



STUDENTS FROM FAR & NEAR WELCOMED ON REVISIT DAY

By **Fiona Fu '25**
Copy Editor

Choate welcomed the families of 232 accepted students for Revisit Day on March 27, 30, and 31. This important annual event allows prospective students to fully immerse themselves in Choate life and decide whether to #ChooseChoate after sitting in on classes and talking to faculty.

Although current sophomores and juniors missed out on this opportunity due to Covid-19, freshmen and seniors may remember the rows of brightly colored national flags lining the path to Colony Hall and the air of nervous excitement during their own Revisit Days in 2022 and 2019.

Visiting families hailed from as close as Hamden, Connecticut, and as far as Singapore, representing eight countries and 22 states.

The Admission Office made sure to also provide programming for the approximate 100 other families who were unable to make the trip to Wallingford.

Virtual opportunities on Zoom included panels with current parents, panels with Gold Key ambassadors, and other Q&A sessions.

Opening performances by dance and music groups on campus and speeches from Chief Enrollment Manager Mr. Jeffrey Beaton and Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis were also livestreamed.

Each Revisit Day kicked off with families being warmly welcomed in the parking lot by enthusiastic Gold Key tour guides and Boar Pen before registration in Colony Hall.

The Jazz Combo provided some lively tunes in the lobby, giving families time to mingle, enjoy coffee, and take photos with Choate's wild boar mascot. In Colony Hall, Mr. Beaton and Dr. Curtis's opening remarks were accompanied by Step Squad and the Symphony Orchestra, who showcased their talents for the visiting families.

Prospective students spent the rest of the school day shadowing their hosts, who were paired with them based on shared interests.

To accommodate the special programming, classes started later in the day, were shortened to 50 minutes, and ended earlier than usual. Previous revisit schedules allowed for only three class blocks, but this year's schedule change allowed visitors to see four and get a better idea of the course offerings at Choate.

"I think our office is really great at looking at what we do and [thinking], 'How can we improve on it a little bit? How can we make it better?' So we're always making slight changes," said Associate Director of Admission Ms. Cynthia Stahura. She added, "I think we've found a schedule that we really like and seemed pretty successful."

The chance to host was both daunting and exciting, even for those who have experience touring prospective students. "I think I was a little nervous," said Sophie Park '25, a Gold Key ambassador. "Having them sit in your classes is a totally different environment."

For other students, hosting was an opportunity to pay forward their own positive memories. "I was a new sophomore, so I had [my Revisit Day] last year," said Max Lo '25. "It was a good experience. It was why I chose Choate, and I wanted my student to have that."

Some teachers planned their lessons to be more approachable for visitors. "Classes were shorter, so I think it

really allowed them to get a glimpse of what life [at Choate] would be like," said Park. "A lot of teachers structured their classes more towards the revisit students, like incorporating them into activities."

At the same time, teachers also wanted to give prospective students the most genuine experience possible. "I tried to make [classes] as authentic and realistic as they would usually be," said Math teacher Mr. Zachary Kafoglis. "I hope they get a sense of the flow of a class and what being in a classroom feels like, but also, more importantly, get a sense of who their peers would be ... and hopefully, they see the type of awesome engagement and inquisitive nature that makes teaching here great."

Students who had free blocks during the day also took the opportunity to show visitors their dorms, Lanphier Cafe, and other parts of campus that were relevant to their visitor's interests.

"My student plays the tuba, so I showed him around the music building, practice rooms, and where they would put their instruments so he could get a feel for what it would be like with the orchestra here," said Lo.

While students got a taste of Choate classes, robust programming occupied their parents, who first heard from a community life panel and an academic panel. Representatives from the Health

Center, Student Activities Center (SAC), Deans' Office, College Counseling office, signature programs, and Registrar's office shared insights and answered questions. Lunch with current Choate parents offered an informal opportunity to learn more, and the sessions ended with a residential life and day student panel for the parents of boarders and day students respectively.

At the end of the school day, visiting students reunited with their parents at the Chapel, where they heard from either the Jazz Ensemble or Chamber Choir.

Newly-elected Student Body President Amanda Benneh '24 and Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott shared closing remarks. Families were also encouraged to visit Community Fair, where prospective students could talk to representatives from athletic, academic, and art departments, as well as signature programs, summer programs, and a selection of student clubs.

Extensive planning behind the scenes allowed this year's revisit programs to run smoothly. The Admission Office, led by Ms. Stahura, began working in the fall and coordinated with SAGE Dining Services, facilities managers with the American Building and Maintenance Company (ABM), the Communications Office, and many other groups on campus.

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Accepted students shadow Choate students during Revisit Week.

Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

CHOATE HOSTS SECOND ANNUAL TEDx TALKS

By **Eliana Li '26 and Savannah Emery '26**
Reporters

Choate hosted its second annual TEDxChoateRosemaryHall Youth event at the Getz Auditorium on Sunday, April 16, featuring Lauren Kee '24, Chelsea Branch '25, Syna Mathod '25, Zaki Shamsi '26, and Grace Yoon '26. These students spoke about various topics under the umbrella of this year's core theme, "Fork in the Road."

One of the six speakers, Branch, titled her speech "The Driver's Ed of Life: How to Navigate Your Future?" Branch's speech discussed using psychology in order to plan for the future and avoid feelings of anxiety. She said, "We are so often expected to plan, but nobody tells us how to do it without feeling so overwhelmed. Peace and planning for your future can coexist."

Shamsi jumped at the opportunity to give a TEDx talk because of a longstanding desire to share his ideas and experiences. Shamsi narrated the story of his parents in the context of the American Dream and used the guidance of his peers and fellow TEDx members to land upon his final message: "The American Dream is achievable, and if you have an idea, you conceive of that idea, and if you dedicate yourself to that idea, you can achieve it."

Mathod, another presenter, first found interest in public speaking through a debate club at her middle school. "I have always believed and supported TEDx's mission," she said.

Her presentation, "The Power of Comfort in a Diverse Society," explores the concept of accepting differences by detailing immigrants' and refugees' experiences. Mathod commented, "I believe that it's a really important message to share and has the ability to make a true impact."

TEDx was started as a way to bring the community together even when students were away from campus. Feeling a lack of connection between Choate students during hybrid learning of the 2021-2022 school year, Yoyo Zhang '24 hoped to bring the community together through founding TEDx at Choate. Over the course of two years, the planning committee has grown to include 16 core members. Within the committee, the speakers, Visual, Fundraising, Website, and Production teams all worked tirelessly to ensure that the event succeeded in amplifying "Ideas Worth Spreading," the TED motto.

The planning committee aims to establish a platform for talented student speakers to voice their opinions. Throughout the process of preparing and planning, the committee oversaw the eight-month-long curation process, maintained outreach with various offices,

and facilitated collaboration between different students on the team. Instead of inviting alumni speakers as they did last year, the team wanted to tap into the diverse student body and amplify the voices of the youth. The selected student speakers were encouraged to interpret the prompt based on their own insights and experiences, and the student leaders worked closely with them to further develop their ideas.

Mathod has been preparing for her presentation by making a good balance of personal anecdotes and external research. "My biggest takeaway from this experience is that it's really possible to make an impact on a community through a speech like this one," she said.

The members, speakers, as well as the adult advisers were all integral to the success of the event. Zhang is grateful for the support of many adults around campus, including the TEDx club adviser Mr. Sam Christenfeld, Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar, and Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long, for their wise guidance and generous support.

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TEDx

ChoateRosemaryHall

ATOMIC BOMB SURVIVOR MS. TOSHIKO TANAKA SPEAKS AT SCHOOL MEETING

By **Sarina Fernandez-Grinshpun '25**
Staff Reporter

Ms. Toshiko Tanaka was six years old when Americans detonated an atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima in 1945. Just weeks before the bomb was dropped, her family had moved houses from the hypocenter of the atomic bomb to just outside the radius of its impact.

While it was too painful to recount that experience for most of her life, she later began sharing what happened to her through talks at schools and on TV to ensure that this experience is not lost to history. On April 4, she shared her story with the Choate community during School Meeting.

To begin, Ms. Tanaka's daughter, second-generation survivor Ms. Reiko Tashiro, shared the story of the day she was born. She explained that the first thing her father did after she was born was count her toes, fearful of the effects of Ms. Tanaka's possible radiation poisoning on their daughter.

Her powerful story showed that the atomic bomb not only had consequences on immediate victims and survivors, but also had lasting consequences that burden them for the rest of their life.

Philosophy teacher Mr. Jim Davidson, who helped organize the event, said, "I hope that [the Choate community] would have a firsthand and personal account of the real world risks of nuclear weapons, particularly right now, where there is an area of serious conflict in the U.S., and in the world."



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Mr. Jim Davidson introduces invited speakers.

Then, Ms. Tanaka herself shared the harrowing experience of being a survivor of the atomic bomb. On August 5, 1945, she was a young girl walking to school, when a bright light suddenly covered her vision. She threw her arm over her face before feeling a searing heat all around her. Then, interminable darkness blanketed her vision as the dust and ash from the initial bomb impact blocked the sun. While her arm filled with unbearable pain, she struggled to decide whether to continue her walk to school or return home, entirely unsure of what had happened. Later in life, she learned that out of her entire kindergarten class, she was the only confirmed survivor of the attack on Hiroshima.

The suffering did not end at the initial blast of heat and impact; it continued in the form of radiation. Despite how little her family had, Ms. Tanaka's mother took in and cared for many survivors. When many of them passed within days or weeks, radiation poisoning was not understood as the cause of their slow deaths. Following School Meeting, students were welcome to attend a debrief session and additional Q&A session in the Humanities Rotunda with both speakers.

Emily Mito '24, who attended the Q&A, said, "I already knew all the stories of the atomic bomb since I grew up in Japan and learned a lot about it in school, but it was ... special to hear the story in the U.S. with my American friends in this high school setting."

During the Q&A, Mito also learned that Ms. Tanaka still lives in Hiroshima, as she has done for the last 70 years. After asking about how Ms. Tanaka balanced living in the place where such a tragedy had occurred, Mito said, "She told me how when she talks about the story, it is important to tell everyone not only the tragic part of the history, but also the present day of Hiroshima."

Ms. Tashiro wants students to "to have empathy" and "know that behind the facts of history, each victim had their name and was loved by someone."

The Hiroshima bombing should not be something that is considered to be entirely in the past, as its effects are still rippling through those who survived and those who didn't.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Melody Qian '24, Toffy Prakitiphoom '24, Suzie Kim '24, and Oona Yaffe '23

LISTEN UP!



we just Listen to music and it's fun

CHOATE HOSTS REVISIT WEEK FOR ACCEPTED STUDENTS

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“We see Revisit Days as a school-wide event where our visiting families really want to see our community. It’s the first time they get to meet many people beyond the Admission Office,” said Ms. Stahura.

“We want to be like, ‘Welcome to the rest of our commu-

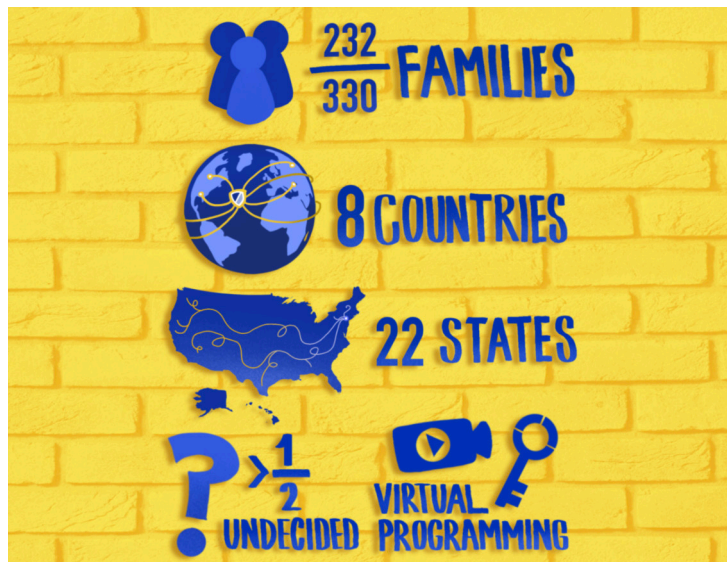
nity,’” she shared, expressing the importance of prospective families getting to know the people that make up the Choate community. “We’re always asking families to trust their instincts and trust their gut, to look around and see if they [can] see Choate as their home, that they’d be happy here and that they’d be able to follow their interests and

really be the best that they can be,” Ms. Stahura stated.

Reflecting upon his experience teaching a class with visiting students, Humanities teacher Mr. Jesse Minneman said, “I hope that what they see is that we have engaging, interesting, exciting classes here. I hope they notice that the students are engaged, but also that the teachers are connecting with students in meaningful ways. I think that’s really what those class visits are for: for students to sincerely see themselves in those seats and in those classrooms.”

With revisits now over, the Admission Office will have a chance to debrief on this year’s programming. “There were lots of families that we saw at the end of the day in the school store buying a sweatshirt, which is always a great sign,” Ms. Stahura shared with a laugh. “I think I can speak for the Admission Team — revisits were a success!”

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Students Compete in Debating and Public Speaking World Championships

By **Eva Swanson '25**
Copy Editor

From March 26 to April 2, Choate Debate Captain Lex Njomin '23 and Co-Vice Captain Michael Korvyakov '23 took to Durban, South Africa, for the 2023 World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships (WIDPSC). The annual tournament consisted of 16 teams, each representing a nation, comprised of 16 high-school-age students. As Co-Vice Captain and Captain of the Choate Debate Team respectively, both Njomin and Korvyakov have worked hard to refine their skills in order to qualify and compete in this year’s championship.

As one of the most prestigious debating events in the world, the championship is extremely challenging to qualify for. Candidates must win the best speaker award in one of seven to ten tournaments in their regional league to be considered for WIDPSC. Choate students compete in the Debating Association of New England Independent Schools (DANEIS)

league, covering the Northeastern parts of the United States.

Though winning a tournament is “exceptionally challenging,” said Korvyakov, receiving qualifying scores is difficult, too. The lone judge makes subjective ratings of debaters’ performance; “judges are told to only give 90s to the most exceptional debaters” or after listening to “one of the top 10 speeches [they have] ever heard.” Thus, one judge who prefers a faster speaking cadence may mark a speaker higher for doing so while another might mark them down.

At the competition, students took part in four forms of speaking and debate: interpretive reading, impromptu speaking, debate, and a choice of either persuasive speaking or after-dinner speaking. The lattermost category is speech in which the speaker takes on a persona of their choice to entertain and inform the audience following a dinner.

Njomin qualified for the after-dinner speaking finals, which accepted only 10 speakers, despite having done it only one time

prior. For his speech, he chose to be a “big pharma exec” critiquing the American government. Discussing “big pharma” issues through a comedic lens, the final proposal developed through his speech stated that “big pharma [needed] a new face,” and not one with “rhinoplasty and Botox.” Instead, Njomin advocated for national healthcare, stating that nothing will change since the government’s poor regulations and ignorance to the plights of the people are the problem. Critiquing Medicare and including many statistics, Njomin wove humor and political analysis into his speech. Though not qualifying for the grand finals, he “really [fell] in love with the idea [of his speech].”

The journey of getting to the world championships was not an easy one. However, the many hardships and tournaments attended culminated in a rewarding and challenging experience for both Njomin and Korvyakov.

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Choate for Women Hosts Feminist Poetry Reading

By **Anya Shah '25**
Staff Reporter

An advocacy club for female-identifying students, Choate for Women empowered female voices through a poetry reading event in the Andrew Mellon Library’s Reading Room on March 28. People in attendance listened to the readings, asked questions, and discussed the meaning behind the text in honor of Women’s History Month.

Three students — Francesca Howard '26, Chloe Jacobs '23, and Keegan Hennessy '25 — read poems incorporating themes of female triumph, struggle, and the overall experience of what it means to be a woman. Students discussed how the poems aligned with the female experience at Choate and the ways in which historical events connect to recent

ones. The conversation touched on a multitude of topics, from the use of hurtful vocabulary to the ways in which sexism is ingrained into different languages.

Hennessy, a member of Choate for Women, recited a poem about the Salem Witch Trials titled “Prophecy 1” by Amanda Lovelace. “It kind of is poking fun at the Salem Witch Trials and the burning of women in historical context,” she said. “[Lovelace] projects into the future and draws parallels between the Salem Witch Trials and the things that happen in our current society.”

Jacobs was grateful to be a part of the event. The original poem she read is about the fictional birthday of a 10-year-old girl. Jacobs’s writing delves into the emotional complications of “personhood” and the limitations of gender identity. Jacobs hopes that audience mem-

bers in attendance that day were able to relate to her words, and she appreciated the kind and gentle environment they created. She wants to remind female-identifying students that they are not alone. “I could witness in real time how my words lead some people down a path of reflection and acceptance for the things which they had experienced,” said Jacobs.

“Overall, the event went much better than I anticipated, and everyone was really receptive to the poems,” said Racquel Welcome '24, President of Choate for Women. Welcome said the event was relatively easy to plan, and it spurred great discussion. She ended, “I hope to highlight the diversity of the female experience by collaborating with more clubs and hosting more events.”

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APPLE PAY NOW ACCEPTED AT CAMPUS FACILITIES

By **Calvin Moon '24**
Staff Reporter

Choate recently implemented Apple Pay in all Choate facilities where students typically use their Choate card for purchases. The Tuck Shop, Lanphier Cafe, and the Choate Store are now accepting Apple Pay as a form of payment alongside previously used payment methods, such as Choate cards and credit cards. This change was spearheaded by Student Council Vice President Cassatt Boatwright '24, who saw the need for a more convenient payment option for students.

Boatwright said the inspirations behind her proposal were suggestions from students who had trouble paying for their purchases, either because their Choate card was empty or because they left their wallet in their dorm room. As Boatwright said, “Not only did

I want to get rid of awkward situations like this, but Apple Pay in the school store is simply more convenient for the student body while simultaneously beneficial to the School, as having more payment options encourages students to go to the Tuck Shop, Lanphier Cafe, and the Choate Store.”

The slow implementation for the updated pay system was caused by numerous unexpected obstacles. “The largest challenges were ones I could not control,” said Boatwright. “Mrs. Lafontaine informed me that implementing Apple Pay would require an upgrade, or even a complete replacement, of our credit card terminals,” she shared. “In addition ... it was discovered that multiple vendors on the backend bank processing side of Apple Pay were involved in this process as well. Therefore, it took much longer than I had anticipated.”

With Apple Pay finally in place, Boatwright hopes that students can more conveniently enjoy the many necessities, foods, and drinks offered on campus.

“Apple Pay may seem small of a change, but I know it will allow at least a few students to enjoy what Choate has more frequently and easily.”

This change has been welcomed by many students who are excited to have a more convenient way to pay for their purchases. Ethan Wu '24 said, “After Apple Pay, paying has become easier and convenient. It is just a great option to have in case you don’t have your wallet.”

The addition of Apple Pay is just one example of how Choate is adapting to the changing times and providing the best possible experience for its students.

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FOURTH-FORMERS PRESENT ANNUAL GOODYEAR PRESENTATIONS

By **Annelie Hang '25 and Lola Wennmachers '25**
Reporters

Four sophomore finalists presented their speeches to the fourth-form in the Getz Auditorium for the annual Goodyear Presentations on Tuesday, April 6. In the competition named after former history, political science, and public speaking teacher Mr. Zachary Goodyear, fourth-formers across all levels of World History are tasked with researching a topic from the Interwar period and giving a thesis-driven presentation with a complementing visual aid.

This year’s presentations included “Tippu Tip and the Zappo Zaps” by Teniola Obayomi '25, “Shintoism in Japanese Korea” by Caroline Kim '25, “How the Qing Dynasty Avoided Imperialism through Diplomacy” by Jason Cao '25, and “Canadian Cultural Imperialism through Legislation” by Libby Dai '25. Ultimately, Kim came in first place.

Obayomi opened the presentation with a speech about the Congolese leader, Tippu

Tip, and the Congolese group, Zappo Zaps, who collaborated with the Belgians in the late 19th century. Obayomi brought light to a topic rarely talked about: violence was not only perpetrated by the colonizer, but the local tribes as well.

Kim, who was especially inspired by her own grandfather’s history and role during this time period, spoke on neo-imperialism in Asia, highlighting a topic Choate students hear little about.

Kim shared, “The hardest part was definitely trying to incorporate my grandfather’s story into my speech without having it dominate the entire project.”

Cao presented on how the Qing Dynasty avoided colonization through diplomacy. He painted a clear picture of China’s political climate and tactics by highlighting the maneuvers of the Qing dynasty in light of internal protest and pressure from outside forces.

Dai, the final speaker, spoke about the lives of indigenous peoples in Canada and the suffering they endured at the hands

of the Canadian government. Tasked with discussing a sensitive subject matter, she used gruesome imagery and real-life examples to support her argument. As she stepped up to the podium, the room quieted and assumed a serious tone.

She began with her opening paragraph, “The medical examiner report says that they were wearing underwear, blue denim shirts, overalls, socks, and low-cut rubber boots. Days later, three boys were found frozen and huddled together. One lay 25 meters away, he died alone.”

Dai’s speech captivated audiences and drew this year’s presentations to a close.

As a whole, the presenters of the 2023 Goodyear Presentations not only upheld the tradition and expectations of this annual competition, but also educated audiences on important topics that are often overlooked in history textbooks.

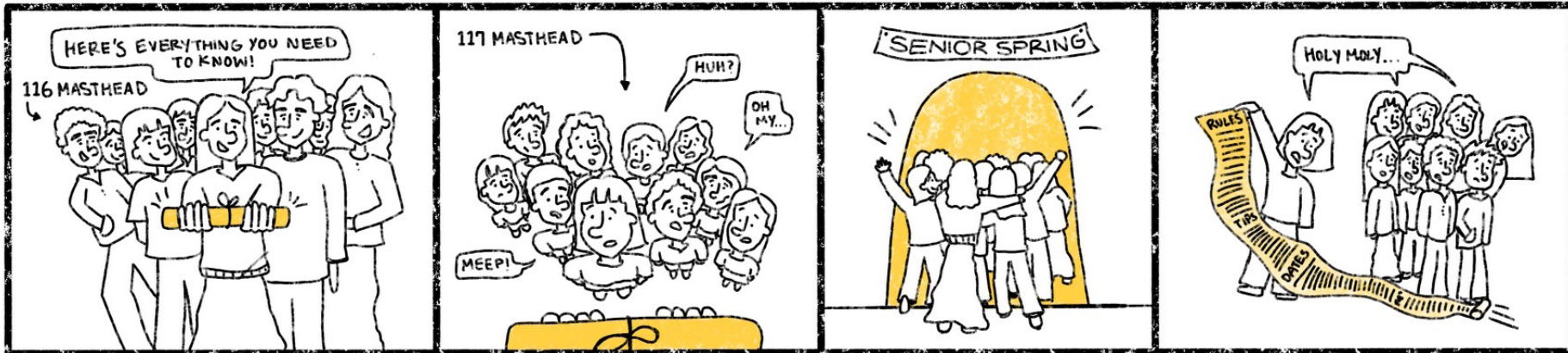
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Jason Cao '25 speaks on the diplomacy during the Qing Dynasty.



Caroline Kim '25 delivering her speech on Shintoism in Japanese-ruled Korea.



Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

QUESTIONS LOOM OVER WALLINGFORD HIGH SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

By **Grace LaPlaca '25**
Copy Editor

This February, Wallingford’s Board of Education voted eight to one to consolidate the town’s two high schools: Lyman Hall High School and Mark T. Sheehan High School.

The decision, which includes the closing of Sheehan High School and the construction of a new building next to Lyman Hall, is expected to be completed in 2028. The plan has been in the works for about five years but was recently reintroduced after being put on hold during Covid-19.

One of the primary reasons for the plan was declining enrollment in both Lyman Hall and Sheehan. The Wallingford Board of Education felt that consolidating the two schools was the best solution to ensure that resources could be equitably distributed to the students at both institutions.

However, a consolidation would result in a student population increase of about 1,800 students, a number that neither school’s facilities can accommodate. Thus, the idea of constructing a new building, likely on the site of Lyman Hall, was introduced.

Vice-Chairperson of the Wallingford Board of Education Mr. Ray Ross was the lone dissenter in the recent vote about the consolidation. Mr. Ross said he voted in opposition because “bigger isn’t necessarily better when it comes to educational resources.”

Larger class sizes may result in an inability to receive extra help and a weaker student-teacher relationship. He reiterated, “I still feel, person-



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

ally, that students get better attention from a smaller school.”

In contrast, Chairperson of the Wallingford Board of Education Ms. Tammy Raccio was among the eight board members who voted in favor of the consolidation. From her perspective, the student-teacher connection would not be lost should the schools combine.

“So much depends on the teachers, and we have fabulous teachers. I still think that the teachers will be equally available to the students.” Ms. Raccio added, “The students will seek out the areas of interest that they want, and the teachers that work in those areas.”

However, Mr. Ross raised additional concerns about extra-

curricular activities and the potential for fewer students to participate in sports teams. With a significantly larger student population, coaches may lose their ability to connect with students.

“The coaches don’t just coach sports — they’re life coaches, and they take their students under their wing,” he said. With a larger student body, fewer students would make it onto sports teams. These students may lose the opportunity to try new sports, be a part of a team, and receive valuable coaching.

“The emotional stability of the students, and the ability of the students to partake in a lot of the high school experience is greatly diminished,” said Mr. Ross.

Parents worry about reduced student leadership opportunities should the plan be enacted. However, this problem may not arise. “I think there’s opportunity that you could have co-presidents of a student council,” said Ms. Raccio. “At a larger school, you’re going to need more student government leadership positions.”

Ms. Raccio’s philosophy surrounding the plan boils down to two words: “equity and education.” One of the main concerns with the current two-school model is the difference in student course paths. While there may be enough interest in a certain course at one high school, there may not be at the other.

As a result, some courses are not offered at both schools. “It’s not equitable in our programming. We have some programs that are only offered at one high school,” said Ms. Raccio. While Lyman Hall students involved in the culinary program can commute to Sheehan to take certain electives, this opportunity doesn’t exist for other areas of study. This limits the opportunity for students to explore their interests if their school cannot offer a course.

Should the plan be enacted after approval from the Town Council, more courses could be offered. The plan has sparked controversy, and some Wallingford residents have expressed disapproval. Outside a

town council meeting to debate the topic on March 28, students and parents from Sheehan held signs in protest. Ms. Raccio noted that, however, no Lyman Hall students or families were in attendance.

One of the topics discussed at the meeting was the location of the proposed new school, which poses transportation problems for Sheehan students. Over 100 students who used to be able to walk to school would need transportation, which Mr. Ross estimates would require around 60 buses to accommodate. The bus ride would also be significantly longer for students. Some people at the town council meeting proposed that the new building be in a more central part of town between both schools. However, this proposal would take work and resources to enact.

“The Board of Education has no authority to buy land,” said Ms. Raccio. “That would be a larger discussion than the nine of us volunteers on the Board.” Therefore, no decision was reached at the town council meeting.

The Wallingford High School Consolidation Plan remains an ongoing and divisive discussion. While the range of course offerings may be expanded, many Wallingford residents hold apparent concerns for their children and community regarding the consolidation. Ms. Raccio said that in her ideal outcome, “students have the same opportunities, whether they went to Sheehan or whether they went to Lyman Hall.”

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Interact Club Inspires Local Children



Photo by Cassatt Boatwright '24/The Choate News

Choate Interact volunteers read to Wallingford public school children on Friday nights.

By **Rella Wang '26**
Reporter

Choate’s Interact Club is a philanthropic organization on campus dedicated allowing students to contribute to the local community. The club has been working hard to expand its weekly Reading Buddies events. Held every Friday night at the Wallingford Public Library, club members read books to children who attend Wallingford public schools. By sharing their enthusiasm at these events, volunteers can help children improve their reading comprehension skills, foster excitement for reading, and create a stronger bond between Choate students and the local community.

The high turnout to Reading Buddies Events shows its popularity among the children. Ms. Kari Hamad, Head of Children’s Services at the Wallingford Public Library, said, “A to-

tal of 17 children participated in our most recent event. The kids really enjoyed the interactions.”

Since the kids are often read to by parents or other adults, Ms. Hamad said, “It’s nice to have someone who’s a little bit closer to their age read books with them.”

The club has developed strategies to encourage more participation from the local community. “When we have more volunteers than children, those without reading buddies team up with cabinet members to create a skit with a moral or a game for everyone to play to present at the end,” President of Choate Interact Cassatt Boatwright '24 shared. “It really brings the energy back up and tends to draw families to come back for the engaging events we host.”

In hopes of making Reading Buddies more fun and inspiring children to embrace their creativity, the Interact cabinet plans to expand its program to

include arts and crafts. Instead of reading for 40 minutes, volunteers will read for the first 20 minutes before transitioning to creating art. According to Boatwright, prepackaged bags with supplies will be laid out prior to the start of the event.

“Volunteers would then remain with their buddies to help them create something with the items provided.” After, kids take their creations home.”

Boatwright desires that the Choate and Wallingford communities grow closer. “We really want to do our part in giving back to the local community” and decrease students feelings of separation from the town. She concluded, “We hope this bond continues to grow and are able to make more of an impact through more events and fundraisers in the future.”

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Wallingford Robotics Team Qualifies For World’s

By **Ellie Porter '25**
Reporter

With an incredibly successful season so far, robotics teams at CT STEM Academy in Wallingford are currently preparing for this year’s VEX Robotics World Championship.

The VEX IQ program at the academy is relatively small, with 22 students from Wallingford, New Haven, and Hamden, Connecticut comprising six teams.

The Director of the VEX IQ program, Ms. Laura Juarez, said, “We’re really serving all of Connecticut right now.”

The program strives to develop students’ passion for STEM, regardless of their experience. Students can explore any aspect of robotics, such as coding or building, depending on their interests and strengths. Some students joined the program without prior interest in pursuing STEM.

Brandon, a member of the middle school division, claimed he joined because “it was a summer day, and [he] was bored.” On the other hand, Phillip, from the same division, wants to pursue robotics outside of school and travel for tournaments.

The program kicks off around late September to early October and continues through January, with practices occurring from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturdays.

According to Ms. Juarez, the challenge of the year is presented at the beginning of each program cycle, when the planning process commences. “Soon after, [the kids] start putting the robot together, and it starts coming to life. Once the construction is done, they begin the coding stage.”

Large competitions happen every other weekend in January, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m, with occasional scrimmages in between.

Despite its size, the program has made a great impact on the

robotics community. In the finals, the elementary team won first place for their design and teamwork, and the middle school team won the Think Award for their creative design.

With such impressive achievements at competitions large enough to host up to 50 other teams, both the A and C teams earned their tickets to the World Championship.

This, however, did not come without its struggles. Leo, a ten-year-old member of the elementary division, found the State Championship challenging. Their robot faced an unexpected malfunction of a pulley device, but, fortunately, they were able to improvise as a team. Leo said, “In the end, it was very dramatic.”

Teamwork was vital to both teams’ victories. Sam, a member of the middle school C team, said, “Our robot itself wasn’t bad, but compared to some of the other robots in the tournament, it seemed outclassed in some areas. What really kept us going was ... good teamwork.”

To prepare for the World Championship, the teams are currently working to raise money for their traveling expenses via

GoFundMe while also continuing bonding activities.

CT STEM Academy hosted an end-of-year breakfast to celebrate the program’s successful season. With over 150 people in attendance, every family and sponsor contributed to funding the breakfast.

Ms. Juarez has big plans for the program. She would not only love to expand the program as a whole, but also increase the number of female competitors involved.

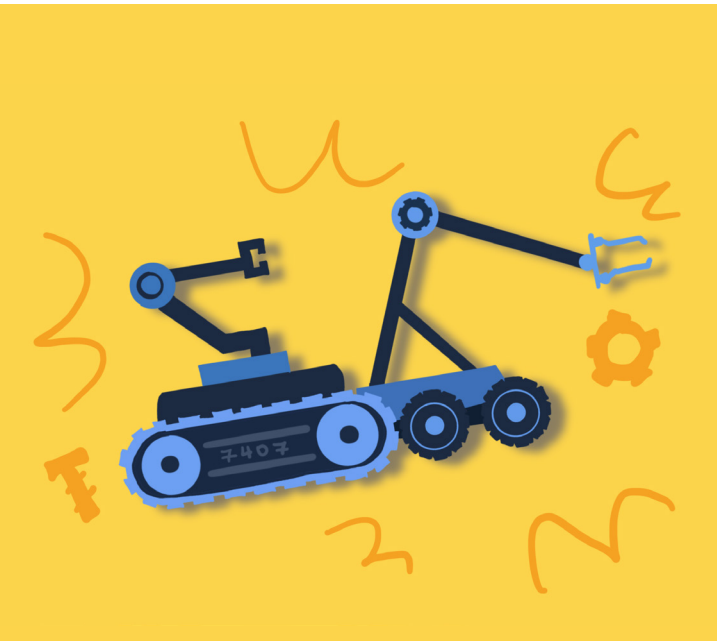
“The last time I sent an all-girls team [to Worlds] was in 2019. I hope to get a girls team out there in Texas for next year’s,” Ms. Juarez said.

For those who would like to learn more about robotics before the team tryouts, the CT STEM Academy hosts an intensive one-week-long summer program open to various skill levels.

The team is thriving, with members confidently cheering, “We’re gonna win World’s.”

Last names were redacted to protect the privacy of the children.

Ellie Porter may be reached at reporter25@choate.edu



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

THE CHOATE NEWS



117TH MASTHEAD

VOL. CXVII
NO. 1

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An Inside Look into Fasting During Ramadan

By **Monicke Costa '25**

Opinions Writer

Despite the circumstances of my busy life at Choate, I choose to fast every Ramadan because it is a customary practice for me and many of my family members. This decision often surprises people, and I am frequently asked, “Not even water?!” to which I consistently respond, “No.”

Ramadan is a sacred month for Muslims, observed as the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. During this month, they fast from sunrise to sundown, pray, and dedicate themselves to their religion, while also having the opportunity to come together and share meals in celebration of their faith.

Before starting my fast, I begin my morning with a meal called *suhoor* to prepare my body for the day ahead. This is followed by a morning prayer, known as *fajr*, which takes place before sunrise. Afterward, I start my fast.

Personally, I prefer to sleep before *suhoor* and wake up around 4 a.m. to have my meal and perform my morning prayer; however, some Muslims opt to stay awake until *suhoor* and sleep only after starting their fast. I have my morning meal and prayer in my dorm room, and I typically eat food from the previous *iftar* (the meal to break fast during Ramadan), which is usually bananas from the dining hall. After the meal, I go back to sleep and commence my fast, which lasts until sunset.

Like any other student at Choate, I spend my day studying, attending classes, and taking occasional naps to recharge. Without these moments of rest, my body would feel completely drained, and I wouldn't be able to function properly. I make it a priority to nap at least once each day.

Even though fasting throughout the day may seem like a challenging feat, it becomes easier with each passing

day. The first day of fasting can be particularly tough because the stomach isn't accustomed to it. However, it adjusts as the days progress, and you become more comfortable with the fasting routine. Eventually, you'll find that you only need to eat a small amount during *iftar* to feel satiated.

Apart from the spiritual aspect, what helps me push through the passing thoughts of “it's just water” or the occasional feeling of “hangriness” is the knowledge that this is the constant reality for numerous people. Many have to work under extremely harsh conditions, without access to water or sufficient food, for several hours at a time.

This realization reorients me towards what truly matters and keeps me grounded in my thoughts. It inspires me to strive to be a better person. As someone who is privileged enough to have access to what are considered basic necessities around the clock, why should I com-

plain about being tired and hungry during an 8 a.m. math class?

While the month of fasting may not hold personal significance for the majority of Choate's students and faculty, it carries immense importance for me and the nearly two billion Muslims worldwide. I believe it is essential for people to understand what Ramadan is and why it is significant. I know that many individuals are curious about this holiday and its meaning, so I urge you not to shy away from asking your friends. You will find that many Muslims love to discuss their cultural experiences and religion. I also encourage you to show empathy, and perhaps even challenge yourself to fast for a day! Choate provides a daily *iftar* at the Student Activities Center (SAC), so feel free to join us in fasting, coming together as a community, and engaging in meaningful conversation and connection.

Monicke Costa is a fourth-former from Worcester, MA. She may be reached at mcosta25@choate.edu

MY ULTIMATE RANKING:
CHOATE ENGLISH BOOKS

HOW TO BE A
GREAT PREFECT

By **Francesca Howard '26**

Opinions Staff Writer

Prefects play a pivotal role in cultivating the culture and values of the Choate community. As a current freshman living in Nichols, I have learned that a good prefect isn't just there to make sure our rooms are clean or check that our lights are turned off at 10:45 p.m. A truly great prefect exemplifies positive behavior in and out of the dorm and inspires their prefectees to do the same. They supervise our dorm and ensure that we are adhering to the rules and treating each other with respect while still being able to have fun with us.

A good prefect goes out of their way to foster a welcoming and fun dorm environment. As I stood outside Nichols on my first day of freshman year, I was a frantic mess. I had never been away from home before, and the mere idea of living in a boarding school environment where I didn't know anyone yet was extremely daunting. With trembling hands, I swiped my key card and opened the door, bracing myself for the unknown. To my surprise, I was met with a scene that instantly calmed me down. I stepped inside to the upbeat sound of Taylor Swift music and a group of smiling prefects. They each introduced themselves and offered to help me with my luggage. Just a few minutes in and already feeling like I belonged, my anxiety dissipated. As we walked down the hallway, I couldn't help but notice the walls of our common room that were adorned with vibrant hues of posters and banners. Clearly, our prefects went out of their way to make our dorm upbeat and welcoming.

The best prefects are the ones that always find time to offer their support or be a listening ear when I need to talk. Despite their busy schedules and heavy course load,

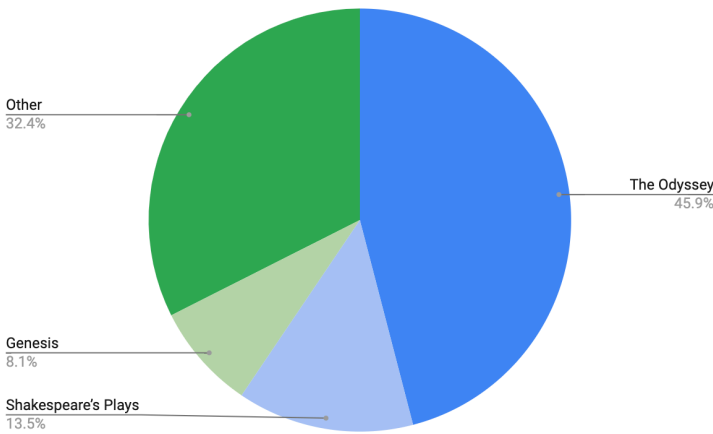
their doors are always open. Our Nichols prefects tell us about their own experiences as freshmen and give us advice on navigating the ups and downs of our first year. Putting themselves in our shoes, they are able to relate to us on a level that house advisers might not be able to. For instance, during my first few weeks at school, I was struggling with homesickness. One of my prefects noticed and immediately comforted me. She introduced me to other students grappling with similar struggles, helping me feel more at home and less alone. On another day, when I was confused about my physics homework, my prefect put down her own work to help me figure mine out.

It is also incredibly important for a successful prefect to be responsible and organized. Prefects must take their roles seriously, delegating their tasks and ensuring the dorm is clean and orderly. In turn, they teach us, their prefectees, important life lessons and responsibilities. They are proactive in identifying and addressing issues that arise, mitigating conflicts, and ensuring that their respective dorm is a comfortable environment for everyone. They demonstrate strong leadership and communication skills, bringing up dorm-wide issues at our weekly meetings. They have great work ethics and are exceptionally mature, while still maintaining a sense of humor that makes them fun mentors we love talking to.

Ultimately, it is the seemingly minor interactions with my prefects, such as my first day of school, that showed me the genuine impact a good prefect has on their prefectees. I hope that when I am a senior, I can become a prefect myself and emulate what they have taught me.

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Freshmen's Favorite Novel



Graphic by **Amelia Sipkin '25**/*The Choate News*

By **Danny Yoon '24**

Opinions Writer

For the past three years that I've been at Choate, I didn't *have* to, but rather *got* to (kudos to Ms. Jenny Elliott and Mr. Will Gilyard!) engage with a variety of English literature, including an array of novels, plays, and poems. I would like to preface my ranking of the top five books I've read for class (from worst to best) by saying that this ranking is based solely on my humble opinion.

#5. A Not-So-Good Ol' Shakespeare: *Macbeth*

In my sophomore winter — one of the toughest terms at Choate — I got hit with *Macbeth*. It was a tragedy, so it's no wonder I'm ranking this book at the bottom of my list. A dark and gory play, *Macbeth* explores reality, delusion, greed, and the effect of guilt on one's mind. While it is a great book to inspire thought about the destructiveness of basic human desires, I feel there are better ways to learn those life lessons without having to memorize 20 lines of the play. After going through this experience, I would never voluntarily read Shakespeare ever again.

#4. Choate's Most Under-rated Go-To: *Genesis*

One of the most underrated books in literature, *Genesis* is the first book of the Old Testament in the Bible and a sacred text for the Judeo/Christian religions. Although primarily written for religious purposes, *Genesis* has standalone value as both a piece of writing and as a fundamental piece of work in Western literature. Many stories and characters in *Genesis* have been used as symbols and metaphors throughout literary history, so an apt understanding of these biblical allusions make for a better grasp of western texts as a whole.

#3. A Web of Love Affairs: *The Great Gatsby*

Often associated with the American Dream and Leonardo DiCaprio, *The Great Gatsby* follows the wealthy and extravagant Jay Gatsby and his love for Daisy Buchanan. I enjoyed this book tremendously because there were so many mysteries and symbols to unravel throughout the chapters. The last sentence of the book, “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past,” particularly inspired me; it beautifully ex-

presses the limits of human ability and the irreversible nature of time.

#2. A Novel I Could Relate To: *Everything I Never Told You*

Everything I Never Told You, the debut novel of Celeste Ng, topped Amazon's Best Books of the Year list for 2014. The novel follows a mixed-race Chinese-American family that endures generational struggles as they find their place in an American community. Ng excelled at portraying how race and identity can affect one's life, and she wrote about hardships that I could relate to as an international student. The book further explores themes of child development and its significance, so if you aren't sure where to apply your Intro to Psychology knowledge other than on the AP exam, this book is for you.

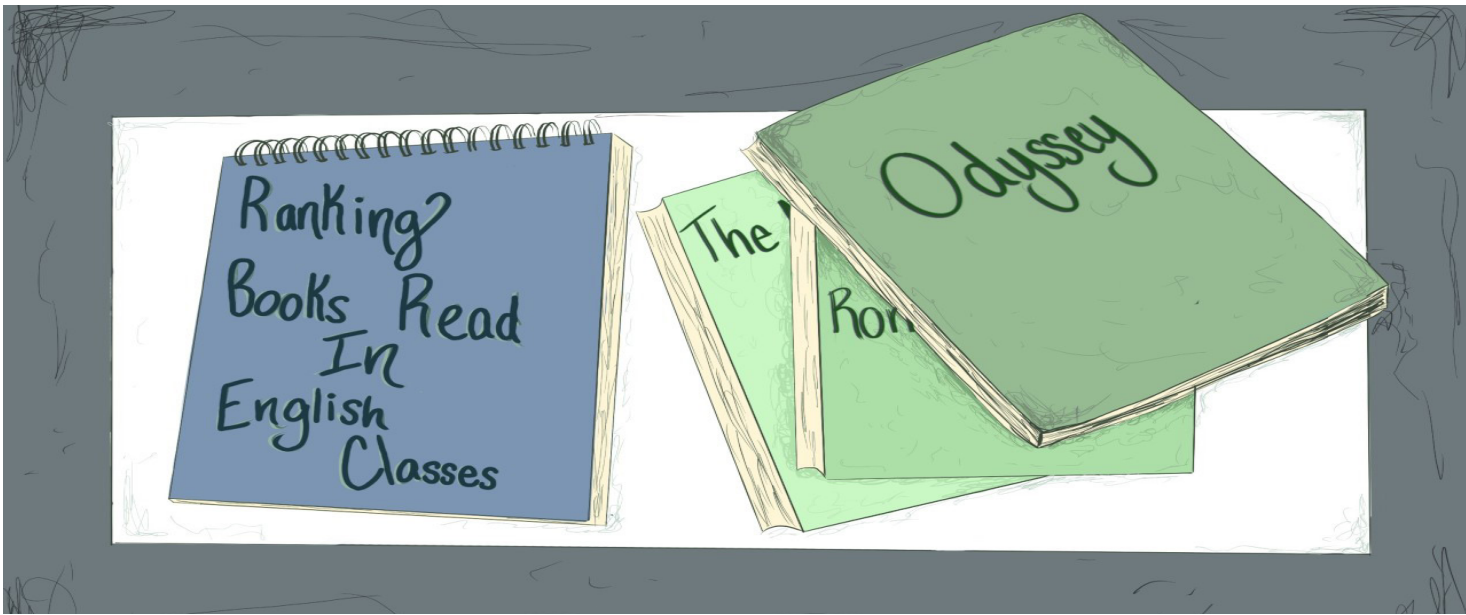
#1. The G.O.A.T of Choate English: *The Odyssey*

Written by the ancient Greek poet Homer, *The Odyssey* is an epic that details Odysseus' ten-year journey back home after the Trojan War. Although it is incredibly lengthy, which may intimidate

readers who are not big fans of poems, I believe *The Odyssey* is the best book for freshmen students kicking off their Choate careers. The story is about embarking on a journey, which mirrors how freshmen begin their new journeys at Choate as they tackle this epic in their English classes. After finishing *The Odyssey*, I remember my English teacher Mr. David Loeb saying, “It's all about the journey, not the destination.” Looking back as a junior, I see clearly now the value of this mindset as I embark on the odyssey of my own life.

All in all, my experience with Choate English has had its ups and downs, but in pitting these books against each other, I've had a chance to evaluate and reflect on what I've learned from each piece of literature. Some tough decisions had to be made, but, after much thought, I have concluded that *The Odyssey* is my top choice without a doubt. Hopefully, the books I read in my senior English electives will take top spots in next year's ranking.

Danny Yoon is a fifth-former from Seoul, South Korea. He may be reached at dyoon24@choate.edu



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

Sophomores' Favorite

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Juniors' Favorites

Passing by Nella Larsen

We The Animals by Justin Torres

Graphic by **Junho Lee '24**/*The Choate News*



Graphic by **Carolyn Chen '25**/*The Choate News*

How the Federal Reserve Failed to Protect SVB

By **Xiu Lim '25**
Opinions Writer

Although the aftershocks of the recent Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) bank run have largely calmed, placing blame on this financial tragedy is difficult. For one, the bank's officials had preemptively dedicated too many excess reserves towards long-term investment and loans. For another, Former President Donald Trump P'oo decided to loosen bank regulations from the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010. However, I believe the central blame lies in the Federal Reserve (the Fed) and its tunnel vision while handling the recent spike in inflation.

Inquiry into SVB's collapse reveals crucial lessons about the causes of bank runs and potential future safeguards. Understanding the bank run requires two critical concepts: fractional reserve banking and the relationship between bond prices and interest rates.

Choate's macroeconomics class teaches the first concept: banks only hold a required portion of their deposits (according to a "required reserve ratio" set by the Fed) and either loan out or invest the remainder (or "excess reserves").

SVB spent its excess reserves on U.S. treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities, both traditional, vanilla, and low-risk investments. However, with interest rates rising, the prices of these low-risk investments fell due to bond sellers having to justify selling their

bonds with interest rates lower than the newly issued bonds. This caused a \$17 billion loss on SVB's bond investments.

To account for this loss, SVB sold its securities at an after-tax loss of \$1.8 billion in the first quarter of 2023, alarming its tech startup and venture capital clients. This fear, exacerbated by news of SVB's losses spreading through social media, prompted investors to pull out their deposits in the bank rapidly.

The problem lay in too many investors wanting to take out their cash simultaneously, a phenomenon aptly named "bank run." Unfortunately, SVB did not have enough cash for investors to pull out, causing the bank to inevitably collapse in one of the largest bank runs in U.S. history, second only to Washington Mutual's collapse during the 2008 financial crisis.

We can see the following reverse chain of events: SVB collapsed due to investors being alerted to the high risk that depositing in the bank posed. This risk was exposed when it was revealed that the bank suffered losses of \$1.8 billion, a direct result of SVB's sale of securities to cover up an even more considerable loss of \$17 billion caused by investing in vanilla assets. This \$17 billion loss resulted from falling bond prices caused by rising interest rates. The Fed is to blame for this sudden interest rate spike. By raising interest rates to curb the effects of extraordinarily high inflation, 6.5%, compared to the target rate

of 2%, they inadvertently led SVB toward financial chaos.

With SVB's senior officials taking on more risk than they could realistically bear because of loosened regulations on smaller banks, this spike in interest rates paved the path for SVB's collapse. With the Fed's capacity to detect future implications of such monetary policy, they must bear some responsibility for failing to realize that the interest rate hike may have been too aggressive for banks such as SVB and Signature Bank.

Thankfully, the SVB bank run did not balloon into a more significant crisis throughout the banking industry, and depositors — even those who deposited sums higher than the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's (FDIC) \$250,000 "guaranteed insurance" amount — were fully insured.

However, to prevent future crises, the Fed must not enter a state of tunnel vision and should instead consider the potential effects of its contractionary monetary policy despite the pressure to solve the immediate problem of high inflation. Smaller regional banks across the U.S. must also be stress-tested the same way larger banks, such as Chase Bank and Bank of America, are regularly required to prove their capacity to survive during financially challenging times.

Xiu Lim is a fourth-former from Singapore, Singapore. He may be reached at xlim25@choate.edu



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

TEL AVIV PROTESTS ARE NECESSARY



Graphic by William Gao '24/The Choate News

By **Nilan Kathir '25**
Opinions Staff Writer

Graphic scenes of running people, sweeping fires, and spraying water canons were broadcasted from Israel's economic and technological center, Tel Aviv. Recent protests have substantially altered life in the city, causing blocked roads, disrupted train services, inaccessible airports, suspended education, nonoperating banks, and closed hospitals. Despite the mass disruption and chaos in Tel Aviv, these protests are justified.

Sparked by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to fire his defense minister, Yoav Gallant, the protesters' anger stemmed from what the dismissal represented: silencing opposition towards the government's plans to overhaul the judiciary. These plans come with many controversial proposals, including allowing a simple majority in the Knesset, the unicameral legislature of Israel, to override Israeli Supreme Court rulings; allowing politicians to appoint most justices; and allocating more constitutional power to the government.

The main issue of this rapid overhaul is its goal of over-centralizing government power. The proposed judicial changes pose a tremendous risk by reducing checks and balances against unconstitutional government motions and invalidating the Israeli Supreme Court's role.

Rather than representing power allocation within different parts of the government, the issue has evolved into other complex debates, such as Judaism versus secularism, conservatism versus liberalism, and government consolidation versus enforcing checks and balances.

Those who criticize the Court say that it reduces the power of democracy as elected lawmakers should not have total power or control. They note that the government's plan to obstruct the power of the Supreme Court, which right-wing members of Knesset proposed, was primarily influenced by the Court's backing of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

On the other hand, Netanyahu proclaims that increased political power for the government was necessary, explaining that the judiciary has accumulated increased authority and needs to represent Israeli diversity. However, critics reveal that the current circumstances of being faced with trial for corruption charges likely influenced his desire for regressive change. Netanyahu could use the government's new judicial power to extricate himself from his legal problems.

In recognition of political instability and power shifts, Tel Aviv's protestors seek to protect their nation. Many of the 200,000 protestors are secular, central, and left-wing citizens who fear that the government proposals will threaten their previously guaranteed freedoms under the judicial power of the Supreme

Court. They believe the change will threaten their democracy by providing unchecked power to elected officials, which would disproportionately affect those who have contrasting views to that of the right-wing Netanyahu.

Another group that opposes the judicial overhaul is those involved in the military. They fear being given illegal orders to advance government goals without the judgment of the Supreme Court. Furthermore, military reservists were infuriated by the firing of the defense minister, who had previously represented those in the military. In fact, even before the former defense minister's dismissal, members of the Israel Defense Forces refused to train in protest of the government's plans.

The protests have not been entirely successful in their goal, but they have created a temporary pause in the judiciary overhaul's advancement. By showing the importance of using their voice and will to change their society, the protests in Tel Aviv serve as a symbol of revolution. Protestors show no signs of slowing and will likely continue until the cancellation of the judicial overhaul. The reduction of checks and balances and the over-centralization of power at the expense of the people are issues severe enough to justify the protestors' actions despite their harm in the short run.

Nilan Kathir is a fourth-former from Cheshire, CT. He may be reached at nkathir25@choate.edu

How TUCKER CARLSON WEAPONIZES AMERICAN MASS MEDIA

By **Arjun Pathy '25**
Copy Editor

Fox News host Tucker Carlson, a divisive name in many American households, is considered a beacon of modern conservatism for some. *Fox News*, a haven for the alt-right, serves as a breeding ground for Carlson's radical viewpoints and protects him from public backlash despite his extensive history of indefensible statements. Individuals like Tucker Carlson endanger the validity and constructiveness of political discourse in America due to their insidious shift toward extremism.

With 3.47 million nightly viewers, *Tucker Carlson Tonight* was the second most-watched cable news show last year. Carlson's media machine is comprised of wealthy, well-educated men who perpetuate a profit-seeking narrative, regardless of the validity of such statements. These influential individuals disseminate digestible yet bigoted rhetoric that is

strife with conspiracy theories to an information-hungry conservative America.

Tucker Carlson, a member of the Swanson frozen food conglomerate family, was born into the American elite. After bouncing from one news outlet to another, Carlson found himself at *Fox News* in 2009. At the time, the Republican party was characterized by less radical sentiments, represented by figures such as Mitt Romney. Back then, Carlson's viewpoints were accordingly less controversial and more fact-based.

However, as time passed, the political right drifted towards extremism, and Rupert Murdoch, the president of Fox's parent company News Corp, followed this trend. The 2016 election cycle represented a watershed moment, with a previously marginalized part of America's political spectrum coming to the center stage. Carlson's segment was quickly populated with angry monologues on the dangers of diversity and immigration.

It wasn't long before Carlson began supporting ideas such as the Replacement Theory, which suggests that higher birth rates among immigrant populations will eventually replace white populations and culture. Many believers in this theory have gone on to commit horrible acts. In the case of the shooting in Buffalo, New York, a gunman killed ten and wounded three in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

As such rhetoric continued, Carlson, at one point a close friend of Former President Donald Trump P'oo, converted the nightly segment into an outlet for the White House's initiatives. In addition, the monologues supported falsehoods on national television, as manipulative misinformation provided an opportunity to further improve ratings and income.

With little care for the consequences of his actions, Carlson's broadcast pivoted towards intrigue and deception rather than fact. With fewer guests of opposing viewpoints represented, these partisan falsehoods spoke

to a larger audience, further driving up ratings. The malicious effect of these conspiracies worsened to such a degree that Carlson faced a defamation lawsuit at one point. However, the suit was dismissed, with District Judge Mary Vyskocil noting that "any reasonable viewer arrives [to the segment] with an appropriate amount of skepticism."

Tucker Carlson is just one case of the information war plaguing America today. Defined by wealth and an endless desire to maintain power, members of the conservative elite contribute to the drastic political polarization of America through the continuation of extremist values. For instance, pro-working class policies pushed by the conservative elite are often a cover for more harmful intentions. Moreover, through their money and platforms for prominent figures such as Carlson's, extremists are capable of influencing impressionable and uneducated Americans into supporting candidates and legislation that benefit few but the ultra-wealthy.

A prime example of this misinformation is the tax cuts proposed by the Republican leadership. A mainstay of conservative policy, tax cuts are presented by *Fox* and other media groups as a lifeline for the middle class. However, research reveals that the focus of the proposed legislation is centered on cutting corporate income, capital gains, and estate tax. In other words, these politicians are truly interested in easing the burden on their most influential supporters — the ultra-wealthy.

The most recent controversy surrounding Carlson only further speaks to the profit-driven and elitist nature of conservative leadership. Last month, as part of the \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit about misinformation in the 2020 election, *Fox News* was mandated to release its internal correspondence. Carlson made the headlines for texts relating to his private misgivings about Trump.

Two months following the election of President Biden,

Carlson texted members of his staff, "We are very, very close to being able to ignore Trump most nights. I truly can't wait ... I hate him passionately." Such communications serve to demonstrate further the hypocrisy that goes on behind the scenes of the propaganda machine that is *Fox News*. Knowing that betraying Trump's ideology would anger Fox's base and destroy viewership, Carlson maintained the facade of being a die-hard supporter of the former president despite clear apprehensions.

As American politics offers more representation and influence to groups of self-serving elites, it is imperative to understand the fundamental values of America. Our country was founded on embracing truth and valuing the voice of the people — ideas that are ever more important as people like Tucker Carlson seek to harm our country.

Arjun Pathy is a fourth-former from Denver, CO. He may be reached at apathy25@choate.edu

EMBRACING THE THOREAUVIAN LIFE

By **Hannah Quan '26**
Reporter

From spending a week without social media to building fairy houses in the woods, students in Dr. Stephen Siperstein's Environmental Literature class are undertaking various projects inspired by Henry David Thoreau's book, *Walden*. The book details Thoreau's experience of being isolated from human civilization at the famed pond in Massachusetts and his intent to "live deliberately." Through the project, Dr. Siperstein challenged students to do something that is different from their daily routines for a week.

Cathy Liu '24 focused on "doing nothing" in the woods by the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC). Amid her involvement in numerous extracurricular activities, including the Girls' Varsity Crew Team, the Spring Dance Concert, and Concert Orchestra, Liu "found [herself] in the midst of chaos, and ... this project was a way for [her] to find [herself] again, like Thoreau hoped to do." Throughout the project, Liu has found an interest in observing plants in the wild, such as skunk cabbage. For her, living deliberately means finding peace and clarity among her many commitments.

Having discovered the importance of reciprocity, gratitude, and living with intention, Pascale Senatus '24 spent the week with-

out using social media. "I just found that I'm on my phone too much," said Senatus. "So, I decided it would be a good idea to ... do something that would be challenging and would benefit me."

Attempting to find a deeper meaning behind darkness and silence, Suzie Kim '24 found time to stargaze and search for constellations. "Thoreau had an ideology of going back into the natural world ... for me, it was [about] reconnecting with the night and the stars by going out into the woods," she said. Kim connected the project to her childhood, when she was enthralled by constellations and Greek mythology.

Constanza Aportela '24 walked to the main campus from the KEC instead of taking the shuttle and meditated in the woods before sunrise. When walking in nature, Aportela realized that she noticed much more of the environment around her when there are no distractions. "If I turn on music, walking becomes a race. If I listen to birds chirping or the sound of my feet on the gravel, I can truly experience the world around [me]," she said.

Chris Childs '24 woke up early to explore the woods and used what he saw to write a poem. Though it can be hard to find inspiration every day, he has learned to "connect deeper with [himself] and [the] spaces around

us." Deep reflection was helpful when writing poems, especially since he was immersed in his surroundings, alone with nature.

Erin Balduf '24 built fairy houses, creating designs that she will ultimately compile into a photobook with a map of each design. Balduf was inspired by Thoreau's idea that people can build creativity throughout their lives. "Going back and having fun doing things in nature that would not seem difficult [to] a child but now as an assignment is just such an interesting thing," she said. Through building fairy houses inspired by the natural world, Balduf hopes to reconnect with her childhood.

Many student projects involved stepping away from the chaos of society to experience and appreciate nature. Like Thoreau during his time at Walden Pond, KEC students are also gradually changing their habits, perspectives, and lifestyles.

"Studying in the EIP [Environmental Immersion Program] means grappling, emotionally and intellectually, with the challenges we face in the world today," Dr. Siperstein said. Through this project, Dr. Siperstein hopes to help students connect with their environment and experience a different lifestyle in today's fast-paced society.

Hannah Quan may be reached at hquan26@choate.edu



Photo courtesy of Eva Li '24

Eva Li '24 goes vegetarian for a week to try out a different lifestyle.



Photo courtesy of Ria Tyagi '24

Ria Tyagi '24 sets up bird feeders in the woods and birdwatching for her project.

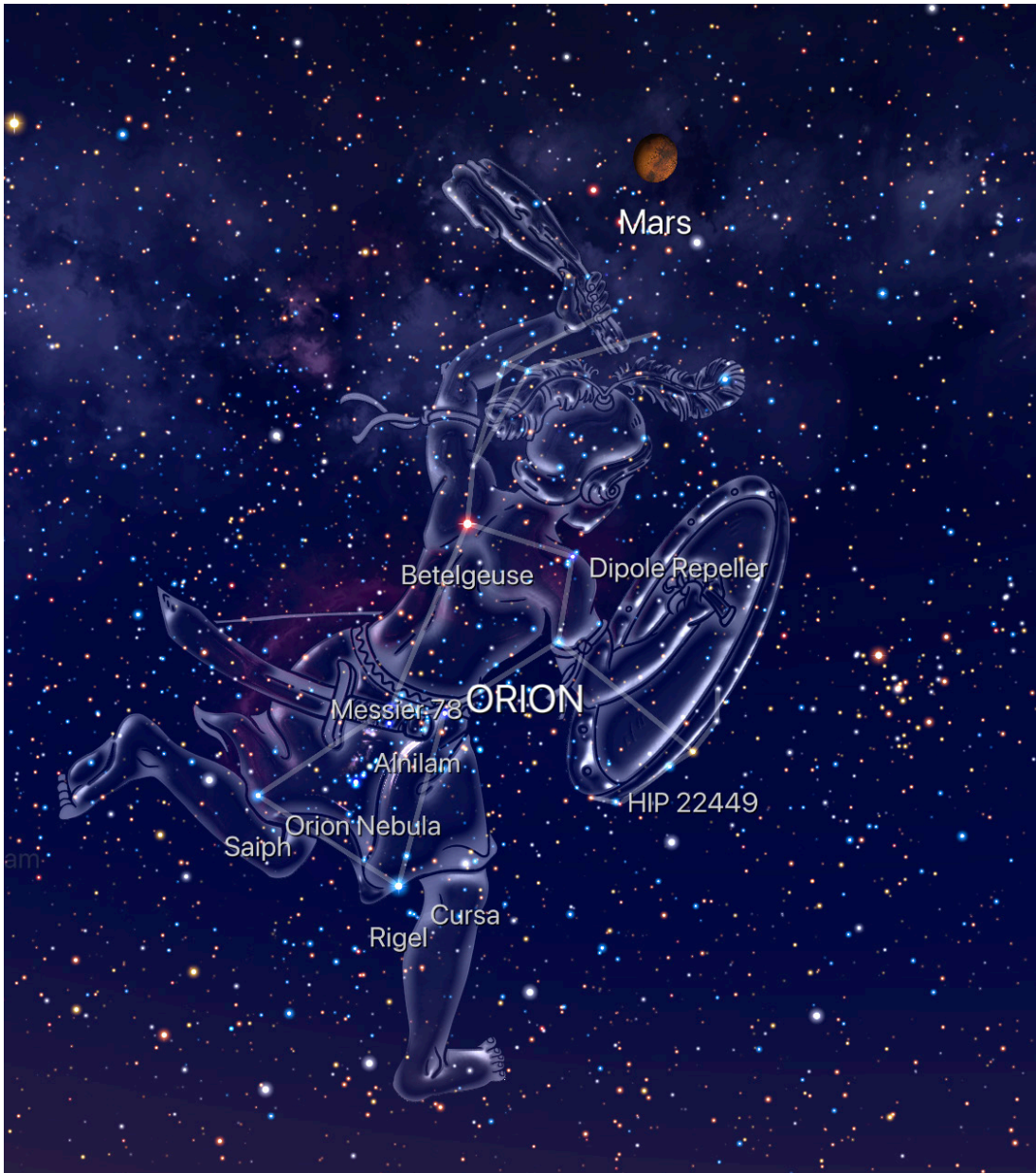


Photo courtesy of Suzie Kim '24

Suzie Kim '24 searches for constellations outside the KEC using the app, Night Sky.

BLACK HISTORY SERIES- EPISODE 3

Closing the Gap: Choate's Journey Towards Racial Equity

By **Semilola Obayomi '23**
Reporter

This is the last episode of a three-part series that aims to provide a brief timeline of race relations at Choate. Research about the history of Choate Rosemary Hall is an ongoing process; if you are curious about learning more, please visit the Archives.

On May 25, 2020, the modern-day lynching of George Floyd shocked the world. A horrific video of the event was recorded by onlookers pleading to stop the instance of police brutality, a practice that has become overly normalized. As a community, Choate has learned a great deal from the murder of George Floyd and the worldwide Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that followed. Like those in other institutions across the nation, Black students, alumni, and faculty made their voices heard about their experiences with racism and prejudice during their time at Choate.

On June 3, 2020, over 40 students of color, with faculty

assistance, wrote an open letter to the Choate community demanding more from the Administration and the student body. Notably, the letter stressed the need to retain teachers of color, educate individuals in and out of the classroom on Black issues, share stories, and more.

In the same month, the Instagram account @blackatchoateofficial posted for the first time. The account was created for past and current Black students of Choate to voice their experiences as students of color. Hundreds of posts were shared in a short span of time, highlighting past and current issues of the School that made for unpleasant memories for Black Choate students, such as the visit from Matthew Hale, a self-proclaimed white supremacist and neo-Nazi, to the Wallingford Public Library.

The Administration's immediate response was to create a day of conversation and reflection for the Choate community on June 5. Although the event was impactful and necessary, students criticized its non-mandatory status, which

made it easy for non-Black students to avoid participation.

The Administration took time to listen and reflect on these concerns, following up with attempts to create tangible changes. Efforts at Choate included the incorporation of Community Conversations into daily schedules, donations to nonprofits for racial justice, and the establishment of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) task force.

The DEI task force was formed in the summer of 2020 to address the inequities at Choate and the concerns raised by students. The committee consists of 11 members, including the Dean of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Rachel Myers. On July 16, 2020, information about the task force and its mission was emailed to the community. There were three phases to its system: collecting and organizing data and feedback, developing and hosting workshops for the community, and writing a formal assessment analyzing the workshops and creating plans to implement the feedback. Some ideas from the second phase in-

cluded the Bias Incident Report form, created and implemented in 2021, and an identity-based slur policy, implemented in the 2020-2021 handbook, that would enact consequences such as probation, suspension, or dismissal as a result of using derogatory language towards others.

The establishment of the DEI task force paralleled the growth of the Current Events Resource Group (CERG). CERG was established at Choate in 2017 to help the community understand and respond to events that impact the world. The presence of this group grew after June 2020, as it provided information and support to students during moments like the January 6 insurrection and the eventual conviction of Derek Chauvin, the former police officer who murdered George Floyd.

On November 7, 2020, Dr. Curtis sent an email to the Choate community informing them of the anonymous threat made to Black-identifying Choate students. Details of the threat and its intentions were not announced at first, per advice given by law en-

forcement. However, the many actions taken to ensure student safety were detailed.

A few days later, on November 11, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found the threat to be non-credible, concluded that the goal of the email was to terrorize the community, and used a search warrant to continue their investigation into the perpetrators.

Throughout the event, the School provided separate affinity spaces for Black students, students of color, and white-identifying students. Advisers, teachers, and the counseling team also provided student support.

However, not all Black students felt fully supported by the community. The Administration canceled homework assignments that week to relieve some of the pressure from the threat, but, because of differences in racial background and levels of ignorance, not all students had appropriate reactions.

Dylan Allen '22, a member of the BIPOC community, appreciated the cancellation of homework but wished "there was a mandatory Zoom for the School

explaining the appropriate way to react to no work."

In addition, Allen spoke of the long-lasting impact of the threat. Not only were her previous feelings of safety on campus jeopardized, but it also took time for her to understand how to approach her feelings. "The summer gave me the chance to reset my brain and realize my life could be threatened anywhere in the world, not just on campus," she concluded.

Throughout these crises, students voiced changes to be made by the School, such as increasing the level of Black representation in faculty and improving the attempts to support students of color. Like many other institutions, Choate Rosemary Hall isn't exempt from change, but the Administration has recently responded to crises more proactively and taken more initiative in supporting students. These actions are proof of Choate's desire to foster a more equitable environment.

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ORGANIZED CHAOS: BACKSTAGE OF THE SPRING DANCE CONCERT

By **Eva Swanson '25**
Copy Editor

Every year, student dancers showcase the results of their hard work in the Spring Dance Concert. On stage is a graceful and polished performance; backstage, however, is bursting at the seams with controlled chaos.

With over 50 performers in this year's concert, the dressing rooms were packed. "The energy in the dressing rooms this year was probably the best that it has [ever] been," said Sydney Alleyne '23, one of the three Dance Company presidents. Before each show, dancers played music over the speakers while they donned their costumes, helped one another with makeup, and took pictures and videos commemorating their time together.

In addition to looking the part, dancers also have to prepare their bodies to perform their challenging pieces on stage. Before the performances started, all the dancers in the show came together for a warm-up guided by one of the dance faculty members.

Athena Robinson '24, a member of the Step Squad and Hip Hop cabinets, enjoyed the daily "shakedown" — a warm-up in which students shook their hands and feet, counting down out loud from one to eight, one to seven, one to six, and so on, until no numbers remained. "It ended

with us all shaking and screaming on stage," said Alleyne.

Though the dancers prepared for months prior to the performance, they still feel a wide range of emotions before stepping on stage. Vicky Grechukhina '23, a choreographer and one of the Dance Company co-presidents, does not experience stage fright because she has "performed frequently before and at Choate," she said. Robinson felt similarly, saying that she doesn't get nervous performing. Instead, she asks herself, "Is the audience going to like it?" Once she hears the audience's cheers and applause, being on stage becomes "second nature."

On the other hand, Alleyne said that she "probably has some of the worst performance anxiety in the world." Even though she is a veteran dancer, she said, "I am still freaked out about every step I might mess up or count I might get wrong." To calm her nerves, she "would run through the dances in her head," listening to and becoming one with the music. Zooley Schamis '26, who was initially nervous for her first performance on the PMAC stage as a freshman, said, "I thought the concert went great, and I loved dancing with all my friends."

During the concert, some dancers had to quickly change costumes between performances. With less than two minutes



Dancers get ready together in the dressing room before the show.



All the students in the dance show warm up on stage together with dance faculty member Ms. Lynn Peterson.



Dancers perform a peice inspired by classical Indian and contemporary dance forms.



Hip Hop Club brought energy and cheer to the PMAC stage.



Scan to watch a short recap of the concert.

A Cappella Group Accent Comes to Campus

By **Adrian Torres '25**
Copy Editor

With their impressive vocal talent and enchanting jazz arrangements, the a cappella group Accent held workshops for Choate musicians and performed in Colony Hall during their visit to the School on March 24. Accent is a musical group featuring six vocal artists from five countries. They have released multiple albums and performed on global tours across Europe, North America, and Asia.

During their visit to campus, Accent met with musicians, a cappella groups, and students in the Music Theory class. The performers taught complex jazz vocal warm-ups not traditionally sung by Choate choir students and rehearsed a concert piece with Chamber Choir that was performed during Revisit Week.

"We also worked on tone, balancing voice parts — just any advice that an a cappella group can give," said Elsa Franks '24, a member of Choate a cappella group Whims and Chamber Choir. "I thought it was really helpful, and both workshops were interspersed with performances from the group, which was really fun."

Members of Accent also taught students about the influences of a cappella, its history, and the process behind how they arrange their music.

"I think it was really cool to see how theory could eventually be applied to make interesting or unexpected music," said Shawn Yang '24, a student in the

copter crash. When she receives this news, Emma is absolutely heartbroken and tries to pick herself back up. In the process of rebuilding her life, she bumps into her childhood friend, Sam. They hit it off and start dating, eventually getting engaged, only for Emma to discover that her dead husband, Jesse, is actually alive. Ultimately, Emma has to make her choice between Jesse and Sam.

Having read the book before filming, Yaffe said that it has more background on the characters as young people, which was helpful for "flush[ing] out the character and building a performance that makes sense, especially when there's an older version" of the character.

Yaffe described the experience of working with the cast as "fast-paced," adding that some of the more experienced actors were "laser-focused." "They go through each moment in a very careful mechanistic way, and I want to do that," said Yaffe.

"I was so starstruck and nerdy about all of this," said Yaffe, com-

OONA YAFFE '23 APPEARS IN NEW MOVIE ONE TRUE LOVES

By **Sophia Liao '25**
Copy Editor

Oona Yaffe '23's acting career did not start immediately with films and movies, but instead on the kids' cooking show *MasterChef Junior*. At just age nine, Yaffe joined the show to fuel her budding passion for cooking, which very quickly turned into something much greater. After her appearance on *MasterChef Junior*, agents began reaching out to her with acting opportunities. Yaffe said that acting had started off as an "experiment," but it quickly became clear that she wanted more. "I really liked the actual practice, as much as I liked the idea of getting famous," she said.

Yaffe's acting career has since taken flight. Last year, she was cast in the movie *One True Loves* with the likes of Phillipa Soo and Simu Liu. It all started in August 2022 when Yaffe sent in a self-tape that she had filmed on her phone in the garage of her home in Los Angeles. She received a callback for a chemistry read on Zoom with the actors and actresses going for other roles. Just three days later, Yaffe learned that she got the part — a "ridiculously fast turnaround," she said.

Yaffe traveled to Wilmington, North Carolina, to begin shooting for the movie, taking only three days off from school at Choate to do so. In *One True Loves*, Yaffe plays the character Young Emma, who is in a flashback in the first seven minutes of the movie. The movie was released in select theaters on April 7 and is available for purchase on Apple TV+ and Amazon Prime Video.

The romantic comedy is based on a book of the same title by Taylor Jenkins Reid, who is also the author of the popular novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. In the film, Emma is married to her high school sweetheart, Jesse, until he is presumed dead in a heli-

menting on her first reactions to being on set.

One of Yaffe's favorite memories on set was when she filmed a scene where she went on a midnight walk in the street with fellow actor Cooper van Grootel, who plays the role of Young Jesse. This moment was meant to take place in the summertime but was shot during the mid-November North Carolinian winter instead. "We had these big coats, and we were shivering. [When] they said cut, we didn't have enough time to get the coats on, so we're standing there, and he's like, 'It's ok, it's ok,' and we sort of held each other and shivered together," said Yaffe.

Currently a senior at Choate, Yaffe has decided to take a gap year next year before heading off to Harvard University, where she hopes to hone her acting skills through taking scene study classes. "I hope my acting career continues for a long time. That would be awesome," said Yaffe.

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Accent held a workshop with Choate musicians.

masterclass led by Accent. "They arranged 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' in all the different styles of different groups and performed them for us to see that there's so much you can do with a simple melody [that] everyone knows."

Reflecting on the workshop experience, Choral Director Dr. Julie Hagen said her favorite part "was seeing the students engage in a different way and respond to something [she] can't give them."

The students who worked with Accent also gained insight into their work from their time spent with the group. "I have a lot of respect for how detailed their work was," said Yang. "There's so much versatility, even though it's the human voice, that you can do within an a cappella group."

Finishing off their visit with an evening performance, Accent entertained people from Choate and the local community. They closed the show by singing the American, British, French, Canadian, and Swedish national

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Oona Yaffe '23 acts in a flashback at the beginning of *One True Loves*.

FIELD

REPORT

Choate Spring Record

28 - 6 - 0

Varsity Games

Boys' Baseball (4-0)
vs. Kent, 15-4

Girls' Lacrosse (3-1)
vs. Pomfret, 11-4

Boys' Golf (3-0)
vs. Avon, 191-200

Girls' Softball (3-0)
vs. Porter's, 17-0

Boys' Lacrosse (4-0)
vs. Kent, 19-3

Girls' Tennis (2-0)
vs. Loomis, 6-3

Boys' Volleyball (0-2)
vs. Exeter, 1-3

Girls' Water Polo (0-1)
vs. Williston, 4-14

Ultimate Frisbee (1-0)
vs. Middletown, 13-11

J.V. Games

Girls' Tennis (1-0)
vs. Kingswood Oxford, 6-1

Girls' Lacrosse (3-0)
vs. Pomfret, 11-0

Boys' Lacrosse (2-0)
vs. Kent, 6-5

SPRING SPORT TEAMS BOND

DURING PRESEASON TRIPS



Girls' Crew row on the water in DeLand, Florida.

Photo courtesy of @choategirlsrowing Instagram

By Lucy Domingo '26
Reporter

Spring preseason training had been a long-standing tradition at Choate prior to the outbreak of Covid-19. Unlike other preseason trips in the fall and winter, athletes had the opportunity to travel outside of Connecticut to bond as a team and develop their technique. This year, seven Choate sports teams visited fields, lakes, and courts across the country for training.

One of the greatest benefits of preseason training is the opportunity for team building. Girls' Varsity Lacrosse player Elsa Haakonsen '24, who went to Orlando, Florida, said, "My favorite thing about it was being able to get that bonding with the team before the season actually started, and then when we came back to Connecticut for tryouts, it already felt like we were a team, and it was a lot more cohesive than it would have been without preseason."

Boys' Varsity Baseball also attended preseason training in Orlando. New pitcher Jeter Andrews '26 said that spring training helped "get the chemistry going" within the team. "We went swimming, we went out to eat, we went shopping," said Andrews about the team's activities outside of practice. Beyond the opportunity to bond with teammates, athletes faced fierce competition from other teams. "It was nice to play other teams from places outside of Connecticut to see more competition," Andrews said.

Girls' and Boys' Crew trained at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. Similar to Haakonsen, Brecken Cullinan '24 emphasized the importance of this trip for "building relationships with team members," especially because being a successful rowing team requires rowers to be in sync.

In addition to having multiple training sessions each day, the team enjoyed time at the beach and at an escape room. Cullinan noted that one challenge of the training was the "humidity in Florida, which [made] it hard for rowing." She said, "My hands got pretty scraped up. Because you're rowing so often, twice a day for a week, it messes up your hands."

Unlike most teams that experienced warm weather in Florida, Boys' Varsity Lacrosse went to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and trained with lacrosse organization NXT Lacrosse. Boys' Lacrosse planned many team-bonding events, including a Dave & Busters trip, a night of bowling, and a Philadelphia Flyers game. With many opportunities for the team to grow closer, Ian Franasiak '25 felt like "everyone was being themselves ... there was no real competitiveness with lacrosse."

While players were incredibly excited for the return of preseason trips post-pandemic, Girls' Varsity Tennis player Maddie Chia '23 had a bittersweet perspective. For many teams, this is the first time in a few years that Choate has been able to field

trips of this kind. Girls' Varsity Tennis attended preseason at Saddlebrook Resort in Tampa, Florida. Saddlebrook Resort, which houses a tennis academy, offers extensive facilities for athletes, including 43 tennis courts and a fitness center. "It's really sad, honestly, because I would have loved to do this all four years," Chia said.

Nevertheless, Chia said that it added to the fun of her senior spring and set the team up for the official season. "Everyone who went, for the most part, hadn't played tennis since last season ... [preseason] was good for us cause it gave us that time to shake off the rust before the actual season," she said.

Spring preseason training for Choate's student-athletes is a great way for teams to bond and get extra training in before the season starts, while also increasing players' confidence in themselves and their team. "I think the biggest takeaway would be how important it is to play as a team and play into the whole idea of being a team and being there for your teammates," Chia said.

Reflecting on a successful preseason trip with Girls' and Boys' Crew, Cullinan said, "I'm really excited about the team and the speed we have this year and our ambition. I think we have done a lot of good work, and I'm excited to see what more we can do."

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Lapping the Pool

with Layden

By Leilani Gao '26
Reporter

Victoria Layden '24 made Choate history when she stopped the clock at 56.89 seconds in the 100 Backstroke race at the Founders League Championship, breaking the school record previously set in 1988. In addition to placing second in the event, the Choate Girls' Swimming Co-Captain also took first place in the 100 Freestyle, making valuable contributions to the team's second place finish.

Layden began swimming 10 years ago, following in her brother's footsteps. She started with recreational leagues and now trains with the Choate swim team during the winter term and with her club team the remainder of the year. "I swim six days a week. Through the weekdays, the practices are two hours, and, on weekends, practices are three hours — we mix in some dryland and strength training outside of the water," Layden said of her year-round training.

This past swim season, a group of supportive teammates and coaches guided Layden through the season. "I definitely struggle

with pre-race anxiety and anxiety before I swim, but I would just say that swimming with the Choate team has made it a lot more fun. The supportive community and the atmosphere that the Choate community fosters just helps me a lot," Layden said.

In swimming's intense training environment, athletes sometimes struggle to stay motivated. "I've been swimming for so long now that it feels like home to me; I am so passionate about it, and I want to swim in college, so that definitely keeps me motivated," Layden said, "but I also just love the sport — the lessons that it's taught me." Through swimming, Layden has learned to manage her time more efficiently and confront the inevitable losses that accompany her successful career.

Layden's positive mindset keeps her grounded as she continues her swimming journey and prepares for her final swim season at Choate next year. "I've had a blast swimming at Choate and being a part of the swim team ... it's brought a whole new sense of joy to the sport for me," Layden reflected.

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Photo courtesy of Victoria Layden '24

Victoria Layden '24 dives into the pool at New Englands.



Photo courtesy of Mr. Nolan Silbernagel

Layden and Head Coach Mr. Nolan Silbernagel at New Englands.

BATTER & TEE UP FOR THE NEW BOYS' BASEBALL

AND GIRLS' GOLF COACHES

By Annie Cady '26
Reporter

This season, Choate welcomed two new spring sport coaches. Assistant Head of Athletics Mr. Andrew Dickson, who arrived on campus this fall, is the Head Coach of Boys' Varsity Baseball. Long-time Chemistry teacher Mr. Will Morris is taking on the role of Girls' Varsity Golf Coach.

Before coming to Choate, Mr. Dickson was the assistant baseball coach at Yale University. Prior to that, he played baseball at a junior college and coached at other colleges, including Northwestern University and Lafayette College.

Mr. Dickson said that his goals for the team are improving every week and always playing as hard in practices as in games. He hopes to find success with the values of "discipline, excellence, belief, and toughness." With this in mind, the team can "[continue] to find ways to get better every day," he said.

Mac Cady '23, one of the Boys' Varsity Baseball co-captains, described Mr. Dickson as "very dialed in" and always ensuring that everyone is "prepared in an actual game situation." Cady is excited about the

new energy and ambition that Mr. Dickson has brought to the program and admires his acknowledgement of the needs of the junior varsity baseball team, which he recognizes as the future of the baseball program.

Mr. Dickson's most central objective is for his players to achieve their individual goals. With his college connections, Mr. Dickson wants to be a resource for players hoping to continue their baseball careers in college. Unlike at Yale, coaching at Choate allows Mr. Dickson to make "a larger impact on players' development" early on, and he appreciates the players' "eagerness to learn."

Although Girls' Varsity Golf Coach Mr. Morris is new to the realm of coaching golf, he is a life-long golfer and has had coaching experience at Choate as Head Coach of Boys' Varsity Squash. Together with Assistant Golf Coach and Humanities teacher Ms. Amy Salot, Mr. Morris is helping implement traditions and practices to keep the program "sustainable."

Because golf is one of the smallest and newest programs on campus, Mr. Morris hopes for it to be a "developmental program," meaning players should feel comfortable coming in without much experi-

ence and still find success coming out.

Mr. Morris also emphasizes the importance of "sportsmanship" and "the rules of the game" in a sport where etiquette is key. Girls' Varsity Golf Captain Casstatt Boatwright '24 appreciates how much time Mr. Morris dedicates to helping players learn the rules, saying he makes them play "correctly and honestly." Boatwright added, "He's really pushing us to be used to competition, so that when we have our matches, we are calm and confident with our skills."

Both Mr. Dickson and Mr. Morris are successfully contributing to their respective programs and enriching Choate's athletic environment. "I think the Girls' Varsity Golf program is going to show a lot of progress over the course of the season because of [Mr. Morris's] new practice plans and strategies, both for helping us with our swing and also with our mental game," Boatwright shared.

As Mr. Dickson and Mr. Morris begin new chapters within the baseball and golf programs, students and faculty wish both them and their athletes all the best.

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Photo courtesy of @choatevarsitybaseball Instagram

Mr. Andrew Dickson smiles on the baseball field.



Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Mr. Will Morris, new Head Coach of Girls' Varsity Golf.