lights, blaring speakers, and tasty burgers don't describe your typical fundraiser, but they perfectly sum up Rhythm for Refugees. On May 3, the School held its first charitable musical festival, featuring performances by Elia Ahmadi '24 and T!LT, a local indie punk rock band. By charging attendees five dollars for admission,

the event's organizers, Ahmadi and Owen Sessine '25, successfully raised money for the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC).

Rather than holding a traditional Choate fundraiser, which entails sitting outside the dining hall and asking community members for donations, Sessine and Ahmadi wanted to reward donors for their generosity with a mini-music festival. "I'm a big concert-goer, [and] I'm a big

music lover ... I think [music] is a force that we can use to bring people together for meaningful social causes," Ahmadi said. He was proven right, with students from every grade flocking to Macquire Gym for an evening filled with music.

Rhythm for Refugees opened with hits including "DJ Got Us Fallin' In Love" by Usher and "Party in the USA" by Miley Cyrus, mixed by Ahmadi. For attendees hungry from all of the dancing, burgers flipped by CRH Grilling were waiting for them right outside.

As soon as T!LT stepped onto the stage, the audience was captivated by their unique music. Attendee Lila Gizzie '25 left the festival a T!LT fan. "I wasn't sure what I was expecting going into it, so I thought it was really interesting to hear their alternative music style," she said. Marissa Jacobs '24 agreed, "I loved the instruments ... It was really fun, especially when they first came on."

Though the night of music was no doubt a blast, the true goal of the event was to raise money for CIRC. This non-partisan non-profit works around the clock to advocate for the rights and safety of Connecticut's

immigrants and refugees. Ahmadi shared his personal ties to CIRC's cause: "I learned a few months ago that nearly 300,000 Ukrainian citizens were resettling in the United States, and I thought of my own parents, both of whom are Iranian refugees," he said. Sessine, as President of the Choate Aids Immigrants and Refugees club (CAIR), had goals that aligned directly with those of CIRC, making them the perfect organization for him and his club to support.

Attendee Jordan Dodd '25 left Rhythm for Refugees reflecting on the refugee crisis. "I hope that [the event] will bring awareness to new perspectives [of immigrants and refugees] at Choate ... I think that [having the] information coming from peers will make students want to learn more," he said. Ahmadi also hopes that the event will have a lasting impact. "I don't want it to be a one-off thing," he said. "It would be great for local refugees, for local artists, and for our campus culture if we could have this event become an annual thing."

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## FINAL TEDx TALKS

Continued from Page 1

Sheep: A Pla-sheep-bo Study." His research focused on the effects of placebos and how counting sheep lulls people to sleep. Sun emphasized the power of "implementing different aspects of placebo into our own lives, like having rituals or setting positive expectations."

Sun had to explain his science-heavy topic in a manner that was accessible to a diverse audience and also memorize his lengthy speech. Despite these challenges, he still found the process to be meaningful and worthwhile: "I definitely developed a lot of skills, whether that be memorizing or ways to write, and as a person, now I try to see how science can help improve our lives," he said.

Camila Granda '25 delivered a speech entitled "Turning a Racist Science on Its Head," which focused on the negative effects of social Darwinism on oppressed communities and the field of epigenetics. Granda connected concepts she learned in her World History and psychology classes, as well as her experiences at summer programs, to formulate a real research prompt. "This is a huge, controversial claim that I'm making, so a lot of research went into it. I read *Good Morning, Monster*, and I also investigated Frantz Fanon and his theories on psychological trauma and colonialism having a direct psychic effect," she said.

For Granda, the process of developing her speech helped her realize that her ideas are worth sharing. "TEDx has given me the security in myself to know that further out in life when I keep researching different things and keep pursuing different paths, all of these things can culminate into

something that other people will want to hear," Granda said.

The event also featured talks from Suleika Sandi '26, who explored déjà vu in history through the overlapping experiences of various Native American tribal groups; Francesca Howard '26, who presented a fascinating metaphor of the chrysalis of human development; and Sophia Liao '25, who connected 1950s American conformity with various personal narratives.

The event was well-received among student attendees. "I really enjoyed the speakers because they got to choose what they want[ed] to present. I feel like there [was] that element of passion," audience member Cora Slowe '26 said. "You could tell that each one really wanted to share what they talked about." TEDx committee member Ada Tieworn '26 also found the talks particularly eye-opening. She said, "A lot of the things that speakers talked about were things that I haven't thought about, so they opened my perspective to thinking more about different topics."

Since its beginning in April of 2022, TEDx has come a long way in providing an uplifting platform for Choate students to amplify their voices. With this year being her final year at Choate and TEDx's conclusion, Zhang regarded her TEDx journey as "very impactful." She said, "It taught me a lot of things that I didn't know before. One of them is just having the confidence that you will be able to make a difference if you put in the work. If you have a vision, if you have an idea, and the courage to follow through on it, it is a possibility."

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## READING ROOM REDESIGN

By **Lara Amer '27**  
Reporter

This summer, the Andrew Mellon Library Reading Room will undergo a redesign to improve the student experience. The change of the space is focused on enhancing both comfort and functionality, as well as creating a welcoming environment for everyone.

One of the redesign's goals is to utilize the Reading Room more effectively by increasing the seating capacity from around 30 to 70 people. The new seating arrangement will accommodate multiple people comfortably, making the Library a great space for group activities, collaborative work, and larger events. At the same time, new furniture will create a more inviting atmosphere for those working independently.

New tables will also play a pivotal role in the transforma-

tion, as they will be equipped with built-in lamps and power outlets. Additionally, the furniture selection features soft seating options, offering students a comfortable spot for reading or casual discussions. All of the new furniture has been carefully selected to ensure consistency throughout the Library and cater to the diverse needs of users.

The concept for the redesign was initially proposed around six years ago by the Director of the Library Dr. Sherry Marrotte-Newman, but due to the pandemic, the implementation of these plans was delayed. Now that they are being set in motion, Dr. Newman is more excited than ever to see how the changes will benefit students. "I believe designing a space that is multi-use is really important for creating a well-balanced environment



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

that encourages productivity and makes everyone feel welcomed," she said.

The redesign is planned to take place during the summer of 2024 and is anticipated to be completed by the time students arrive in the fall. Through integrating consistent and aesthetically pleasing furniture that

will accommodate the needs of everyone, Dr. Newman envisions the redesigned Reading Room will become a destination where students feel safe and supported in their academic and personal pursuits.

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## TOWN COUNCIL REJECTS COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST FUNDING

By **Addy Hawthorne '27**  
Reporter

On April 9, the Wallingford Town Council struck down a motion seeking to fully fund a communications specialist for the rest of the fiscal year because some members believed that funding the position was not an appropriate use of their annual budget. The motion was aimed to better inform residents of the town's regular activities.

At the beginning of April, Wallingford Mayor Mr. Vincent Cervoni created a new position in the city for a communications specialist. According to Mayor Cervoni, the position involves managing the relatively new social media accounts for the city, such as the ones for the Public Health Department and the Wallingford Police, and preparing press releases.

During the Town Council meeting on April 9, Mayor Cervoni said, "Over my 14 years on the Council, I heard a lot about concerns about transparency, so I thought it important that we make lots of information available to people about what's going on in town."

Mayor Cervoni hired former Wallingford Town Council member and current Chairman of the Wallingford Parks and Recreation Commission Mr. John J. Sullivan, who was also Mayor Cervoni's campaign manager in last year's election, to take on the communications specialist position.

"The request before the Council was to fund the position for the balance of the fiscal year until June 30," Mayor Cervoni clarified. "[Funding] is in the



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

budget for the next fiscal year that starts on July 1." The mayor requested \$8,200 to fund the part-time position until June.

This amount would have come from the remaining money in the Mayor's Office budget, some of which came from the six weeks when the city was without an executive secretary.

Ultimately, four Town Council members voted in favor of funding Mr. Sullivan's new position, while four members voted against it.

"Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should," Wallingford resident and Choate alumnus Mr. Riley O'Connell '14, who ran against Mayor Cervoni in last year's election, said during his public testimony. "In this case, while yes, it is a part-time position, it is paid more or as much annually as some of our full-time positions in town are."

Town Council Member Mr. Samuel Carmody voted against funding the position because

he disapproved of the process through which the role was created. "I think this process should have been more inclusive and transparent. It is my understanding that this position was never posted, and there were never a variety of candidates interviewed for this job," Mr. Carmody said during the Council meeting. "I think the process that played out here leaves a lot to be desired."

Another concern was the previous social media posts that Mr. Sullivan created in the

short time he has occupied the job. Town Council Vice Chairwoman Ms. Christine Tatta highlighted the issue near the end of the meeting. "There are a lot of grammatical errors in these [posts], which is disappointing that that's the way that we're showcased to the world," she said.

Other members were worried about other posts. In one instance, Mr. Sullivan posted a photo of Mayor Cervoni celebrating the reopening of an

automobile dealership in Wallingford, which some saw as promoting the business.

"I had participated in the grand reopening of an auto dealership in town and the social media posts showed my participation said something positive about that dealership, about its employment of people," Mayor Cervoni said. "Somebody complained that I was picking favorites and that other car dealers were not getting similar treatment."

In addition, members found the lack of activity on the account to be problematic. Currently, there are only eight posts on the account.

During the Town Council meeting, conversations got a little heated. "I don't think in my thirteen years on the Council I've ever really gotten into something like that," Town Council Member Mr. Tom Laffin, who voted to fund the position, said. Mr. Laffin argued that the decision of who to hire should be the mayor's prerogative.

Although the Mayor's Office has not officially terminated Mr. Sullivan's role as a communications specialist, he is unable to continue the job without the funding now that the motion was struck down by the Town Council. The Mayor's Office is currently looking for someone else to fill the position. "I posted the position," Mayor Cervoni said. "It's been advertised, so I'm going to go through a more traditional hiring process and see what the result is."

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## WALLINGFORD WELCOMES NEW ACTING FIRE CHIEF, MR. SAMUEL C. WILSON III

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

On April 18, Wallingford's Fire Department (WFD) underwent a significant change. Following Fire Chief Joseph Czentnar's retirement after 32 years of service, Deputy Fire Chief Mr. Samuel C. Wilson III has been promoted to acting fire chief. As the acting fire chief, Mr. Wilson will oversee the department's operations.

Given his 17 years of experience and longtime relationship with the station, selecting Mr. Wilson for this role was an easy decision. Beginning his tenure in public safety back in 2007, Mr. Wilson climbed the ladder and worked diligently to obtain his current status. Starting out as a paramedic, the new acting chief has come a long way from his early days at WFD.

This pivotal moment in Mr. Wilson's career, however, was

bittersweet. As he stepped up, a mentor close to his heart stepped down. Mr. Wilson has "big shoes to fill" as he steps into Mr. Czentnar's role. Nonetheless, he is honored to be taking the reins, and strives to continue Mr. Czentnar's legacy. "I just hope that I'm able to at least do him proud," Mr. Wilson said.

In his new role, Mr. Wilson is responsible for making sure that WFD runs smoothly and efficiently. Amidst the search for a permanent chief, he leads the department of 83 firefighters and support staff as well as more than 100 volunteer firefighters. As acting fire chief, Mr. Wilson said he is responsible for "providing leadership and direction for Wallingford's Fire Department in the interim period [until a permanent Chief is appointed]."

Mr. Wilson plans on prioritizing collaboration and leadership. "You're only as good as the people that you surround your-

self by, and then by listening to people. That's more my leadership style," he said.

While this position grants Mr. Wilson significant power to make changes as he sees fit, his immediate focus is solely on working to ensure the safety of Wallingford's residents. "I guess I do have the authority and the power to change a lot of things. But it wouldn't be right of me to do that until the mayor has made up his mind of who he wants," he said. During this transformative period, it is crucial for the department's functionality that things are managed with simplicity and routine, and Mr. Wilson prefers to be in an established role before implementing major changes.

However, a few challenges have presented themselves to Mr. Wilson already. The largest ones so far have been deciding on the tentative 2024-2025 budget and becoming the

primary responder to complex public inquiries. These two issues intertwine as Mr. Wilson must answer questions from Wallingford residents directly. "You're putting a budget forward and you're having a lot of questions, and no longer do you have that security shield," Mr. Wilson said. He is now the primary spokesperson of the Wallingford Fire Department and is responsible for representing all the workers behind him.

Despite these hurdles, Mr. Wilson has embraced his new role with optimism. Wallingford can rest assured, knowing that their fire safety is in great hands. Carrying an unwavering dedication to security and a forward-thinking vision, Mr. Wilson is ready to lead the Wallingford Fire Department towards a bright future.

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## IRIS: Resettling and Supporting Refugees



Photo courtesy of Owen Sessine '25

Choate students volunteer with IRIS.

By **Portia Chung '24**  
Reporter

In November 2023, Mr. Chris George, the Executive Director of Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS) in New Haven, was warmly received by the Choate community at School Meeting. His engaging lecture touched on his experiences in the Peace Corps — a government agency that trains and deploys volunteers to provide international development assistance — and his impactful work with refugee resettlement. During the talk, he spoke about the challenges faced by families in refugee camps seeking to come to the United States, shedding light on the rigorous and borderline inhumane vetting process they endure.

In 1982, Mr. George founded IRIS with a mission to welcome, resettle, and support refugee and immigrant populations. Over the past four decades, IRIS has evolved into a vital force in Connecticut, prioritizing safety, wellbeing, and successfully integrating immigrants navigating the complexities of displacement.

IRIS achieves this objective through various key programs and services: they employ a strength-based assessment model, offering wrap-around services for successful integration. Departments cover resettlement, job assistance, case management, legal services,

health services, and education, accommodating various client statuses. The community engagement team also collaborates with volunteers, interns, donors, and sponsorship groups, fostering community involvement and spreading their mission with the wider community.

However, their work is not without its challenges. While IRIS aims to support individuals in integrating themselves in new communities, legal barriers, such as unemployment, make smooth transitions challenging. Nonetheless, IRIS counters these obstacles by raising money, collecting donations, and paying rent until work authorization is granted, highlighting their commitment to prioritizing the needs of its clients.

Additionally, IRIS works to confront political challenges that affect its clients. The organization gauges their success through data on resettlements and on-going support. Factors include clients gaining citizenship, pursuing higher education, opening businesses, or returning to IRIS as employees or volunteers.

IRIS's growth and recognition in Connecticut and on the national level over the past few years have underscored their positive impact in supporting refugee and immigrant communities.

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Photo by Elizabeth Burgstahler '26/The Choate News

The Wallingford Fire Department on Main Street.



### THE CHOATE NEWS



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## THE BEST WAY TO SENIOR SPRING?

### Try Everything

By **Lauren Kee '24**  
Editor-in-Chief of the  
117th Masthead

Senioritis is real. When senior spring comes around, the drudgery of hiking up the hill to class in the morning, opening my textbook to study for a test, and lifting a finger for anything is painful. I'm a burnt-out senior ready to retire. But, that's all the more reason to switch things up and take advantage of every minute of the ticking clock during my final two months on campus.

Trying new things can dispel the mundane routines of life at Choate. Instead of using an afternoon activity exemption to return to my room for a nap or drag myself to the library to get ahead on homework, I skip rehearsal with my friends, who are also in the musical for the first time. As a member of the ensemble, I bourée around the stage as a bird, gallop across as a horse, and wiggle my way on as a pig. Being in the cast of a Choate theater production was a bucket list item I got to check off this spring.

This term, I've also found a renewed sense of purpose in pursuing ambitious goals. Following the transition of leadership for clubs and organizations, time and energy returned to me, propelling me to prepare for a senior recital. As an underclassman, I watched in awe as previous seniors poured their souls into 30 minutes of virtuosic repertoire, dreaming of being in their place one day. The hours in the practice room, which had felt like a dungeon when I had hundreds of looming dead-

lines, flew by as I practiced five of my favorite percussion pieces to share with everyone who has impacted me at Choate. I rekindled an extinguished love for music and accomplished what I thought was impossible.

As a senior, I feel that I have nothing to lose by saying yes to everything. Am I down for a sleepover at a day student's house? Yes! I can't use editing for *The Choate News* as an excuse to say no. Perform "The Odyssey" in Greek at School Meeting? Yes! Hold a spoon on my nose with one hand and a water-squirting beach toy in the other for some senior assassin fun? Yes!

Perhaps I'll relearn how to ride a bike (I did indeed forget), learn how to ice skate and bake some delectable caramel chocolate brownies as a consolation prize for my poor coordination. What's the harm in some entertainment, mischief, and the occasional sprinkle of public humiliation?

While some say that senior spring is finally the time to let go of all purpose and responsibility, succumbing to this notion is doing myself an injustice. It is my last chance to savor the opportunities and relationships I have at Choate. I believe that the cure to senioritis is to use my newfound time and energy to find the things and people that put a smile on my face and pursue everything I never got to do before. In doing so, I know that I can walk the stage at commencement with no regrets.

Lauren Kee is a sixth-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at lkee24@choate.edu.

### Embrace Spontaneity

By **Junho Lee '24**  
Layout Editor of the  
117th Masthead

For the past 12 years, I've followed a structured schedule that left little room for spontaneity. School, afternoon activities, homework, sleep, and repeat. At Choate, each of my days was packed from 8 a.m. until bedtime with six classes, editing for *The Choate News*, Gold Key tours, orchestra rehearsals, club meetings, and more. Stepping from adolescence into adulthood, we seniors have just overcome one of the biggest hills of life thus far. As such, I see senior spring as a downhill segment that allows us to recharge and prepare for the challenges ahead.

To execute this vision, I decided to scale back by allowing my schedule to be as open as possible. My four-block, five class schedule, granted by the Capstone program, has gifted me with three sleep-ins a week to enjoy slower mornings.

I also decided to do a photography project instead of participating in sports because I didn't want to be constrained to one space in the afternoons. I go on spontaneous walks on Rosemary Lane, admiring the cozy cottages lined by floral trees. I take tours of the athletic fields on Wednesday afternoons to visit sports I've never watched before at Choate, cheering on the Wild Boars in everything from softball to track and field.

As I view the campus through this different lens, everything seems simultaneously familiar yet slightly different. I've noticed how bright the sunlight was, how the ducks in Archbold Pond like to sunbathe on the dam, how the Minnemans' dog, Brunswick, likes to make eye contact with

students walking by, as well as other minor details about our campus that I was missing out on when I was busy rushing between different classes. Although I am still taking the same path from my D block Chemistry class to my E block Behavioral Economics class, I am making new memories in the place I call home, at least for the next three weeks.

Alongside these activities, I've also been able to binge-watch Netflix shows, my guilty pleasure, take naps to mentally compensate for all the past late-night study sessions, and spend more time planning for my future. In addition, I can play soccer with my friends, go to more school events, and explore the town of Wallingford without checking my watch to make sure I can make it to my next commitment. I quickly realized that these unexpected but memorable moments are the ones I will miss most.

This spontaneous lifestyle has helped me connect with more people this spring. From supporting my friends at the Dance Concert to playing FIFA and spending countless hours talking in our dorm rooms, these simple yet profound moments strengthened our bonds and enriched my final days at Choate in ways that structured activities never could.

Senior spring should not be about filling every moment with scheduled events. Instead, it is a new beginning and should be a time to embrace the freedom that will come with our approaching graduation. It is a time to enjoy the company of friends in unplanned ways and to savor one's last days of high school life.

Junho Lee is a sixth-former from Ulsan, South Korea. He may be reached at jlee24@choate.edu.

## Stop Policing Political Apparel



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Jason Cao '25**  
Opinions Writer

On April 18, a group of students and I had a productive discussion with the Board of Trustees over the state of political discourse at Choate. We explored potential ways to promote free speech on campus and agreed that ensuring diversity of opinion and increasing political engagement were important goals for our community.

However, Choate's restrictions on political and partisan signage and apparel in academic spaces do not support all voices, nor do they improve political participation. The current policy says that academic spaces should be "kept free of all political messaging or branding in the form of decorations, adornments, computer images, and apparel." One substantive step that Choate could take to promote discourse is to abolish these restrictions, thereby promoting political engagement, fostering civil debate, and supporting the goal of free expression.

First, these regulations harm political literacy and engagement on campus. The largest divide at Choate is not between Democrats and Republicans, or liberals and conservatives, but rather between the politically engaged and those who lack a deep understanding of politics. Our goal should be to increase students' involvement with politics and make discourse a more prevalent part of our lives since understanding politics is vital to being informed citizens.

Restricting expression does not serve this goal. Instead, it makes politics a prerogative of only a few students actively searching for information and reading current affairs. By freeing students from the complicated restrictions that govern political speech, other students will be encouraged to ask questions, rethink their opinions, and become more civically minded.

As we embark upon a pivotal election year, what I find the most astounding is not the strong opinions I hear in favor of certain candidates, but rather the surprising lack of political engagement among many community members. By making political opinions a more visible part of our lives, we can help bring more students into politics.

Supporters of the current policies note that the School allows for the following types of political speech: political slogans outside the classroom, apparel supporting candidates without referencing

specific slogans, and political statements on dorm doors. As a non-profit, Choate also cannot endorse any single campaign, and as such, faculty members are not allowed to wear political apparel.

However, the contention that political apparel in classroom settings would create a "hostile learning environment" is unfounded. Political and partisan apparel spark debate and confrontation, which are necessary components of a successful education. Shielding students from confrontation codifies their minds and hinders their understanding and appreciation of opposing perspectives.

Even if the negative impact of a "hostile learning environment" rings true, observers should note that on campus, politics is rarely a personal and contentious matter that pits students against one another. In fact, the discussions that happen on campus between politically-minded students are remarkably civil. As a conservative, I love discussing politics with my liberal peers and always share my disagreements in a thoughtful and non-combative manner. Thus, rather than fostering prejudice, allowing students to voice support for different candidates and positions would make community members more curious and willing to hear opposing perspectives. Allowing political apparel would therefore be very beneficial for promoting civil discourse on campus.

Finally, the idea of restrictions on the expression of political speech is inherently unjust and counterintuitive to the goal of education — the pursuit of truth. The current policy argues that "some forms of political expression have the potential to disrupt educational settings or infringe on the rights of others." Administrators, however, fail to realize that these restrictions infringe on the most important right — the right to free expression. No entity can truly discern which expressions are true and which ones are false. Instead, truth must be found through the collision of thought in the marketplace of ideas.

Promoting political discourse achieves just that. Let's abolish political apparel restrictions and create a freer community where every voice is valued and heard, and no student is restricted from expressing their opinions.

Jason Cao is a fifth-former from Guilford, CT. He may be reached at jcao25@choate.edu.

## THE MAGIC OF FRIENDSHIP TRIADS

By **Jacqueline Yan '24**  
Managing Editor of the  
117th Masthead

Walking into my Introduction to Sociology classroom for the first time, I knew I was in for a ride. I scanned the faces that patiently waited for our teacher, Mr. Timothy Yun, to appear, and mentally prepared myself for a course filled with fiery debates and clashing personalities. I was correct. Over the course of the term, we learned about the urinal rule, compared the female and male gaze, analyzed Nicki Minaj's music videos, were assigned to speak in funky accents, and more.

Yet, out of all the crazy conversations that took place in Humanities Room 302, one topic of debate has lingered in my mind. During our unit on the social construction of groups, we discussed group dynamics and how the number of people in a group can affect its stability.

When Mr. Yun's slideshow stated that a triad, a three-person group, is more stable than a dyad, a two-person group, I angered half the class by agreeing that triads are some of my most treasured friendships at Choate. Although it is not a widely shared opinion, my trio friendships truly have been the ones I have clung to most tightly.

### Puellae Probae Latinae (Lauren Hsu '24 and Lauren Kee '24)

I met my first trio during my freshman year in Latin 100. I don't remember the exact details of how we became friends, but I suppose the friends you pick up along the way end up being the best ones.

Our first meeting took place at an Italian restaurant tucked neatly across the street from Pacific Place, a popular shopping center in Hong Kong. I happened to be in the city during that strange period of freshman winter when Choate



Photos courtesy of Jacqueline Yan '24

Commemorations of LJJ, J<sup>2</sup>D, and Puellae Probae Latinae.

students took online classes, so the three of us planned to meet up in person.

The restaurant, Grappa's, had a cute, rustic interior. I had just eaten lunch there with my parents a few days before, so I knew exactly what I wanted to order — the famous Fettuccine Nere (squid-ink pasta). I was the first to arrive, and while waiting, I fidgeted anxiously with the neatly pressed napkin in front of me, nervous about meeting my first friends from Choate. Now, I think back and laugh at the order in which we arrived: Lauren Hsu, ever punctual, arrived at exactly the time we specified, while Lauren Kee, in her usual fashion, arrived late.

Since our very first meal together, we have enjoyed countless more. Though we began as Latin classmates, we have grown to be the best of friends and each other's support systems.

And, we have held onto our roots. Our group chat name, "Puellae Probae Latinae," or "Good Latin Girls," stems from wordplay in the first chapter of our Latin textbook and still remains proudly in use after four long years.

### J<sup>2</sup>D (Joshua Ramon '24 and Dena Chawalidit '24)

My second trio came together rather unexpectedly — in fact, I myself am still sometimes surprised by how our group came to be.

Josh and I had met through a mutual friend freshman year, while Dena was a new sophomore

I met for the first time at a weekend event at school. The three of us always found ourselves hanging out together, and so began our trio.

As much as I enjoy my time with them individually, whenever the three of us are together, the hours fly by, and the topics of conversation are never-ending. Every time we plan for dinner, I know to carve out a minimum of two hours because we won't leave the dining hall until we absolutely must.

Over the years, we have gotten ourselves into plenty of prickly situations due to spur-of-the-moment ideas. From braving a storm for a scoop of ice cream at Mr. D's to waking up at 6 a.m. to catch a train to New York City, there are no other friends that I enjoy living life to the fullest and being my naturally spontaneous self with more. As we like to say, "Always do it for the plot!"

### LJJ (Lauren Kee '24 and Junho Lee '24)

My third and final trio was, funnily enough, a byproduct of this very newspaper. As the Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, and Layout Editor of the 117th Masthead, the three of us were quite literally duty-bound to spend a ridiculous amount of time together. We couldn't leave Tuesday layout meetings until we had approved every Section Editor's layout, so we were always the last to leave the newsroom. The following night, we had to jump onto a FaceTime call sometimes

for hours on end to complete the final layout and send the paper to the publishers. Unfortunately, 5 a.m. bedtimes became our norm.

Rather inevitably, forced proximity brought us closer together. During those nights, we fought to stay awake while rushing to create the perfect product on a tight deadline, sneaking in laughter-filled conversations, boba orders, and heart-to-hearts. Since our very first issue, we upheld the tradition of taking a photo on FaceTime every time we sent the paper off to our publishers. In fact, we have a whole camera album dedicated to those photos; twelve pictures for twelve issues.

### Three: The Magic Number

When I was an underclassman listening intently to seniors bequeathing the wise advice they garnered over the years, I always found myself enraptured by the speeches about friendship. Every year, despite the speaker, the lesson shared was always the same: the friendships you make here often surprise you, so one should always keep an open mind.

Was I an ardent supporter of trio friendships before Choate? I can't say yes to that, but I do know where I stand now. There is a famous expression that goes, "Two heads are better than one." I'd like to revise that: "Three friends are better than two."

Jacqueline Yan is a sixth-former from Shanghai, China. She may be reached at jyan24@choate.edu.



### SATIRE: COMEDY FOR DEMOCRACY

By **Zaki Shamsi '26**  
Opinions Writer

There's a sweet spot in the world of media in which humor and political commentary intersect: satire. When the nightly news feels like too much and straightforward political analysis feels like homework, satire makes the dense and daunting world of politics more digestible. As I've gotten older, I have come to appreciate political satire not just as a form of entertainment, but as a vital component of civic engagement and a healthy democratic society.

Political satire is like one of those funny mirrors one sees at a carnival, reflecting society's flaws and absurdities while also distorting them for comedic effect. Shows like "The Daily Show" and "Saturday Night Live" (SNL) have been making mockeries out of politicians and policies for decades, crafting laughter from the complexities of legislation and leadership.

An example of political satire is the SNL skit "Trump People's Court." In this 2017 sketch, which has over 22 million views on YouTube, actor Alec Baldwin's impression of Former President Donald Trump P'oo acts as the plaintiff suing judges for challenging his executive orders. The skit humorously captures Trump's habit of taking matters into his own hands, a theme that's especially relevant today.

Some critics will argue that satire oversimplifies complex issues or caters to those who share the satirist's viewpoint, thus reinforcing echo chambers. However, to many, satire is a gateway, not a wall. In a world where politics can sound like a foreign language, satire translates policy into colloquial terms. It empowers people by making them informed, critical thinkers. The accessibility satire provides, especially for young people who might oth-



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

erwise feel disconnected from the political process today, is crucial in fostering an informed electorate, a cornerstone of any democracy.

Satire also acts as a societal pressure valve. It provides a means for the public to cope with the often disheartening realities of political life. Through humor, we find a way to confront our frustrations and fears about governance and policies.

More importantly, political satire serves as a check on power. By mocking the powerful, satirists remind them (and ourselves) that they are not above scrutiny. In regimes where freedom of speech is stifled, satire often bubbles up as subversive art, challenging authority and sparking debate. Even in democracies, it keeps leaders from becoming too detached, puncturing their egos with wit.

Take, for example, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: a famous piece of satire that uses a seemingly simple story about farm animals to critique the rise of totalitarianism. Orwell's use of allegory illuminates the dangers of unchecked power and the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, serving as both a cautionary tale and a sharp critique of political hypocrisy. By using animals to stand in for political figures, Orwell

highlights the absurdities of power struggles in a way that resonates with audiences both young and old.

It's true that satire isn't perfect. Poorly made political satire can sometimes trivialize politics and promote a narrower point of view. But when wielded thoughtfully, it can illuminate truths that traditional reporting might gloss over. In a world saturated with information, where bias and unreliable news confuse our understanding of matters, satire serves as a form of clarity.

I cherish political satire because it serves a greater purpose than just pure entertainment; it educates, critiques, and provides a unique perspective on politics. It makes us laugh, it makes us think, and most importantly, it encourages us to question. In a world teeming with unchallenged power and unchecked truths, satire is not just helpful; it is vital. Political satire keeps our democracy vibrant, critical, and delightfully bold, establishing its role as something worth celebrating.

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

### Apathy Might Cost Us the Planet

By **Gopika Sheth '27**  
Opinions Writer

Imagine a world where the air is choked with pollution, the seas are littered with plastic, and the human race has vanished off the face of the Earth. We, unfortunately, don't need to imagine this supposedly dystopian future — it is already in the making. Despite the urgency of ongoing environmental crises, many of us seem strangely unfazed. Why do we remain so indifferent to the impending catastrophe looming over our heads?

The root of our indifference towards environmental crises lies in our inability to see or feel the direct consequences of our actions. The impacts of climate change and pollution often seem distant and abstract. Most people cannot sense the direct impact of our actions on the environment, so it's easy to ignore them. For example, when we drive gasoline cars or waste electric energy, we don't see the greenhouse gasses released into the atmosphere or the ice caps melting.

Our perception of environmental issues is shaped by our immediate surroundings. If the effects of climate change and pollution were as visible and tangible as a natural disaster,

we would be more inclined to take action. However, because these impacts often unfold gradually and not before our eyes, we struggle to grasp the urgency of the situation.

Take deforestation for example. It worsens climate change, erodes soil, and drives species to extinction. However, those living in urban areas are unlikely to see trees actively being cut down or forests being cleared. We don't often witness the direct consequences of deforestation, so we might not feel compelled to advocate for forest conservation.

It's not that we don't care about the environment, but rather that we struggle to prioritize it among the many other concerns in our lives. We are bombarded with daily information and challenges, from work and family obligations to social media and entertainment. Amid this constant downpour, environmental issues can easily fade into the background.

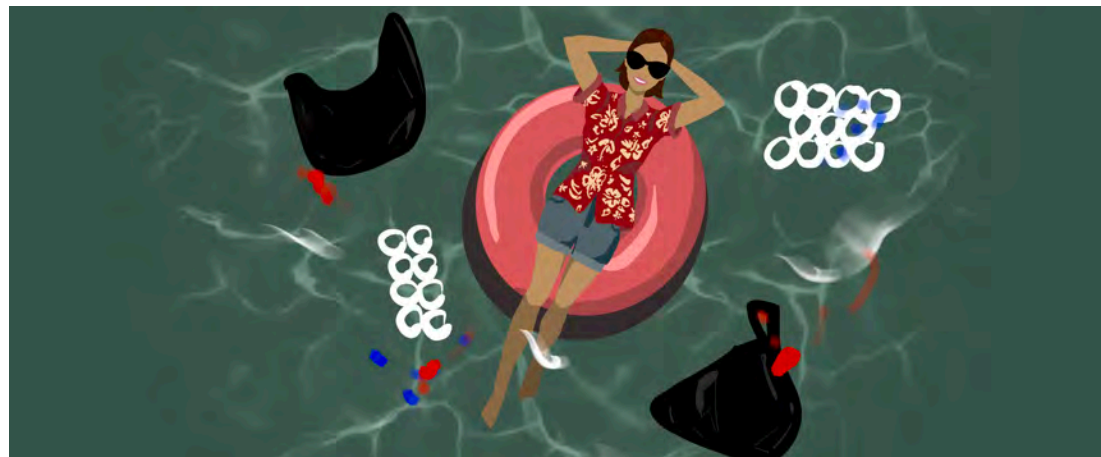
It's possible that alongside feeling detached from the effects of climate change, consumerist culture encourages us to prioritize short-term gratification over long-term sustainability. We are conditioned to seek immediate rewards and convenience, often at the expense of the environ-

ment. From fast fashion to disposable products, we often consume and discard items without considering the consequences.

But just because the problems are complex doesn't mean they are irreversible. Every small action, be it reducing our plastic use or supporting renewable energy, contributes to the larger effort to protect the environment. Our apathy towards climate change stems from our inability to see or feel the direct impacts of our actions. However, this does not absolve us of responsibility and is not an excuse for our stagnancy.

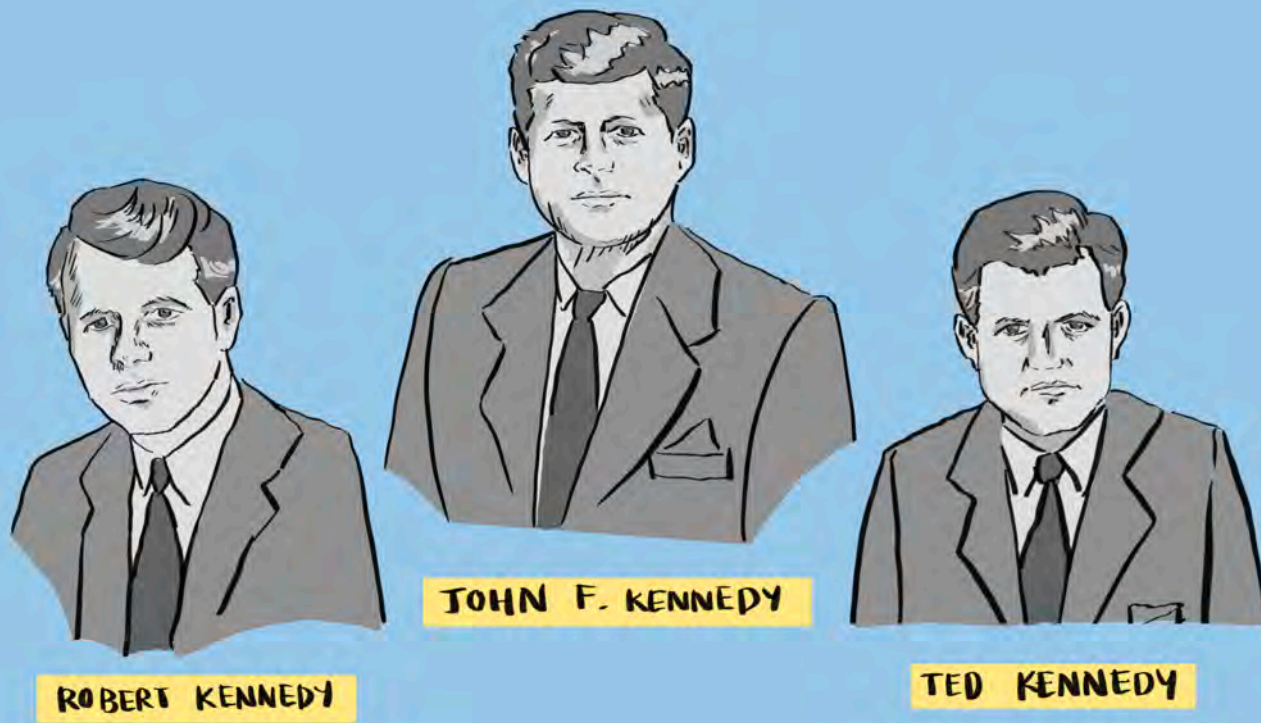
Despite the challenges posed by our limited perception, it is imperative that we overcome our environmental ignorance and take action. The evidence of environmental degradation from climate change is overwhelming, from the melting polar ice caps to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events. We cannot afford to ignore the warnings any longer. We must recognize that our actions have far-reaching consequences, even if we cannot see the results immediately.

**Gopika Sheth is a third-former from Hamden, CT. She may be reached at sheth@choate.edu.**



Graphic by Kate Park '27/The Choate News

### BRING YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY: POLITICAL DYNASTIES



Graphic by Evetyn Kim '25/The Choate News

By **Francesca Howard '26**  
Copy Editor

America has a nepotism problem — and no, I'm not referring to Lily-Rose Depp's acting debut or Zoey Deschanel claiming that she is self-made. I hate bad acting and hubristic celebrities just as much as the next person, but America's nepotism problem is more worryingly prevalent on Capitol Hill, where having a family in high places is king.

Those who hail from these "political dynasties" embark on their campaign trails with pre-established networks of influential supporters and donors at the ready. These connections translate into greater visibility and, ultimately, electoral success. Essentially, in this system, political influence can become an inherited trait.

"Nepo babies" aren't a new concept. For almost all of human history, leadership has been handed down from generation to generation, a practice that was once believed to maintain stability and ensure smooth transitions of power. The Zhou dynasty in China lasted nearly 800 years. The House of Habsburg ruled

Austria-Hungary from 1282 to 1918. The British royal family dates back to the 1500s.

In comparison, America's dynasty problem doesn't seem that bad at all. It holds presidential elections every four years and has no singular ruling family. Though it might not necessarily have dynasties in the traditional sense, America has always been dynastical by nature, and there are a slew of examples to prove it. One of the very first instances of political nepotism in the United States was in 1797, when Former President John Adams appointed his son, son-in-law, and father-in-law to key positions in his administration.

Another example of a family that embodies political nepotism is the Kennedys. In 1960, Former President John F. Kennedy '35 (JFK) appointed his brother Robert F. Kennedy as Attorney General, despite Robert having never tried a case in a courtroom before. JFK justified his decision by claiming he wanted his brother to gain some experience before moving into private practice. Around that time, Joe Kennedy, JFK's father, was also the United States Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Ted Kennedy, JFK's younger brother,

was a State Senator in Massachusetts. This year, America witnessed a Kennedy resurgence, with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (RFK) announcing his 2024 presidential candidacy. In one of his speeches, RFK referenced his father, Robert F. Kennedy Sr., and uncle, John F. Kennedy, more than 20 times. Though RFK positions himself as the change America needs by promising to shake up the established order, one must wonder how much disruption can realistically be expected from a scion of one of America's most storied political families.

Historically, such familial ties have been common. According to data compiled by congressional historians between 1789 and 2016, 400 parent-child duos and 190 sibling pairs have served in Congress. In 1848, more than 16% of Congress members were filling the seat of a direct relative. This directly undermines the principles of meritocracy and can lead to a lack of diversity in perspectives.

Americans seem to have developed an infatuation with political lineage. Come election day, people will vote for what they know, even if that is just a name. This is because of the recognition heuristic, a tendency for humans to place a higher

value on something they recognize rather than something unfamiliar. As political scientists Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes said, "Recognition carries a positive valence; to be perceived at all is to be perceived favorably."

These names have become more than surnames; they are brands. Even when people don't know anything about their policies or campaigns, simply hearing names that have been tossed around before makes them legitimately consider casting a vote in their favor. That is why signs and slogans are so common. You don't see signs posted about Kennedy's plans to reform the healthcare system; you see a sign with the name Kennedy.

This may not seem like a problem at first glance. After all, couldn't the same be said about any other profession? A chef's son is unlikely to be a lousy cook. A businessman's daughter will probably grow up to know the tricks of the trade. However innocuous these scenarios might be in the culinary or business world, this hereditary advantage is particularly troublesome when applied on a larger

scale in politics. "Nepo babies" inherit not just a secret recipe or an investment hack but a name with considerable power and influence, significantly more than the average citizen could ever hope to achieve.

Nepotism in politics results in an administration that is inept and prone to making decisions based on personal affairs rather than the nation's best interests. By its very nature, nepotism gives an undue advantage to those who would otherwise not possess the best credentials for governance. Dynasts ascend to positions of power not based on their qualifications or political acumen, but rather by their pedigree. This frequently results in governmental incompetencies and substandard policy outcomes. That is not to say that every "nepo baby" will automatically be a bad leader, but the process of being elected certainly leans in their favor. They are often held to less rigorous standards than their non-nepo counterparts and thus have it easier. As a democracy, America needs to question why its elections have become almost predetermined, why jobs have become something inherited and not

earned, and why the adage "it's not what you know, but who you know" has become so evidently true for its politics.

American politicians have been keeping it in the family for centuries. While there needs to be more procedural stringency to close the loopholes politicians are bypassing to maximize their power, it would be unfair to blame the consequences of nepotism solely on the "nepo babies" and their parents. At the end of the day, America as a society is at fault. The people's indignation has never translated into action. It's time to jettison the nepotism that favors the few at the expense of the many. It's time we stop saying we want change and start voting for it. America's government should not be run like a family business. The presidency is not a family heirloom to be passed from one generation to the next. America is not a country of the people, by the people, and for the people; but it can be — and it's up to the people to make sure that change happens.

**Francesca Howard is a fourth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at fhoward26@choate.edu.**



## SENIOR SEND-OFF: HOW SIXTH-FORMERS ARE SENIOR SPRINGING

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**  
Reporter

As the school year draws to a close, sixth-formers rejoice during their long-awaited senior spring. Filled with dances and bonding moments, senior spring represents the culmination of a student's time in high school. As seniors indulge in activities under the sun and wrap up their strenuous academic work, they have also taken the time to reflect on their time at Choate.

### Cassatt Boatwright '24

Former Student Body Vice President Cassatt Boatwright '24 is excited to pass on her leadership roles to the younger classes at Choate. "[Now], I have a lot more time to focus on living my best life; hanging out with my friends, trying new things, and even meeting new people in the class that I hadn't talked to before," Boatwright said. Boatwright has also been taking advantage of the weather and playing volleyball with different groups of seniors on the Memorial Circle Field, despite her inexperience. "I'm no volleyball player; ... you can ask my friends. Freshman year, I tried volleyball and I ended up just being a cheerleader on the sidelines," Boatwright said. "But it's so much fun to just be hanging out with a bunch of different seniors that I don't normally interact with, and getting outdoors in the spring weather."



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Seniors gather around a bonfire during Incendium to burn tests and papers.

### Qin Caldwell '24

Qin Caldwell '24's senior countdown has been less focused on graduation. As a member of the Arts Concentration Program for technical theater, he is counting down the days to his last production at Choate, *Into the Woods*.

Beyond theater, Caldwell has also created many new memories with friends during senior spring. He recalled, "During Spring Long Weekend, my friends and I went paintballing in the pouring rain, and it was really fun. That's probably the best thing I've done so far this term." He also added that he has enjoyed spending more time outside with them now that the weather has warmed up. "Half of my friend group is

in frisbee golf, so it is fun on the days I don't have tech to just go out and play," Caldwell said.

### Lorraine Hillgen-Santa '24

Avid photographer Lorraine Hillgen-Santa '24 has been keeping a diary of her senior year to document her favorite memories, taking advantage of and recording fun moments. "Senior [year] is one of those [times] where the class comes together," Hillgen-Santa said. "We all realized that we don't have much time left together." Years from now, she hopes these mementos will help her vividly remember her experiences at Choate.

As she prepares for the upcoming senior activities, especially Last Hurrah, she has felt both excite-

ment and bittersweetness. While she looks forward to the new memories she will make in college, she dreads leaving the close-knit Choate community. "I want to cry when I think about graduation," she said. "It's very hard to think about leaving after all of the wonderful relationships that Choate has given me."

### Selam Olson '24

As a student leader and mentor, Selam Olson '24 appreciated their senior year for teaching them the importance of setting a good example. "If you are a leader or a senior at Choate, people are looking up to you," they said. Even in senior spring, Olson has tried to continue setting a good example for underclassmen.

As Olson's senior spring nears its end, they are excited for the final events of their sixth-form year, including Last Hurrah and supporting their fellow seniors at their signature program presentations.

### Aria Ramnath '24

Aria Ramnath '24 has enjoyed spending time with friends and other seniors whom she wants to grow closer to. "About a week ago, I went to Za-Onn [Thai House] with two of my really close friends, but we met up with five people I wasn't as close with. It was one of the most fun dinners [I've had]," she said.

At the same time, Ramnath is sad about leaving Choate soon. "I love this place ... I've changed so much since I got here," she said.

"[Graduating] is kind of scary. I'm excited for the future, but I'm also really sad because I made so many good memories here."

### Andreas Wimmershoff Gonzalez '24

Andreas Wimmershoff Gonzalez '24 has had a restful and relaxing senior spring so far. He said, "I've spent my entire Choate career really investing myself into not only academics but also the larger college process. So it's been really big for me to just get rest, get sleep and have fun."

Like his peers, Wimmershoff Gonzalez is feeling bittersweet about the days leading up to graduation, but he is excited for his next steps beyond Choate. "I'm sentimental, but I'm [also] very excited," he said. With events like Incendium already passed and dance lessons going on, senior spring has been full of fun, and there's still a lot more to look forward to.

While a freed-up schedule for seniors has meant more time for new memories, it also signals the end of their journey at the School. Nonetheless, from frisbee golf to soaking up the sun to going out with friends, seniors have found so many different ways to enjoy their final weeks at Choate. Goodbye, Class of 2024; we will miss you!

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## HOW TO ACE YOUR SPRING TERM-END EXPERIENCES

By **Rachel Fan '27**  
Copy Editor

The dreaded term-end experiences (TEEs) grow near once again as the spring term winds down. However, there's no need to worry! From study techniques to self-care, five Choate students share their valuable advice on navigating TEEs effectively and efficiently. Whether you're an inexperienced third-former or a seasoned fifth-former, prepare to confidently ace those term-ends!

### Small Steps, Big Results

Isabelle Jiao '26 recommends studying at least two weekends before TEE week. This head start can allow for a more complete understanding of everything taught in class and help clarify what to focus on.

Furthermore, according to Jiao, students should be consistent while preparing for projects and tests. It's crucial to "review a little bit every day" and not to "cram study" the night before. This not only helps to better retain information but also reduces stress.

As Jiao begins her TEE studying, she admitted to worrying about her Calculus BC class the most. Because of this, she plans to prepare by taking small steps and studying for the final exam earlier by "reviewing notes and prac-

ting problems to get the topics covered back into my brain."

### Plan, Relax, Consistency

Nicha Tongdee '26 suggests creating a well-executed plan to stay on top of exams and assignments. "I like to keep a schedule for when I have all my major assessments and projects due. It helps me stay on task and feel organized, especially when I know I have specific times carved out for different things," she said.

Tongdee also emphasized the importance of self-care during this time, advising that students take time for themselves to avoid burnout and over-stressing. "Especially during TEEs, you have to remind yourself to take breaks and take care of yourself. TEE week is going to be stressful and hard, but you still have to prioritize yourself," she said. "When you make sure you are okay, it helps you produce the best quality work."

### Study Smarter, Not Harder

Leo Wei '27 believes students must find a studying technique that works for them. For him, the Pomodoro Technique has been particularly effective. "Using this technique, you study for 25 minutes, then you do five minutes of relaxation," he said.

"It helps a lot with getting the optimal amount of work done."

Additionally, to balance an increasing workload with everyday life, Wei suggested "not abandoning the basics," such as getting enough sleep or eating three meals per day. He also said that it's vital to "tell yourself everything's gonna be okay." He encourages fellow students to be confident, stay focused, take breaks, and prioritize self-care to successfully navigate TEE week.

### Senior Secrets to Success

"Firstly, stock up on coffee," Jacqueline Yan '24 emphasized when asked about her advice for handling last-minute revisions or study sessions during TEE week. As the 117th Masthead's Managing Editor, Yan knows how much caffeine can help during late-night work sessions.

She also suggested finding a "study buddy," as studying with someone else can make the process more enjoyable. "It's a lot less tedious if you're studying with someone else," Yan said. Studying with friends also provides motivation and support, especially during stressful times.

Alongside productive study sessions with friends, Yan recommended giving yourself time

off and doing activities you enjoy, such as going out with friends or watching an episode of your favorite show.

Yan advised prioritizing based on difficulty level and concentrating effort on subjects that require more attention. "If you have a paper or project, you can always finish those ahead of time," she said, "so during the week [of TEEs], I'll just be studying for the tests."

### End Game

"Sometimes, you gotta put in a little bit of work and stay up a little later than you usually do to finish that project," Nevaeh'J Becerra '25 said. However, maintaining a positive outlook is essential to managing stress during TEEs. "Make sure to know that this is the end," she said. "It's only two hours, and after the suffering, it's just peace." For Becerra, knowing that spring TEEs are the final stretch before summer break and the relaxation that comes with it helps put things in perspective.

As you prepare to conquer TEE week, remember these pearls of wisdom. After these exams, summer break is just around the corner — it's one final push; you've got this!

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## ZAINAB KHOKHA '24: CHOATE'S CROSSWORD ENTHUSIAST



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Zainab Khokha '24 poses with one of her crosswords in *The Choate News*.

By **Arushi Krishnan '27**  
Reporter

If this is not your first time flipping through *The Choate News*, you might have previously stumbled upon the crossword puzzles created by Zainab Khokha '24, one of the School's word puzzle enthusiasts.

Intending to add an interactive and engaging feature to the paper, Khokha has designed several crossword puzzles over the past few issues. "There should be a fun aspect of *The Choate News*, and a lot of the time the masthead is concerned about if people are reading all the articles ... So I tried to [make] the crossword to bring some incentive to read *The Choate News*," Khokha said.

To create these crosswords, Khokha first reads the articles slated for publication and creates terms and hints from the content. "It's a creative outlet for me, trying to come up with a hint. Usually, crossword hints are very skillfully worded ... to make sure that it's just enough of a hint where you get it, but it's not too obvious," she said. "Trying to find that balance is challenging, but also rewarding when I get it right." After finalizing her hints, Khokha inserts them into Armored Penguin, a website that forms a structured crossword for her. Lastly, she puts her work into Canva to adjust the layout and sends it to the Masthead.

Khokha's passion for crossword puzzles stems from her family, who often compete in playing the daily *New York*

*Times* (NYT) Mini Crossword, and other NYT games. "My family has a group chat for the Wordle and all the *New York Times* puzzles," she said. Whether through collaboration or competition, these games have allowed the family to bond and spend time with one another.

Khokha's younger sister, Zahabiya Khokha '27, is not as fond of crosswords. But, like her sister, she finds satisfaction in winning or getting the answer on the first attempt. "My family has influenced me to play these games, because they're really big on doing little challenges to help you get smarter day by day," she explained, "Zainab has had an effect [on] me by also creating her own crosswords and inspiring me to be more creative."

Whether by providing a fun aspect to *The Choate News* or increasing readership, Khokha's impact on the School's newspaper has been significant. Ryan Murray '27, who frequently played Khokha's crossword puzzles, said, "[Khokha's] crosswords [are] super fun and creative, and they make me want to read *The [Choate] News*." Khokha's crossword contributions to *The Choate News* have successfully engaged regular readers and new subscribers alike. Her work will be missed, and her departure after graduating leaves shoes that will not be easily filled.

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Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News



## STUDENTS EXPLORE ARTS FROM MUSEUMS TO THEATERS

By Elizabeth Burgstahler '26  
Reporter

Each year, the Choate Arts Department organizes field trips and workshops across various artistic disciplines. These programs are designed to inspire students and help drive their artistic growth.

"We try to make sure that all of the arts are represented in the trips," Choral Director Dr. Julie Hagen said. "We want to make sure that every student can explore and learn about their interests." This year, students visited a variety of locales.

### Boston Field Trip

On April 18, the Arts Concentration Program (Arts Con) took a full-day field trip to Boston. First, they attended the Boston Symphony Orchestra's (BSO) open rehearsal, where students had the opportunity to see how the orchestra refined its performance.

Afterwards, the students met with Hillary Hahn, a three-time Grammy Award winner and solo violinist in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Farrah McQueen '25 said, "She gave us insight [into how] things we learn at Choate can be transferred into the professional industry." Throughout her talk, Hahn answered questions about her creative process and her ability



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

to work through burnout in the professional world. After eating lunch at the New England Conservatory's dining hall, the students visited the Institute of Contemporary Art. There, students observed major thematic exhibitions with works of leading contemporary artists. Some of the exhibitions included Wu Tsang's *Of Whales* and Igshaan Adams' *Lynloop*. Visual Arts Con student Mira Paraparatt '26 said, "It's one thing to take a technique class at Choate, and another to look at the artwork and talk about the work."

### Jazz Ensemble Field Trip

On April 30, Choate's Jazz Ensemble visited a professional recording studio called Powerstation

in Cheshire, Connecticut to record with Treavor Okonuk, a professional sound engineer. Okonuk spent the day helping the ensemble record their repertoire from their fall concert up until their final spring instrumental concert. Additionally, smaller groups from the jazz ensemble recorded separate repertoire that they rehearsed outside of the larger group.

The recording studio has a rich history. Singer and guitar player Eliza Aldrich '27 said, "the console was used to record Nirvana albums, and the sound engineer worked with Prince." Aldrich particularly enjoyed recording "From the Start" by Icelandic

singer-songwriter Laufey. "It was one of the highlights of the trip," she said. "I love watching performances, but I will [most] remember making music with the people that are special to me."

### Hadestown Field Trip

On May 2, Arts Con students traveled to New Haven to watch the musical *Hadestown* at the Shubert Theater, which features the story of Orpheus and Eurydice and Hades and Persephone. "It showed me the importance of pouring your character into every movement you make, and the specificity of each movement," Andra Ionescu '24, who attended the performance, said.

"I also took away the importance of being comfortable and confident on stage [and] really letting your moment breathe." Valentina Askar '25, another attendee, said that her favorite part was "witnessing Persephone's confidence and style come through in her singing voice."

### Workshops in the Arts

In addition to these field trips, Choate hosted two workshops with artistic professionals to educate students. On February 12, Choate invited two professional musicians and actors, Jonathan and Kathleen Butler-Duplessis, to talk about their work on Broadway and in their industries.

J. Butler-Duplessis, an understudy and ensemble member of the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, and his wife, K. Butler-Duplessis, a composer and singer, shed light on the difficulties within the theater and music industries. Gavin Boudreau '24, who attended the workshop, said one takeaway was "being exposed to different types of music, because even the singers themselves have different techniques and styles compared to classical singers."

Choate also invited two actors in the *Hadestown* National Tour, Amaya Braganza and Timothy Lee, to answer questions and do a special performance prior to the *Hadestown* field trip. Filmmaker Tristan Hurst '24, who later went on the trip, said the actors "gave us clarity on what it's like to work in the industry and showed us how many different types of touring and acting jobs there are out there."

The trips and excursions are opportunities for students to engage with art outside of Choate. From orchestra to theater, students involved in every niche can learn more about their passions and enjoy the process.

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## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

By Ethan Zhang '26  
Copy Editor

On April 30, three Arts Concentration students in the Independent Theater and Film Workshop, taught by English and Arts teacher Mrs. Kate Doak, hosted readings of their full-length plays for student feedback in the Gelb Theater.

The staged reading included *Crank 004* by Max Leventon '25, a dystopian play about five strangers in a locked room perpetually pulling a crank for air and electricity, *Butterbaugh* by Tristin Hurst '24, a *Knives Out*-style drama where the motivations of different family members are revealed at a murderous Thanksgiving dinner, and *Goldfish* by Evelyn Kim '25, a satirical comedy where the protagonist must take paid time off for his recently-deceased goldfish.

The Independent Theater and Film Workshop began four years ago after Mrs. Doak proposed the idea for theatrically-focused students "to have a place to work aloud and collaborate with classmates, learn some structure, and get dramaturgical feedback from me," she explained.

The class meets weekly in the Paul Mellon Arts Center, alternating between individual meetings with Mrs. Doak and group workshops where students share their work. Within this program, Mrs. Doak also sets a goal for her students to stage their work publicly once per term. The class differs from a typical Choate course in that it can be added on top of a six-course schedule and can be taken across multiple academic years. It is also a student-led class: students set term-long goals for themselves and deadlines with Mrs. Doak based on their own schedules and availability.

Leventon has been working on *Crank 004* since Spring Break to expand his playwriting skills beyond his comfort zone. "Every single play I've ever written has

been entirely comedy-based ... and I wanted to veer as far away from that as possible," he said. He hopes to produce *Crank 004* at Choate's next Fringe Festival, so that he can take advantage of light manipulation and stage direction to maximize the effectiveness of his play.

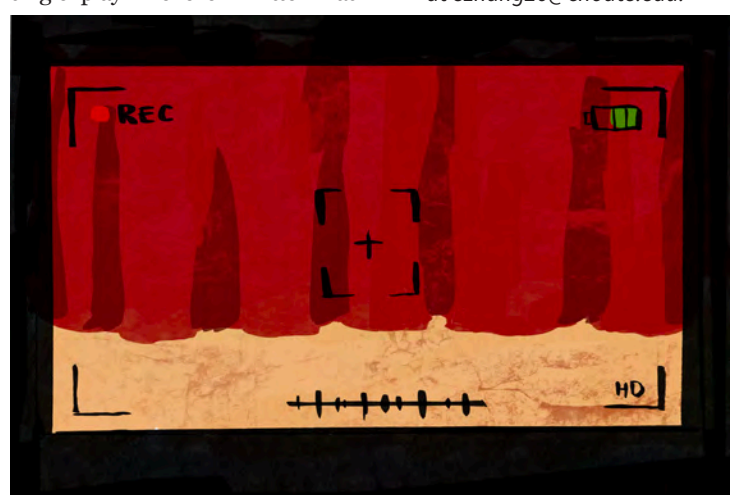
Through writing and sharing his work workshop, Leventon has improved his playwriting skills tremendously. "I've learned how to correctly format plays, make dialogue feel real, and make my scenes purposeful — whether that be funny or serious. It's a constant cycle of improving," Leventon said.

Hurst's play *Butterbaugh* is a mystery drama that satirically jabs at societal norms and behavior. In it, other characters tease a white character who will attend Howard University. "With Howard specifically, I wanted to show people how jarring it is when it's kind of reversed — a white person entering a historically Black institution as opposed to a Black person entering a historically white institution," Hurst said.

The Independent Theater and Film Workshop has helped Hurst achieve his screenwriting goals as he also aspires to pursue filmmaking and screenwriting in college and potentially as a career. He said, "I've been working on balancing tone in my screenplays and managing comedy, and I feel like that has definitely improved."

The Independent Theater and Film Workshop course helps students improve their playwriting and filmmaking skills and learn from other aspiring writers. "Writing can be solitary, but that's the kind of mistake writers make. Writing in the professional world can also be very social," Mrs. Doak said. "[Students learn] how to be in conversation and collaboration with each other — it's the most fun and rewarding part."

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Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

## CAMPUS CANVAS: STUDENT ART SHOWCASES

By Sophie Chung '27  
Reporter

As you walk around campus, you may have noticed the recent surge in student-produced artwork adorning the walls of buildings. The Andrew Mellon Library is now home to various photos, drawings and paintings created and curated by students in Visual Arts classes at Choate.

According to the Arts Department Head, Mr. Matthew McLean, "It has been a long-term goal of the School ... to have student artwork be hung around campus." Difficulties regarding possible locations for artwork and the rotation of pieces, however, made implementing this goal a convoluted process. "There's been a lot of back and forth with where it should go and how often it should be rotated," Mr. McLean said. In addition, he said the responsibility "ultimately rests with the individual visual art teachers to curate which pieces go up and where they go."

Students in Photography I and Photography II classes cap-

tured the photos now displayed in the library lobby. These classes covered various topics and tools that students used to create their final pieces. Waew Techajareonvikul '27, a Photography I student, highlighted how the topic of abstract photography inspired her to use Photoshop to merge two photos together. Her final picture depicted her grandfather walking and her brother running. "The message being conveyed there was how you grow old," she explained.

Aiden Kuo '27, another student in Photography I, captured the New York City skyline. "The photo is just supposed to represent the beauty of nature," he said.

Junho Lee '24 also talked about his process. "Since I wanted the photo to be blurry, I made the exposure time a bit long," Lee said.

Student reception of the newly displayed artworks has been positive. Student-photographer Alex Renaud '26 said, "I'm happy that my photography got put up on campus."

Students who took Photography I or II found it to be



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Student creativity on display in the library lobby. a rewarding experience. Kuo encourages others to take photography. "You get to explore your interests and find out some things that you didn't know about yourself before," he said.

Lee, who is currently working with photography teacher Mr. Matt Kelsey to take photos of student life for the Choate Archives, said, "Photography is a way for me to kind of give back to the community." He added, "Taking classes like photography or filmmaking, where you're physically documenting this

space, is important to preserve the school's history."

In the busy hustle and bustle of life at Choate, taking a moment to appreciate the beauty of our peers' creations can be a refreshing way to catch a breath. These new displays of new student artwork have allowed others to see the hard work of their peers, a testament to the creativity and imagination of the Choate community.

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## BEHIND THE SCENES: INTO THE WOODS

By Leanne Parks '25  
Reporter

We are all familiar with the classic fairy tales of Jack and the Beanstalk with his white cow, Little Red Riding Hood with her red cape, Rapunzel with her long golden hair, and Cinderella with her glass slipper. But, have you ever seen these cautionary tales interconnect into one single story? From the singing, to the set, to the costuming, Choate's upcoming spring production *Into the Woods* will be a culmination of months of hard work.

Theater teacher Ms. Deigna DeRiu, the director of *Into the Woods*, described how this year's spring musical stands out from the shows Choate has done in the past. "We haven't done a [Stephen] Sondheim [musical] in a long time ... It's much more unique and innovative for when it came out, but it is still much more of a traditional musical in the sense that it's written as a musical, not a jukebox musical."

Not only are the songs in *Into the Woods* written in a tra-

ditional musical theater style rather than a pop style, but the technically difficult nature of the music has also pushed the cast and crew to adapt to Sondheim's challenging compositions.

The cast of *Into the Woods* has been hard at work throughout the spring term. Rehearsals, which vary between singing, dancing, acting, or a mix of all three, run daily for two hours, with an additional two hours on Wednesdays and three-hour rehearsals on Saturdays.

The music director of the show, Mr. Nathaniel Baker, has led the cast in learning the music. Although the work during music rehearsals has been challenging, many actors find it to be an enjoyable part of preparing for the show. Candace Beverly '25 described music rehearsals as her favorite part of the process. "One of my favorite things is when we all have music rehearsals, and we stand in circles, and we sing, and everyone's hyping each other up," Beverly said.

Despite the number of hours the cast of *Into the Woods* has put into perfecting the show,

they are not the only group to have the spotlight. Through their creativity and crafting skills, Ms. Deriu and countless crew members have made this show possible. Assistant stage manager and set builder Justyce Easter-Butcher '24 touched on the number of details the team must consider in order to create the set successfully. Easter-Butcher discussed how they build stage props for the set, such as Jack's house, and the questions they had to ask themselves in the process, such as how to "build the frame for [Jack's house]" and "[figuring] out how to cut it on the [Computer Numerical Control (CNC)], and then ... figuring out how to fly it because [Jack's house] flies in and out." This attention to detail serves not only to protect the safety of the actors on stage but also helps bring the show to life.

Beyond all the rehearsing, set building, and technical design that goes into preparation for the show, many participants believe that the community is the most important aspect of the production. The group of

around 30 performers has become tight-knit, and are growing closer throughout the rehearsal process as they prepare to perform together on stage.

Jordan Dodd '25 said that his favorite part of the rehearsal process is tech week, or the week leading up to the show. During this time, the cast and crew spend the most time in the Paul Mellon Arts Center, where they often stay late to run the show in its entirety.

Dodd said, "During tech week is when the most camaraderie is seen, because we are all going crazy without sunlight. I think tech week is probably the most beautiful week of creating the show usually, because [we] get to go crazy together."

Whether you're a musical lover or have never seen a live performance, *Into the Woods* has been designed for all to come and enjoy. Tickets are now available on the PMAC website for performances on May 16 at 7:30 p.m., May 17 at 7:30 p.m., and May 18 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

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## FIELD REPORT

Choate Spring Record  
102 - 75 - 5

### Varsity Games

Girls' Track & Field (2-5)  
vs. St. Paul's, 62-39

Boys' Baseball (9-6)  
vs. Kent, 10-0

Girls' Softball (8-3)  
vs. Suffield, 5-4

Boys' Lacrosse (7-3)  
vs. Salisbury, 12-11

Girls' Tennis (5-3)  
vs. Hopkins, 0-9

Boys' Volleyball (0-7)  
vs. Andover, 0-3

Girls' Cross Country (0-1)  
vs. Lawrenceville, 15-43

Boys' Golf (12-2-1)  
vs. Kingswood Oxford,  
208-208

### J.V. Games

Ultimate Frisbee (0-5)  
vs. Xavier, 2-15

Boys' Tennis (5-0)  
vs. Deerfield, 5-2

Girls' Lacrosse (5-3)  
vs. Williston, 5-3

Boys' Baseball (2-1)  
vs. Avon, 16-5

## CHOATE ULTIMATE FRISBEE DOMINATES THE FIELD

By Eliana Li '26  
Copy Editor

As students walk to their afternoon practices, they often get a glimpse of the Choate Ultimate Frisbee Teams playing on Mather Field and Gunpowder Creek Field. Led by Varsity Head Coach Hannah Huddleston '19 and Junior Varsity (JV) Head Coach Dr. Christopher Hogue, Choate Ultimate Frisbee has become an integral part of many students' spring term experience.

Choate's co-ed Ultimate Frisbee Program began as a club sport in 1980, offering students a laid-back afternoon pastime until it became an official interscholastic sport in 2011. Now, they compete each spring against various public and independent schools in the region as a part of the Connecticut Ultimate League.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the sport's popularity, and this year marks the first time the Choate Ultimate Program has officially had a full varsity and JV team, as well as two intramural teams. "We've had probably the most successful season in a couple of years," Varsity Ultimate player Lila Gizzie '25 said.



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Choate's Varsity Ultimate Frisbee Team winning against North Branford High School on April 5, 2024.

The sport's rise in popularity can be attributed to many factors, including the simple explanation that Ultimate Frisbee is a pleasant opportunity for students to explore a novel activity and enjoy the afternoon with friends. Coach Hogue said, "It's a spring sport, and I think it attracts a lot of seniors who want to do something outside with their friends in the spring."

Furthermore, the program's welcoming community and different teams help attract players of various skill levels. "Ultimate Frisbee is accessible because it has such a low barrier to entry," Coach Huddleston said. "It's just one of those sports where everyone's welcoming to new players, and I think the team does a really good job of making sure that all the players are welcome as well," Gizzie added.

While consisting of players from diverse backgrounds, many participants find that the team dynamic is their favorite aspect of the sport. Gizzie said, "Every practice is very relaxed, and although we have the intensity and we really want to win, we still maintain that rich and uplifting environment." The unique self-refereeing aspect of Ultimate Frisbee also significantly contributes to the dynamic

of the sport. Playing without the oversight of a ref "places the responsibility of fair play solely on the athletes themselves by requiring each player to know the rules and make their own calls," the USA Ultimate website states. "You have to develop a real positive spirit of the game and recognize that we're here to have fun and compete, but we can't let the competition turn us into hyper-competitive and unfair athletes," Coach Hogue said.

Reflecting on the team camaraderie, Varsity Ultimate Captain Elizabeth Zhao '24 said, "The people in Ultimate Frisbee are just genuinely the nicest people I've ever met. You get the balance of still being very competitive and having an intense game balanced with good spirits."

With the regular ultimate season coming to a close, the memorable moments on the field and significant growth as a program have left a lasting mark on the Choate community. As the team looks towards competing in the Connecticut State Championships this week, Dr. Hogue concluded, "Our participation has been very strong, and I think we've got a chance to do really, really well in [the tournament]."

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## AN ODE TO CHOATE ATHLETICS

By Bella Welch '26  
Reporter

As spring term comes to a close and Choate's senior athletes prepare to hang up their well-worn jerseys, many of them have taken the opportunity to reflect on their high school athletic careers. With just three weeks remaining in the school year, these athletes have a limited time to cherish the fond memories of their sports and the relationships they have built over the years.

While participating on a high school varsity team in New England is a unique challenge, the experiences gained from being a part of these teams have left many players with several life lessons. Throughout many long seasons, Ellie Bissell '24, a forward on the Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Team, said, "I've definitely learned how to be versatile and adapt to different situations." As Bissell reflected on her time with Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey, she expressed the importance of actively contributing to the team, even off the ice. "Even if you're on the bench, you have to work with and support your team. I learned that people have different places and ways to be valuable, even if it's not immediately obvious that they're valuable," Bissell said.

Additionally, Boys' Varsity Ice Hockey player Ryder Holloway '24 found a strong mindset and relentless discipline are keys to success. "Controlling the control-

lable is my biggest takeaway from my time here, just because if you can't control everything, control your ability to show up with your best every day," Holloway said.

With the pressures of varsity-level sports, athletes have also found the importance of staying grounded and remaining flexible. Boys' Varsity Lacrosse player Owen Guiney '24 adapted to the rapid pace of the team by getting out of his comfort zone. "You have to get out, and you have to try to push yourself even if it's hard," Guiney said.

Sports teams at Choate are also known for their competitive spirit and dedication to supporting each other, where individual and team triumphs are moments commemorated, regardless of magnitude. As they reflect on their past seasons, many seniors have pointed out several pleasant memories they have made with their teams. For Bissell, celebrating her first Choate goal at the Taft School this past February was monumental. "I scored, and everyone on the team was pretty happy for me because that was the first point of my career [at Choate]. It was overall a very good experience," Bissell said.

Meanwhile, an unforgettable moment for Holloway was beating Deerfield during the 2022-23 season with the Boys' Varsity Ice Hockey Team. "I think it makes it that much more special to be able to beat Deerfield on our home ice," he said.

The time and dedication these athletes have contributed to their craft was an experience like no other, and the love and passion they have developed helped to shape the tight-knit culture of Choate sports, whether in the locker room, on the field, or throughout campus. "We all love our sport, and it's just fun to spend every day with [teammates]," Guiney said.

As these players move on to the next chapter of their lives, their competitive mindset and love for their sport motivate many of them to continue playing. Bissell plans to continue staying connected to ice hockey by playing on a club team at Boston University. After Choate, Guiney also wishes to stay connected to his sport, whether playing club lacrosse or just picking up the stick occasionally. "I think even if I'm just playing wall ball or something, it just feels good to have a stick in my hand," Guiney said.

Choate's senior athletes have shown remarkable dedication, passion, and hard work towards their sports throughout their time here, creating lasting memories with teammates and learning valuable lessons. As they bid farewell to Choate, these student-athletes will carry with them experiences that have shaped who they are and lessons they can lean on in their future pursuits.

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## CRH Pickleballers

By Kaya Weerasuriya '26  
Reporter

Amid their final spring at Choate, a group of sixth-form girls have created a recreational pickleball league called "CRH Pickleballers." Maddie DeTray '24, Sophia Kim '24, and Marissa Jacobs '24, among many others, have begun to organize matches against each other to create memories during their last weeks at Choate.

The idea initially came from DeTray's enthusiasm for pickleball, a sport she avidly plays with her parents and grandparents. Despite initial skepticism, Jacobs eventually joined in on the fun as well. "She was so adamant about us playing," Jacobs said, "And I was like, it can't be all that." However, she became hooked on the sport after just a few days of playing with DeTray. Inspired by how much they loved playing together and how much fun they had, the girls decided to formally create a pickleball league to share their enjoyment with others.

The league's atmosphere is characterized by laughter, friendly competition, and all-around good times. Players will gather throughout the week, with spontaneity being a key part of their meetings. Whether it's a sunny Sunday morning or a weekday afternoon, participants are guaranteed playing time through the league's system of rotating players in and out quickly. "It's so much fun," Jacobs said, "There's a slight amount of chirping, but it's all in good spirit." The

games are accompanied by snacks, sodas, and music, creating an uplifting environment for students to relax and create lasting memories. Although the league only has one net and a few racquets, they hope to gather more equipment as the group expands.

Reflecting on their senior year, DeTray and Jacobs highlighted the league's impact on their final weeks at Choate. "I feel like because it's towards the end of our senior year, this is almost more special," Jacobs said.

However, going to college for these seniors doesn't mean the end of their pickleball pursuits. Jacobs, Kim, and DeTray hope to continue playing. In introducing herself to her college's non-official Instagram acceptance page, DeTray has gone to the lengths of looking for a pickleball team to join this fall. Jacobs also hopes to continue playing at her chosen college. "It's warm [there] almost all the time. So I feel like I'll be more invested to play," she said.

For students interested in joining the league, DeTray, Kim, and Jacobs offer a simple invitation: "Definitely follow @crh\_pickleball on Instagram, which is where we post our gamedays," DeTray said. "You can also DM us," she added, "or you can always talk to [Jacobs] or myself." Regardless of skill, all are welcome to join in on the fun.

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## CONGRATULATIONS ON SIGNING DAY!



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Class of 2024 athletes celebrate their official signing day.