



## SCHOOL UNVEILS PLANS FOR DINING HALL RENOVATIONS

By **Adrian Torres '25**  
Associate Editor

In the spring of 2025, the Choate community can expect a new servery in the Hill House dining hall more than three times its current size. Years in the making, the new servery will concentrate the food serving stations in one area, make space for an expanded menu, and ease the SAGE Dining Services team's food replenishment process. These changes will allow for more efficient use and movement within the dining hall by containing lines within the servery.

During School Meeting on October 17, 2023, Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis announced the details of the renovations to the dining hall, sharing the School's goal of improving student wellness and the overall dining hall experience.

The limitations of the dining hall's current structure became increasingly obvious, especially after the shift in the student daily schedule to ensure greater opportunity for all students to have a satisfying lunch break during the 2017-2018 school year. "We realized at that point it wasn't well organized. It was too small, and it was hard to

### Floor Plan – New Layout

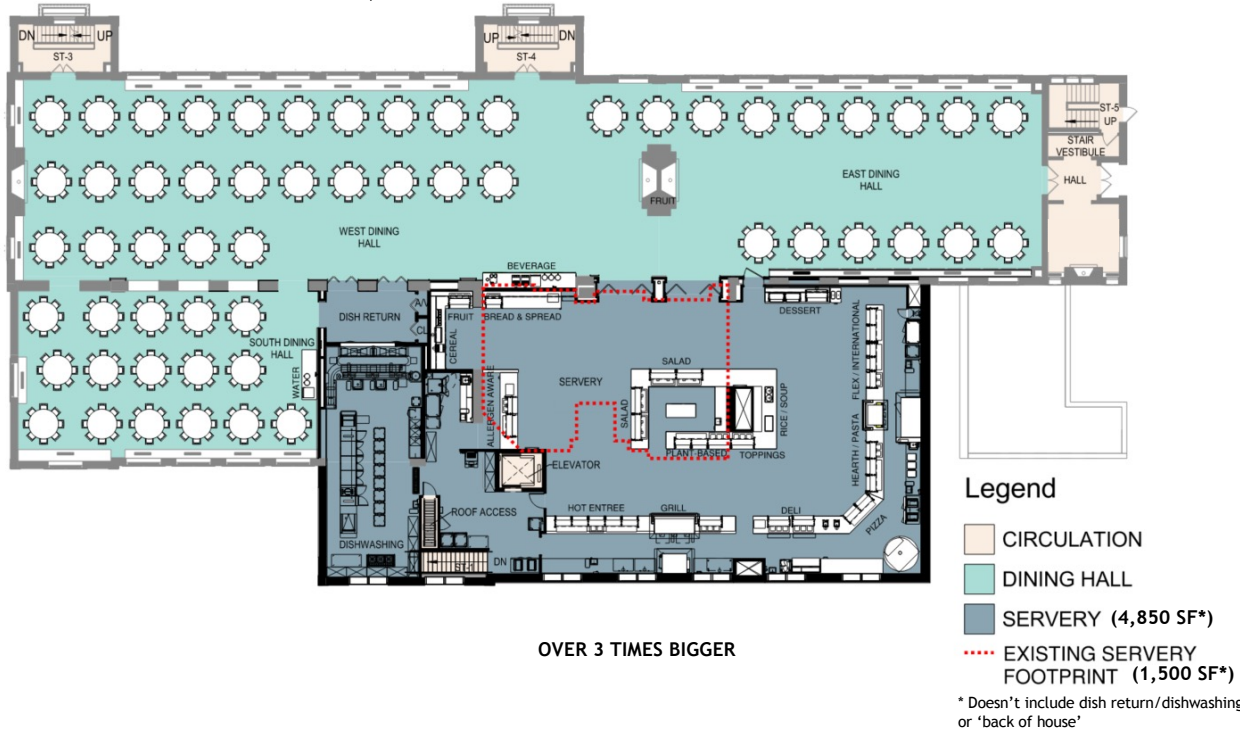


Photo courtesy of Choate Rosemary Hall

Preliminary drawings of the new dining hall showcase an expanded servery area.

restock the space as well," Dr. Curtis said. "It's also very hard to see what's on offer."

To begin the renovation process, architects from Bowie Gridley were given data from surveys collected by the Dining Hall Committee made up of student representatives, SAGE workers, and faculty

representatives. Then, the architects created initial designs for the new space to address the identified issues. On top of the expanded servery from 1,500 to 4,850 square feet, the new design included improved appliances, such as a new dishwasher, upgrades to SAGE's facilities and ability to restock

food, maximized natural light from windows in the servery, and a wider array of allergen-aware and general food options. "We have a diverse community of a lot of international students, and so a lot of people with foods that they're used to from home," Dr. Curtis said. "We wanted to have those

more regularly or just more of them and more options by having much more serving space."

After presenting their initial design to the community in the spring of 2023, the Administration made significant changes to incorporate feedback from the School. These included considering the use of

the dining hall's side entrance by Steele Hall and adjusting the internal arrangement of the servery to ensure space for people to move around comfortably. Considering "efficiency of the space and ease of use for students and adults," Dr. Curtis said the new servery will have more space for lines to form. It will also have a salad bar in the center that can be replenished from the inside while diners are still filling their plates.

Students are looking forward to the renovations and their potential to solve the dining hall's issues. "I'm excited for the renovations," Ransom Albertson '26 said. "I think that the dining hall we have now is a little small, and I think the renovations to the space will make things a lot more accessible." Leo Wei '27 echoed his sentiment, saying: "Lines get long, and more food choices and variety would definitely be nice."

Faculty are also hopeful for what the renovations will bring to the student and staff experiences. "I am excited that the servery will have more options for

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## CHOATE CELEBRATES DIVERSITY DAY 2024: "FOR THE CULTURE"

By **Anya Shah '25**  
Associate Editor

Choate's 33rd annual Diversity Day began with a pop concert in Colony Hall, followed by a keynote speech on hip-hop culture by the "Notorious Ph.D.," Dr. Todd Boyd. In the afternoon, community members participated in activities and workshops that matched this year's celebratory theme selected by the Choate Diversity Student Association (CDSA): "For the Culture."

The day's festivities was kickstarted by jazz violinist and Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator at the Kentucky Country Day School Mr. James "Maestro J" Racine's performance. Mr. Racine and his fellow musicians took the audience through culturally-defining Generation Z pop songs, such as "Party in the USA" by Miley Cyrus and "Call Me Maybe" by Carly Rae Jepsen.

Then, following an introduction by Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers and Choate Diversity Student Alliance (CDSA) President Tristin Hurst '24, the Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, Dr. Boyd, took the stage for his keynote speech.

Dr. Boyd's extensive knowledge of hip-hop culture and its manifestation in American society made him the perfect person, in Dr. Myers's eyes, to address the community once the theme was set. "I don't know a better scholar of popular culture," she said.

Dr. Boyd started off his speech with remarks on the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., saying that people



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

"Maestro J" opens Diversity Day with musical performance.



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Dr. Todd Boyd participates in student-facilitated Q&A session. often twist and misinterpret his words to support their own agenda. "Don't reduce him to an easily identifiable series of soundbites ... appreciate him in his full magnitude," Dr. Boyd said.

He also spoke on the wide-reaching influence of hip-hop and demonstrated how people use terminology from hip-hop culture without realizing it: "When something can affect the way we use language, and we don't even think

about it anymore, that's influence." He argued that there is a fine line between appropriation and appreciation, but one can still experience the culture with respect.

Dr. Boyd spent the remainder of his speech explaining the origins of hip-hop and how the genre has woven its way into American mainstream culture and vernacular. He spoke about former President Barack Obama's close association with hip-hop culture. "By the

2000s, hip-hop had become so pervasive, in so many ways, it would go on to elect a president," Dr. Boyd said.

After the keynote speech, CDSA member Athena Robinson '24 and Hurst led a Q&A session, in which Dr. Boyd shared anecdotes about his personal relationship with hip-hop. He discussed topics ranging from his experience as a college professor to cultural appropriation and representation; this discussion was continued in his afternoon workshop.

Community members were given the choice of 10 different afternoon workshops to partake in. Activities ranged from learning dances, watching documentaries, playing games, engaging in discussions, and more.

Four of the workshops were led by student clubs. Hillel hosted a workshop on cultural intersectionality in the Jewish Diaspora; Chinese Club, Choate Korea Friendship Association, and Choate South Asian Association shared traditional Asian games; and the Middle Eastern and North African Club hosted a cooking event.

In the "Student-Led Music and Dance 'for the Culture'" workshop, student club leaders from Hispanic Latiné Forum (HLF), Africanah, and Japanese Club taught community members traditional dances from their respective cultures. "The environment was very happy, and there was a lot of energy. And there was no judgment about people who could dance or not. Everyone was just having fun," Japanese Club Secretary Leanna Robie '25 said.

Dance Company President and choreographer Marissa

See DIVERSITY, Page 2

## Choate Students Engage with the World at Yale Model United Nations

By **Jolie Zhang '26**  
Staff Reporter

Nine Choate students became United Nations (UN) delegates for a weekend at the 50th annual Yale Model United Nations (Y MUN) conference. From January 18 to 21, more than 2000 students from all around the world, representing 45 countries and over half of the 50 states, gathered at Yale University for a weekend of discourse that simulated real UN deliberations.

Organizers provided attendees with a structured schedule that included mealtimes, committee sessions, and various educational and social activities. The heart of the conference lay in the committee sessions, where students split up into groups to discuss topics ranging from international crises to the economy and social policy. In these meetings, they engaged in speeches, debates, negotiations, and resolution writing geared towards addressing and solving the challenges that fell under their committee's scope. Students then presented their perspectives based on their assigned country in accordance to the systems and policies of that country.

"I was representing Switzerland in the Committee for Cultural, Economic, and Social Rights. I helped create a resolution on the topic of AI and human rights, fo-

cusing on algorithmic bias and AI privacy issues," Cindy Tian '27 said. "The challenges were talking to other delegates and seeing if you are on the same page ... it required a lot of communication."

Additionally, students had the chance to experience the vibrant atmosphere of Yale's campus, such as by attending Yale faculty lectures, joining campus tours, visiting art galleries, participating in workshops with Yale student groups, and dressing up for the Delegate Dance, where students spent the evening dancing and socializing with other delegates.

These activities added a social and recreational dimension to the Y MUN experience. "I had a great time and had the chance to meet some really interesting people," participant Alia Rasheed '25 said.

The 50th annual Y MUN conference provided an opportunity for students to not only engage in the educational aspects of MUN, but also to forge meaningful connections with students from all over the world. Humanities teacher and the MUN club adviser Ms. Cindy Okrah, who was present at the conference, said, "It is a great opportunity to be able to meet people you ordinarily wouldn't and to bond over this shared interest."

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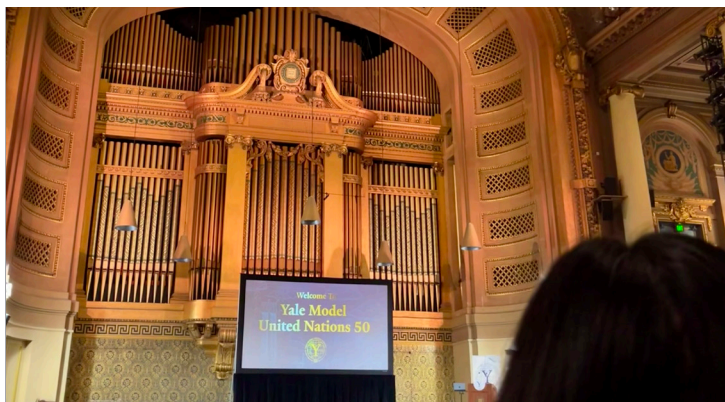


Photo courtesy of Cindy Tian '27

Students attend opening ceremony at Yale Model United Nations.

### Write it Down

Fiona Fu '25 argues for more handwritten assignments  
**Opinions (Campus) • P4**



### Pain and Polarization

Attempted Stabbing Encapsulates Global Politics  
**Opinions (Nation/World) • P5**



### The Lonely Hearts Club

The 117th Masthead is looking for love...  
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### All That Jazz

Mr. Noah Baerman's Journey in Jazz Piano  
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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Melody Qian '24,  
Evelyn Kim '25,  
and Emily Ma '25.





## DINING HALL RENOVATIONS AIM TO IMPROVE STUDENT WELLNESS

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kids [and] that the SAGE team that works in our dining hall will have conditions that allow them to do even better work,” Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott said. “I hope it will lead to healthier eating patterns and habits.”

Some considered the aesthetic upgrade the renovations would allow. “The afternoon light in the southwest area is so nice, and I’m looking forward to there being more windows in the actual servery area and also getting some of that light in other places,” Math teacher Mr. Jeremy Oliver said.

To begin the construction process, the School worked with several commissions and boards of the town of Wallingford to receive the appropriate approvals and the necessary permits. They also resolved the logistical issues around moving the utility lines for Hill House and St. John Hall, so that construction would not interfere with electricity, water, sewage, and telecommunication. During the fall term this year, construction workers laid the foundation for the expanded servery before pausing for the winter term. During the

spring term, construction will continue with building the outer wall of the expanded servery while the dining hall is in use; interior renovations will begin when the school year ends in June. The construction will continue through the fall and winter terms of the 2024-2025 academic year, and the new servery is expected to open in the spring of 2025.

While the Hill House dining hall is closed for construction next fall and winter, the old Student Activities Center (SAC) will serve as a temporary dining hall for the Choate community. The old SAC building has been vacant since the SAC moved to St. John Hall in April of 2017, so the building is being cleaned and prepared for use in the new school year.

Temporary kitchens will be constructed in the parking lot for SAGE to prepare food in, which will then be served in a servery in the old SAC. The building will support most of the same stations currently available in the dining hall and offer the same amount of food. Seating, consisting of tables on the lower level, main floor, and top floor, is expected to hold more students than the Hill House dining hall. “We’ll

do the best to make it as excellent as it can be, but if it’s not the same, we’ll work and bear with it because the benefit in the long run will be great,” Dr. Curtis said.

Some students are slightly apprehensive about dining in the old SAC. “I’m a little skeptical, to be honest,” Albertson said. “I’ve never been in it, I’m not sure what the space is like ... Maybe it’ll be a welcome change until the new servery’s complete.”

These dining hall renovations are part of a larger project to promote student wellness and accessibility to food, which includes the Lanphier Cafe in Lanphier Center and the Tuck Shop.

“[We are] generally trying to make sure that we have food accessible to students that will allow them to be their healthiest selves and support a healthy pace of life for students,” Dr. Curtis said. “Right now getting your food is too difficult, too stressful, [and] too time-consuming, and I think if we can address those things, make that efficient, and dare I say enjoyable, that would be a great thing.”

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Graphic by Grace Ju '27/The Choate News

## CHINATOWN TRIP IMMERSSES STUDENTS IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

By **Kaylin Lam '27**  
Reporter

On January 26, students enrolled in the Chinese 400 and 450 classes embarked on a field trip filled with opportunity for cultural immersion and emerged with a newfound understanding of Chinese-American history.

Departing at around 8:15 a.m., the group drove for three hours to the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) in New York City, which educates people on the history, experiences, and culture of Chinese Americans and immigrants. This was the first time since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic that the field trip took place, although it had been a staple of the course in years prior. The itinerary consisted of visiting MOCA, exploring Chinatown, eating authentic Chinese food, and, of course, drinking boba tea.

Chinese teacher Ms. Dan Zhao, who coordinated the event, said she chose MOCA after considering how it aligned with the Chinese 400 curriculum. “We have a curriculum with a chapter that focuses on important Chinese and overseas Chinese [individuals], which includes Chinese Americans too,” she said. “We studied the stories of people like Jeremy Yang, the founder of Yahoo, Jeremy Lin, who is a famous basketball player, and many others like I.M. Pei, the famous architect.” Visiting the museum allowed students to further explore this topic and the figures they had previously learned about.

Students shared how the field trip added depth to their study of the language and Chinese culture. Elsa Franks '24 believes that seeing all the exhibits reinforced everything she learned in the classroom: “[The trip] was impactful for the learning of Chinese culture because some things that we hadn’t yet touched on in class were heavily covered in the museum, such as Chinese American activism in the Civil Rights Movement of the ‘60s.”

Aubrie Williams '24 found connections between the museum visit and her U.S. History class, in which she studied the Chinese Exclusion Act and other events involving Chinese Americans. “I thought the museum would give a more human perspective on it, so I was looking forward to seeing the primary sources and pictures,” she said.

Another key aspect of the field trip was language immersion. The group went to a restaurant that served seafood, pork bones, and other authentic dishes. Students read the menu written in Chinese and spoke to the servers in the language as well. “Being in the restaurant and having to figure out how to order made us all think on our feet and try to use the skills that had been taught,” Franks said. “It was a completely unique experience.”

To add to what they had experienced on the trip, Ms. Zhao created a follow-up assignment for her students to reflect on their museum visit in the form

of a virtual Padlet. The assignment would include first-hand photos, explanations, and recordings about a specific takeaway from the trip. “It could be an object, a dish, something we bought on the street, or even a piece of art,” Williams explained. “I’m looking forward to reflecting on that and making connections.”

The planning of the trip was conducted by Ms. Zhao and Language Department Head Mr. Charlie Fuentes, who received positive feedback from student participants. “I think it was overall smooth. They made sure that we had a good time, but the bus rides were a little long,” Franks said.

Williams wished she had more time to engage with others on the trip. “I would love to be able to spend even more time talking to people in the museum and in restaurants, but I think my teacher and the organizers of the trip did a really good job,” she said. “It’s a good sign that my only improvement is that I would have liked to do more.”

Reflecting on the trip, Ms. Zhao encouraged her students to continue thinking about the history of Chinese Americans, immigration, and Chinatown. “I want them to see and to experience personally ... that what we learn in the classroom from the textbook is real, and has played a heavy role in our history,” she said.

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## STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN DIVERSITY DAY PROGRAMMING

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Jacobs '24 attended “Dance for the Culture,” a workshop run by STUDIO860, a hip-hop company based in Hartford, Connecticut. After the visiting dancers showcased their specialties and skills, they invited students to the Colony Hall main stage to learn some dances. Then, in a Q&A style discussion, students asked the dancers questions about their experience with cultural dance and music. Jacobs enjoyed how the workshop brought together people from different backgrounds and corners of campus and was surprised by the talent of her peers. “There was a kid who literally did a backflip on stage, and I would have never known he was a dancer,” Jacobs said.

Natalie Egan, a Class of 1996 Choate graduate, was invited to hold a workshop focused on understanding and discussing one’s identity while simultaneously connecting with others. She spoke of her own experiences as a transgender woman and business founder.

Egan then displayed the results to an interesting experiment. Using technology developed by her company, Translator, Inc., people anonymously shared three words that were



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Dr. Todd Boyd addresses the Choate community.

stereotypes or labels and three words they felt accurately described them. Going over the responses, Egan showed the audience how similar they were, emphasizing the importance of recognizing both one’s own experience and the experience of those around them. “All of these words up here are valid, and they’re important,” Egan said.

With the range of learning opportunities offered, this year’s Diversity Day was well-received by community members. “I saw a lot of joy and engagement in the workshops, opening musical performance, and keynote with Dr. Boyd,” Dr. Myers said.

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## Mr. Frank Tipton Fosters Understanding on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

By **Nilan Kathir '25**  
Associate Editor

On January 25, Mr. Frank Tipton, a teacher at the Dana Hall School and an expert on education related to Southwest Asia and North Africa, provided informational programming for students on the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Prior to his talk in Getz Auditorium, Mr. Tipton met with members of the Choate Hillel cabinet and core members of the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Club to prepare for the program and frame his remarks.

To start off, Mr. Tipton clarified that the program’s point of focus was not on the current conflict, but rather the historical context of Israel and Palestine and the lived experiences of both countries’ citizens.

He broke up the presentation into four sections: “the formative years,” “the surprise,” “the peace so close,” and “the hardening.” In between these sections, attendees had the chance to ask questions about the talk and the conflict.

One of Mr. Tipton’s goals was to foster empathetic and sensitive conversations through his talk. “Silence is not productive,” he explained. He noted how indifference can be one of the most dangerous qualities for people living in times of crisis to possess. “Indifference

is, in my view, the absence of compassion and the pain that people feel for not having their story heard,” he said.

Mr. Tipton also emphasized the need for support, alongside further education, on this topic: “People directly connected to this conflict need visibility and compassion.” He continued, saying, “This involves denouncing hate and recognizing that any form of antisemitism, anti-Arab racism, and anti-Muslim bigotry is virulent.”

Blake Steremberg '26, Hillel cabinet member and program attendee, agreed. “It is beneficial to provide an environment that students can feel free from discrimination and feel best supported,” he said.

To ensure he navigated the nuances of the topic with impartiality, Mr. Tipton disclosed his background as an educator in the North African and Southwest Asian regions at the beginning of his presentation and shared the history and demographics of both Israeli and Palestinian groups.

“I think the speaker did a good job of laying out the basic history of the concept, which allowed people to share their interpretations of what happened since everyone there [at the presentation] had the same groundwork to go off of,” Judah Brecher '25, another student present at the program, said.

At the end of his talk, Mr. Tipton directed students to re-

liable resources for further research and shared notable examples of humanitarian work in the region. One such example was Friends of Roots, an organization founded by both Palestinians and Israelis aimed towards “[making] changes to end [their] conflict,” as stated on their website.

Reflecting on the event, Brecher said, “I think there was a lot of conversation immediately after the speech ... the presentation gave people the chance to talk about the conflict in a historical context.”

Arabic teacher and MENA faculty adviser Mr. Yassine Benzinane hoped that through Mr. Tipton’s presentation, “students will become motivated to pursue independent research about the region, to appreciate that every presentation comes from a certain lens, and to also learn about the history through other perspectives.”

Mr. Tipton himself hopes that his audience will “have a humanitarian sense of the people involved in the conflict, some sensibility, and also competence to learn more and support the peoples of the region.”

“It’s a complex situation, and we need to put the people who are impacted by it first over anything else,” attendeee Andy Stahlman '26 shared.

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Photo by Toffy Praktikpoom '24/The Choate News

Mr. Frank Tipton presents on the historical context of the Israel and Palestine conflict.



CRESCENT MOON SHOPPE THRIVES UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP



Ms. Amy Carroll is the new owner of the Crescent Moon Shoppe.

By Rachel Fan '27  
Reporter

Looking for a place to shop for new jewelry and crystals or get tarot readings and unique herbal tea mixtures? Fret not, because the Crescent Moon Shoppe has it all.

With Ms. Amy Carroll taking over the ownership of the shop from her aunt last September, this haven for spirituality and self-discovery is stepping into a new phase.

Located on Center Street and South Whittlesey Avenue on the bottom floor of a charming old Victorian home, the Crescent Moon Shoppe has a history that dates back four years, rooted in the vision of creating a welcoming space “where people could explore astrology and spiritual items,” Ms. Carroll said. “It was about creating a space where like-minded individuals could connect and discover.”

Ms. Carroll admitted that it was challenging to transition into the owner's role. “It's been very busy for me since I took over in September,” Ms. Carroll said.

The period was marked by a steep learning curve, especially as it coincided with bustling downtown festivals like Celebrate Wallingford and the busy Christmas shopping season. “It's been a challenge, setting the shop up the way I wanted while keeping up with the seasonal traffic,” she said.

Under Ms. Carroll's leadership, the store has grown to offer a wide variety of products and services that cater to the bohemian interests of Wallingford residents. At present, it boasts an impressive selection of crystals for gemstone enthusiasts. In addition, the shop offers an array of jewelry, from tiger's eye earrings to pink quartz bracelets.

“Our jewelry allows patrons to not only wear beautiful pieces



The shop offers jewelry, teas, crystals, and more.

but also to carry the energy of their favorite crystals to them,” Ms. Carroll said.

The shop's offerings are not limited to just jewelry. Ms. Carroll has also introduced a unique selection of loose-leaf teas, for which she “buys organic herbs in bulk and mixes [her] own tea blends.” These teas complement a selection of books, incense, and candles as well.

Since taking over the Crescent Moon Shoppe, Ms. Carroll has developed plans to make significant changes to the store. One of the recent renovations was the transformation of the back room of the shop. “Over the New Year's weekend, we took everything out of our back room, which was filled with inventory, and we repainted it,” she explained.

Ms. Carroll aims to repurpose this space into a classroom area, with hopes of a shift towards more educational community engagement. “I

plan on having classes accessible for people of all ages,” she said. A classroom will also help the store facilitate upcoming events like in-person psychic consultations and tarot card readings. Pet enthusiasts can also find a deeper connection with their pets through animal communication services.

Jordy Miller '27 discovered the Crescent Moon Shoppe when she first came to Choate. She recalled purchasing a rose quartz crystal necklace there, which she wears daily. “I find that this shop extremely unique and that the other crystal shops in the area couldn't compare to it,” Miller said.

Ms. Carroll hopes that the shop will serve as more than a retail space to become a community hub where individuals can explore and express their spirituality freely.

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LYMAN ORCHARDS: THE PERFECT WEEKEND ESCAPE

By Rella Wang '26  
Reporter

Located in Middlefield, Connecticut, Lyman Orchards is a popular destination for those seeking some outdoor leisure. It has also become the premier weekend destination for Choate students, providing a myriad of activities that allow them to bond with each other and reconnect with nature.

Since its establishment in 1741 by the Lyman Family, Lyman Orchards has evolved from a simple, self-sufficient family farm to a diverse agricultural enterprise. Over the years, the Lyman family has expanded its offerings, which now include vast orchards of apple and peach trees for pick-your-own fruit experiences and the Apple Barrel Farm Market for browsing locally-grown produce and baked goods. Visitors to Lyman Orchards can also participate in recreational activities such as corn mazes, golf, sunflower mazes, and apple pie workshops.

“We have a whole wide range of activities throughout the year,” Mr. John Lyman, the owner of Lyman Orchards,

said. “From June through mid-November, we start with strawberries, and then we go all the way through with apples at the end, but in between we've got all different fruits.”

This past fall, the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team paid a visit to Lyman Orchards. “It's always fun to go to Lyman Orchards in the fall with the team,” player Eliana Li '26 said. “The scenery is super pretty and the treats are delicious.”

Lyman Orchards regularly hosts special events, including apple hunts, concerts, and trivia. During the summer, the orchard features fruit festivals, and this winter, they hosted a Christmas-themed walk around the homestead. Mr. Lyman plans events based on the fruits in season “to take advantage of the beautiful surroundings that [they] have,” he said.

Only a 14-minute car ride away, Choate students can take a welcome break from their rigorous academic lives and enjoy the selection of activities and fresh products at Lyman Orchards.

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Lyman Orchards's apple picking grounds were open this past fall.

PASSING THE BATON FOR THE MAYOR'S ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE

By Amelia Sipkin '25 and Eva Swanson '25  
Associate Editors

After serving 20 consecutive terms, Wallingford's former mayor, Mr. William Dickinson Jr., has recently left office, along with his Administrative Aide Ms. Joan Stave. Ms. Stave has been serving the town for even longer than Mr. Dickinson, retiring after a 44-year tenure. She will be replaced by Ms. Cori Hass.

The role Ms. Stave played in the Mayor's Office was essential to the well-being of the Wallingford community. Her duties included sending out press releases, controlling communication between public service departments, and representing the office's public relations.

“[Ms. Stave] is very skilled. She has a lot of knowledge about [Wallingford] and the services that are provided,” Mr. Dickinson said. He described her as “calm, focused, always appropriate and approachable,” and having a “good sense of humor.”

Ms. Stave allowed Mr. Dickinson to focus on bigger-picture issues by dealing with the day-to-day matters. “I wasn't reviewing every decision and making the final decision. She handles those things, so [she was a] true administrative aide,” he said.

Ms. Stave also enjoyed working alongside Mr. Dickinson as his administrative aide, which encouraged her to remain in her post for a long time. “He's just a great person,” she said. “[He] always had the citizens in mind ... He's just a very nice man, and it was a pleasure to work with him and for him.”

While Ms. Stave is looking forward to retirement and being able to spend more time with her grandchildren, she enjoyed her time working in the Mayor's Office. “There's a lot of memories. It's the people that I've worked with throughout the years, including the mayor, that have made this a really rewarding experience, and it's going to be hard for me to leave,” she said.

Earlier this month, on January 2, the Mayor's Office announced that Ms. Cori Hass was selected to be the mayor's new Administrative Aide. The selection process was extensive and included classified service protocols and interviews with six applicants as part of a collaborative effort between Mr. Dickinson and the new Mayor of Wallingford, Mr. Vincent Cervoni, to choose the best candidate.

Ms. Hass is a graduate of Wilcox Technical High in Meriden and holds an Associate degree in Business Administration from Middlesex Community College. She worked in the Human Resources Department for SensorSwitch, a lighting control company; in October 2020, she began working as a Human Resources assistant in the Wallingford Human Resources Department.

Since the beginning of her tenure, she has ascended through the ranks of the Mayor's Office. She was appointed as Executive Secretary in the Mayor's Office last March before becoming the Mayor's Administrative Aide.

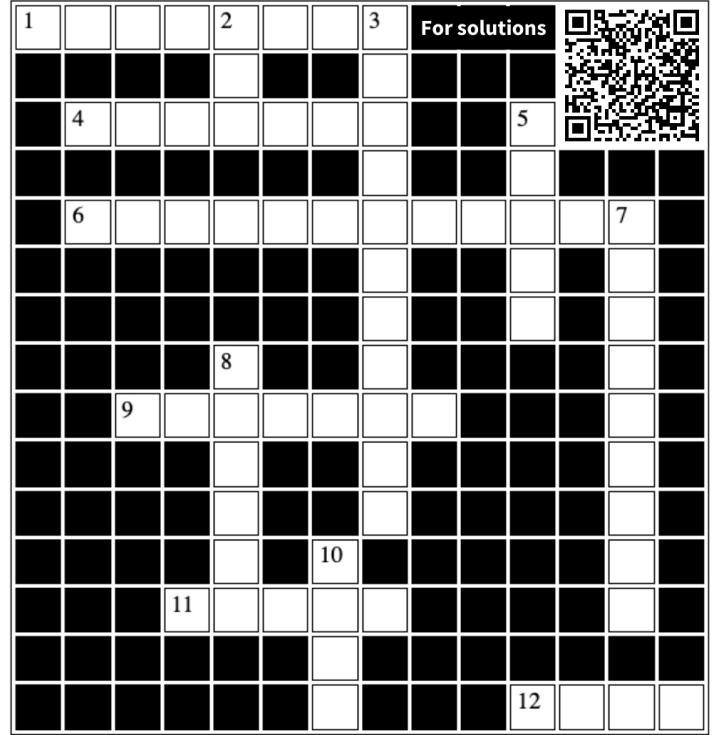
Ms. Hass's interest in the job stems from the variety of work involved: “Each day is different than the next, which I find interesting,” she said. “I've enjoyed every moment of my time here...my intention is only to perform to the best of my ability each day.”

Members of the Mayor's Office look forward to working with Ms. Hass. Describing her as “the perfect liaison between residents and the Mayor's Office,” Mr. Cervoni said that she possessed “the personality traits, demeanor, and capabilities [for the position], in addition to a strong knowledge of the operations of the Mayor's Office.”

“I am looking forward to working with Ms. Hass. We are entrusted with providing services to the Wallingford community, and she will be a great help in our efforts to enhance our town,” Mr. Cervoni said.

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Try the Crossword!

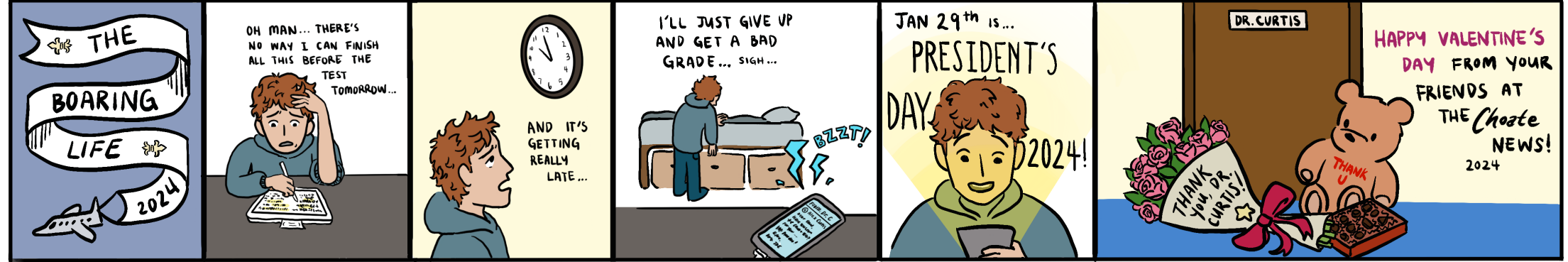


- Across**
- D in SDS
  - From Sesame Street To Jazz Elite
  - Determine your future here!
  - How we gaze upon our teacher-athletes
  - Fall time destination to keep the doctors away
  - Chinese in America, not chocolate in coffee
- Down**
- Dorm alternative for crying commuters
  - Yummy renovations for student wellness
  - Young artist seeking societal change
  - Todd Boyd's nickname
  - These girls \*stick\* together
  - Model United Nations conference host
- By Zainab Khokha '24

Clues from the crossword are related to articles published in this issue.



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News



## THE CHOATE NEWS



117<sup>TH</sup> MASTHEAD

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## THE DAY STUDENT FOMO



Graphic by John Jannotta '25/The Choate News

By **Deyi Meng '26**  
Opinions Writer

Being a day student at Choate Rosemary Hall, a predominantly boarding institution, is a truly unique experience.

Before coming here, I had only ever attended day schools. Like all of my peers, I went to school in the morning, attended classes, and returned home at around 3 p.m.. Classes were relaxed, and the community was tight-knit. Accustomed to this cycle, I came to Choate thinking my new lifestyle would resemble my usual groove. Little did I know, I was terribly wrong.

I was plunged into the unknown with no familiar faces to look forward to; my classes were longer and more challenging; and the school day stretched from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.. I was burned out, anxious, and I felt oddly alone.

I often feel disconnected from the broader school community, especially with limited opportunities for bonding experiences inside the dorm or after-hours. The fear of missing out, or FOMO, is real. Knowing I will never be able to take part in mug nights or spontaneous study sessions in the common room makes me feel like an outsider.

Additionally, day students face timing issues attending school events and activities, especially ones that occur late at night like the Holiday Ball (Hol Ball). Some of my day student friends were unable to go to Hol Ball this year due to the late starting time, and I was only able to stay for 30 minutes.

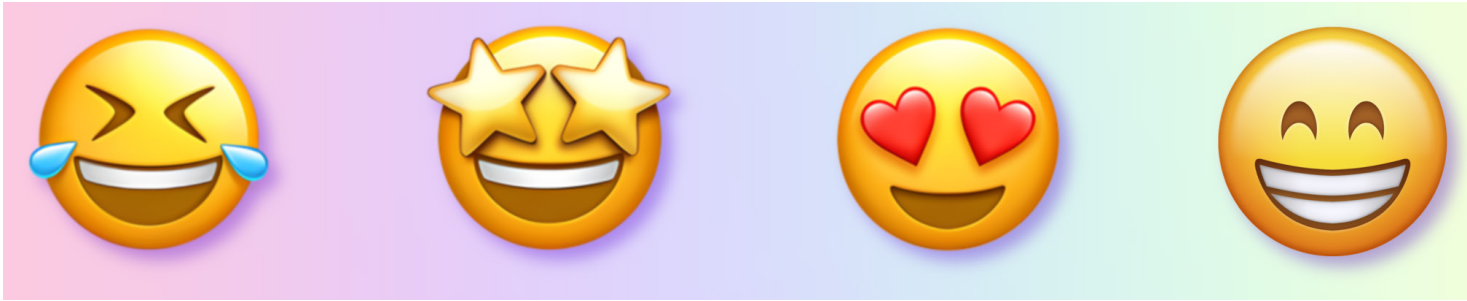
Choate already does a superb job of supporting its day student population by providing us with prefects of our own and a designated area in the Student Activities Center (SAC), but I believe that further measures could be implemented to boost inclusion. All-school events should be held during more suitable hours, and more joint activities should be organized between day students and boarders.

That being said, I am still happy to be a day student. I can return home every day, smell the familiar scents of my house, savor my mother's cooking, and sleep in the comfort of my own bed. Seeing my family daily offers a sense of support and stability that is essential during the tumultuous years of high school. I also enjoy having a distinct separation between school life and personal life. As much as I love Choate, everyone needs a break from time to time. Returning home allows me to recharge myself for another day of school and foster a healthy and well-rounded lifestyle.

There are pros and cons that come with being a day student at Choate. Having a sense of stability by being able to return home every day is nice, but it's easy to feel isolated when you miss so much. Though the day and boarding student experiences are inevitably different, Choate could invite day students to dorm-related events and host late-night activities at earlier hours to improve the day student experience.

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

## A NOTE FROM AN OPTIMISTIC FRESHMAN AND A NOSTALGIC SENIOR



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

By **Jai Midha '27**  
Opinions Writer

I know that winter term at Choate can often be grueling, especially when we're in the middle of it, but there is also much to be happy about.

Every day, we see our peers, friends, teachers, and faculty together, spending time and having fun wherever we look. It is the sound of their laughter and the smiles on their faces that bring me joy. To see people enjoying one another's presence is a unique and beautiful part of Choate.

The School's warm and embracing culture nurtures the next generation of kind, loving, compassionate change-makers. We are making important memories here: memories of laughter in cozy dorms, of bright chatter in buzzing classrooms, of the solace found on those late-night walks, and of the relief upon realizing you have no homework due the next day.

You can find happiness anywhere, and only you can decide whether to be happy or not. I find

happiness in the pages of a good book on a Sunday night, knowing that I've completed the day's work. For my roommate, happiness comes from reading poetry.

Sometimes, "necessary evils" are also required to achieve happiness. To fully understand the value of and be grateful for what happiness can bring, we must bear the sadness, pain, and disappointment that comes with facing hardships. As Whitney Houston sang, "To taste the sweet, I face the pain."

Even when times are at their hardest, you can find happiness in making snow angels in the fields when they are blanketed by snow or by running around with your friends in the pouring rain. Either way, everyone can discover something that brings them joy.

I implore you to try new hobbies, do something merely for the sake of fun, or explore new aspects of Choate because you never know what can and will make you happy.

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

By **Aria Ramnath '24**  
Opinions Writer

As I reflect upon what has made me most happy at Choate, I find myself looking back on the memories I've made these past four years.

I can still recall my first day of in-person classes my third-form year when I somehow ended up in Getz Auditorium instead of my Contemporary Issues class. I remember spending every afternoon of my fourth-form spring in Archbold, lying on my best friend's dorm room floor. And, of course, I will never forget the late nights I spent on FaceTime with my friends, studying into the wee hours of morning.

However, every time my mind travels back to those memories, I am left feeling oddly heartbroken. It is quite sad to watch my Choate years slip through my fingers, so I've started to focus on the present.

With each day that passes, I find myself experiencing more and more "core memories." For example, the infamous night

of senior sledding — packed together with my friends on a sled, we glided down the ice in joy and terror.

I have also found happiness in sitting in the senior section, a tradition that I believe to be wonderfully conducive to inter-grade camaraderie and senior spirit. Not only do I obviously enjoy eating with my closest friends, I also love spontaneously sitting with peers I may not know so well and getting to know them. Most notably, I once found myself eating in a Tuck Shop booth with gamer Joy Gao '24, football recruit Remo Marcaccio '24, and violin prodigy Shawn Yang '24 (quite the group!).

My early Choate memories, the kindness amongst the senior class, and the knowledge that I will be attending college in the fall all fill me up with bittersweet happiness. I just know I will be crying over all these moments at graduation.

**Aria Ramnath** is a sixth-former from Glastonbury, CT. She may be reached at aramnath24@choate.edu.

## DEAR HANDWRITTEN ASSESSMENTS, WHERE HAVE YOU GONE?

By **Fiona Fu '25**  
Associate Editor

*Disclaimer: I would like to preface my argument by noting that not everyone is able to handwrite due to various circumstances. This article is not intended to detract from the importance of typing accommodations and is written from the perspective of someone whose sole issue with handwriting is a cramping hand.*

After reading that headline, you probably think I'm crazy. You're thinking, "she's the type to ask the teacher for homework" (which, for the record, I am not). I say this because every time a teacher announced an in-class, handwritten assessment, I would react the same way you would — groan and complain about how hard and unfair it would be.

Although I will probably keep complaining because that's part of the fun of being a student, I've discovered a newfound appreciation for both the practical benefits and the artistry of handwritten tests, papers, and notes. Not only have both research and personal experience shown me that writing by hand is a much more effective way to learn, but I also find that in-class, handwritten assessments alleviate a lot of my stress.

Most teachers who require handwritten in-class tests

do so out of concern for academic integrity. According to Humanities teacher (and notorious paper-and-pen assignment-giver) Ms. Amy Salot, "The only kind [of assessment] that I would require written by hand would be in-class where I don't want my students to have any access to outside materials." Handwritten humanities tests can more accurately reflect a student's understanding of not just the material, but the critical skills required to digest it; the temptation to quickly Google something is eliminated, and students are forced to think spontaneously.

For example, in a recent in-class explication of Emily Dickinson's poetry, I had to demonstrate my ability to read and analyze a poem I'd never seen before — not simply be good at paraphrasing my notes, my teacher's analysis, or the internet. These tests also help to prepare students for standardized tests like the AP exams, which are done on paper.

In-class handwriting assessments also force me to focus on the content of the work, not necessarily the sentence structures, grammatical gimmicks, or word choices. While these are all crucial writing skills, it's a welcome break to save time by using my own vocabulary instead of a four-syllable synonym from a thesaurus.

The efficient nature of these assessments saves not just time, but the mental stress I experience with take-home papers. (There is no limit to how long I can spend agonizing over whether it is perfect.) To assuage any quality concerns, Ms. Salot, who has graded both handwritten and typed assessments, noted that the content of the former is equal to that of the latter, though the quality of students' spelling is bound to take a hit.

My preference for note-taking by hand reflects what is most important to me as a student; I care about retaining the most important information, not parroting every single word that my teacher says — research has demonstrated that handwriting leads to more effective memory recall. Furthermore, because the notes are written in your own words and handwriting, it's easier to remember and understand new concepts.

I also appreciate how handwriting forces me to be fully present. As fast and easy as it is for me to type, I tend to transcribe exactly what my teachers say or copy and paste from the textbook I'm reading. Note-taking by hand forces me to synthesize the information and identify the key points simply because I do not have the time to write out every word. This process helps me

to remember what I've learned and keeps me on task.

Finally, I like that handwritten assignments force students to actively utilize their handwriting and remember that it still exists. Call me old-fashioned, but I firmly believe that a handwritten card or letter is 10 times better to receive than the best-written email. A handwritten note demonstrates that the sender cared enough to spend the time and effort to write out the message, and because everyone's handwriting is unique, it is so much more personal. I, for one, stick every single handwritten card I receive on my wall, and it brings me joy whenever I'm down or lonely. Essentially, I like handwriting because it reminds us that we can still write by hand, and I don't want that culture to eventually die out.

Of course, like most people my age, I don't think I could survive without my laptop. I would've hated it if I had to write this article on paper instead of typing it out in a Google Doc. Nevertheless, I appreciate that handwriting still has a variety of benefits, and I am glad we have a mix of both handwritten and typed assignments at Choate.

**Fiona Fu** is a fifth-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at ffu25@choate.edu.



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News



## The Problem with Modern Politics is Polarization



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

By **Harper Marsden-Uren '26**  
*Opinions Writer*

Earlier this month, South Korean politician Lee Jae-myung was stabbed in the neck by a man asking for his autograph in a near-fatal attack.

After Lee, the leader of the Democratic Party of South Korea and the Democratic party nominee for the South Korean 2022 presidential election, fell to the ground, officials rushed to his side, covering his neck with a cloth and shielding him from the onslaught of people crowding around him. The man who stabbed him, Kim Jin-sung, stated that he intended to assassinate Lee to ensure that he would never become the country's president.

This is not an unfamiliar story — a crusader for a political cause launches themselves at a politician, believing themselves to be a savior of their nation, while political leaders stand at the helm of a social war. The attack on Lee Jae-Myung is not just an attempted assassination; it's a testimony to political polarization and its draconian hold on the status quo's political sphere.

Likewise, politics have reached a global breaking point. The ability to disagree has faded into obscurity; the concept of "common ground" is a myth of bygone years. This superiority complex hurts us; if we believe our politics are a dogma, how will we ever incite real change? Lee's stabbing should be a wake-up call. Polarization and the echo chambers we force ourselves into create nothing but violence and hatred in modern society.

We, as a society, are more politically divided than ever. Not

only do we align ourselves with our partisanship as if they were a peremptory hard-line, but these beliefs are made manifest in our everyday lives. A Pew Research Center study conducted in 2014 found that 38% of Democrats and 43% of Republicans view the opposing party with a "mutual antipathy," and one-third of both parties view the other as a "threat to the nation's well-being." It's important to note that this was conducted before the Trump presidency, which caused even more enmity than ever before.

What putting ourselves into boxes and finding the opposition as a "threat to the nation's well-being" does is create political silos, in which we surround ourselves with the rhetoric that we are always right and the opposition is always wrong. This is the foundation of the drastic, harmful measures that are the inherent catalysts behind events like Lee's attempted assassination or the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

This mutual antipathy has been brewing for years; political debates and jabs at the opposition have become fraught with disrespect and hatred. Consider the narrative that President Trump pushed about the legitimacy of President Obama's United States citizenship, calling his presidential candidacy into question on an episode of NBC's Today Show in 2011. This blatant disrespect, which he touted frequently during his presidential campaign, set a precedent of discourtesy to the opponent — nothing is off the table. By establishing this barometer for intol-

erance, Trump's constituents can feel spurred on by his remarks.

This contempt isn't reserved for just the opposition; in political debates for the upcoming Republican candidacy for president, petty insults fly through the air, vitriolic and inappropriate. Former presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy called Nikki Haley "Dick Cheney in 3-inch heels," while Donald Trump gloated that Ron DeSantis was "on his knees" for an endorsement. The painting of political opponents as submissive, often grotesque caricatures creates a foundation for their followers to villainize the opposition.

When a 2023 Pew Research Center study asked Americans to describe politics in a single word or phrase, the overwhelming answer was "divisive." It fractures families, erodes friendships, and destroys communities. Politics leaves people exhausted, angry, and hopeless. But this is not the way it has to be. For fear of sounding tedious or self-righteous, let me just say this: by encouraging political discourse in a healthy, positive, and open manner, people can learn that engaging with others across the aisle is the solution to fraught, polarized politics, and quantifiable change can be achieved through compromise. Nothing is dogmatic and everything has a solution if we listen closely enough.

**Harper Marsden-Uren** is a fourth-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at [hmarsdenuren26@choate.edu](mailto:hmarsdenuren26@choate.edu).

## IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE IS THE SOLUTION TO CITY CRIME

By **Francesca Howard '26**  
*Opinions Staff Writer*

Recent initiatives of strict federal law enforcement and the expansion of homeless shelters in New York City have helped to reduce the number of misdemeanors and felonies. Still, the safety of residents in the Big Apple is not guaranteed. More specifically, current policies neglect NYC's true adversary: its outdated infrastructure.

It's undeniable that crime rates have diminished over the past few decades, such as the 184,652 major felonies in 2000, compared to 126,589 in 2022. In fact, Mayor Eric Adams declared New York City to be the "safest city in America," citing significant reductions in crime rates.

And yet, these statistics fail to explain the perception of danger amongst residents, with concerns over Covid-19 being surpassed by fear of violence as the main reason behind workers' reluctance to return to their Manhattan offices and ride on public transport. Having lived in a big city, I know all too well the ominous sound of footsteps lurking and the echo of sirens filling the night.

Truthfully, the lack of safety in urban environments is likely linked to the deterioration of infrastructure and, conversely, the effects of gentrification.

At first glance, one might associate gentrification with improvements to infrastructure. It's true that as the attraction of higher-income residents tends to bring along renovations to buildings, investments in public trans-

sit, and improvements in amenities. Yet, New York City is in a constant state of deterioration. As one of the world's most prominent cities, there's no opportunity for officials to carry out large operations to overhaul the outdated infrastructure. The omnipresent scaffolding and flooded subways contribute to this phenomenon.

Urban areas affected by decay are no pretty sight: inefficient land usage, dilapidated buildings, antiquated subway systems, and graffiti-laden walls. This blatant disregard for infrastructure upkeep is about more than appearance; it signals a lack of concern for the area's welfare. It sends a message that further damage is inconsequential in an already deteriorating community. Neglected and poorly maintained areas also cause stress and anxiety among residents. Some may resort to crime to express their frustration or to earn enough to live somewhere nicer.

Meanwhile, clean and well-maintained environments promote adherence to societal norms and laws. Beautiful and functional public spaces encourage positive social interactions and community engagement. Residents who like their community will look out for one another and be less likely to harm that community.

So we know the problem, but how do we fix it? A better way to sustainably reduce crime and make residents feel safer is to prioritize inclusive and socially responsible city security developments.

Again, it all starts with infrastructure. There are numerous



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

ways to end city crime by simply restructuring the city — improve security systems, clean up trash-ridden streets, ventilate buildings to prevent the stench of marijuana, repair the underground subways, and exterminate the abundant rat population.

Take the High Line Park, which was a former railway refurbished into a unique public park. The collaborative efforts of community activists Joshua David and Robert Hammond, as well as the landscape architecture firm James Corner Field Operations, garnered support for this project. The result was vivid greenery in the concrete jungle of Manhattan, all while preventing the demolition of a landmark in the city's history.

To reduce crime, we must repair damaged infrastructure, remove debris, and improve street aesthetics and illumination. This simple yet effective strategy will transform urban areas into safer and more inviting spaces. In the long run, such improvements will help achieve broader urban renewal and revitalization goals. We need to blend these practical measures with strategies that address the intangible but very real fears and anxiety of those living in cities.

However, we must find ways to develop neighborhoods without gentrifying them and returning to square one. As cities evolve, the contrast in the quality of housing, education, and healthcare accentuates the divide between the rich and poor, fueling resentment among those who feel cheated by the system.

We mustn't overlook the well-being of the residents themselves in the process. The only way to prevent crime more effectively while avoiding the further gentrification of urban areas is to involve residents in the decision-making. Community-led developments should meet the needs of existing residents, not marginalize them. Neighborhoods should feel safe and comfortable, but that must be achieved through dialogue, collaboration, and inclusivity to ensure those benefits apply to all.

**Francesca Howard** is a fourth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at [fhoward26@choate.edu](mailto:fhoward26@choate.edu).

## A MAN OF MANY ATTRIBUTES: KISSINGER'S LEGACY

By **Arjun Pathy '25**  
*Associate Editor*

On November 29, 2023, Henry Kissinger's death at 100 years old brought about a mix of sharp criticism and celebration over his legacy. Perhaps one of the most divisive figures in American history, Kissinger is remembered as either the man who saved the world or murdered millions of civilians. However, looking at Kissinger's legacy through this binary of heroism versus villainy neglects to consider the unique context in which his world-altering decisions were made.

Kissinger, who worked under former Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford as Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, served from 1969 to 1975 while the threat of nuclear armageddon was of utmost concern. The Cold War yielded countless proxy conflicts in which the communist Soviet Union struggled against the capitalist United States to dominate the world order. Kissinger was put on the front lines as a foreign policy expert to sort out these messy conflicts.

His position allowed him to accumulate monumental successes and significant mistakes. Perhaps his most important triumph was the Soviet détente, which allowed U.S.-Soviet relations to slowly normalize. Through a series of arms treat-



Graphic by John Jannotta '25/The Choate News

ties and peace talks, Kissinger eased tensions between the two superpowers, arguably preventing nuclear war and prolonged proxy conflicts. In this case, Kissinger's preservation of human life is irrefutable.

However, this side of Kissinger's foreign policy was balanced with another side that reflected his often ruthless dedication to maintaining U.S. power on the global stage.

One of his most controversial decisions was to carpet bomb Cambodia in an effort to weaken Northern Vietnamese forces during the Vietnam War. Although Cambodia was not directly involved in the war, it suffered tens of thousands of civilian casualties. The ensuing chaos in Cambodia resulted in the ascendance of a murderous dictatorship and decades of political and economic instability.

Yet, in the struggle for influence that defined the Cold War, Kissinger's decisions, even if not successful in the long term, staved off communist influence in Vietnam, Bangladesh, and much of Latin America.

Looking back on these proxy conflicts, they may seem tangential and unnecessarily fought. Foreign interventions that have taken place during most Americans' lifetimes, such as in Iraq, have been just that

— poorly justified, tragic mistakes. From this perspective, Kissinger's actions are unforgivable.

However, one must take a more nuanced perspective to judge his actions effectively. The Cold War was not fought on U.S. or Soviet soil. Rather, it was a war of influence and fear in which a slight miscalculation could have had grave consequences. The war was not fought on U.S. and Soviet bor-

ders; it was fought in Vietnam, Chile, Argentina, Egypt, and many other countries where capitalism and communism battled for supremacy.

Without a doubt, Kissinger's lack of regard for human life in bombing campaigns and coups was detestable. However, when judging his larger legacy, one must imagine a world in which, instead of détente, the U.S. refused to communicate and negotiate with the Soviet Union. Or a world in which the U.S. and China couldn't engage in trade and lacked diplomatic ties. Like it or not, the world we live in today has been shaped by Kissinger's decisions — in both good and bad ways.

An undoubtedly bold figure, Kissinger made some of the most consequential decisions in world history. To condemn his legacy is to accept the reality of failed U.S. policies and murder, but it is also to condemn the relative peace of the last 50 years of U.S. international dominance that has yielded unprecedented economic and social development.

In light of this complicated reality, it is impossible to label Kissinger as "good" or "bad." Instead, it is best to view him and his decisions as a product of the tumultuous and uncertain era in which he lived.

**Arjun Pathy** is a fifth-former from Denver, CO. He may be reached at [apathy25@choate.edu](mailto:apathy25@choate.edu).



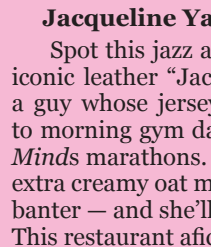
The Lonely Hearts Club

This Valentine’s Day, the 117th Masthead is looking for love. When they no longer have layout nights and editing sessions to fill their lonely hearts, maybe you can.



Lauren Kee ’24 – Editor-in-Chief

See a cute bunny hopping to class at 8:16? That’s *The Choate News’s* fearless leader. She’ll train you into a mahjong master, dazzle you with soulful marimba melodies, and enchant you with her six-hour-long Cantopop playlist. E-calendar date invites are required to keep pace with this busy lady’s dance. The “Kee” to her heart is keeping her company until 5 a.m. for layout.



Jacqueline Yan ’24 – Managing Editor

Spot this jazz and R&B enthusiast with her iconic leather “Jac”ket at the X, searching for a guy whose jersey she can steal. Must agree to morning gym dates and late-night *Criminal Minds* marathons. Bring Jacqueline a gallon of extra creamy oat milk — with a side of sarcastic banter — and she’ll fall in love. Planning dates? This restaurant aficionado has got you covered.



Erin Li ’24 – School News Editor

Her heart is full like her closet, and she is ready to find love. Erin needs someone who can keep up with her trendsetting and fast-rising bread. Her positive attitude and top-notch harp playing will win anyone over. Must be able to supply her Starbucks, especially when it’s a two croissants kind of day.



Helen Ryan ’24 – School News Editor

Don’t be fooled by this fun-sized School News editor — she has a voice that can steer boats and win your heart. Be prepared to compete (lose) in the NYT Mini and Wordle every day. To win her over, an endless supply of Diet Coke and Tuck Shop curly fries is a must. Plus, you gotta love her in all forms, even with her headache cap on.



Eva Li ’24 – Local News Editor

*Eva* seen this Local News editor donning her couture collections around campus or rowing by in the 2V boat? This KEC queen is looking for her future businessman, who will take her exploring the world and supply her with endless Royce chocolates. If you can handle spicy Chinese food and her 9 p.m. “Sorry, I have to go home,” look no further!



Anissa Wang ’24 – Local News Editor

This aspiring economist, with a different set of nails each month, is looking for a Thai-wanese basketball captain. If you don’t want to receive a vicious side-eye, buy her a silver heart necklace, put her initials on your jersey, travel with her, and match her 10 p.m. bedtime. But... I heard “little noosey” has already found her “steady.”



Amelia Sipkin ’25 – Ops (Campus) Editor

Chances are this ginger — sorry, strawberry blonde — Campus Ops editor’s angelic voice has made you feel like you’ve never seen the sky before. She lives in the moment, so forgo Snapchat and Instagram for two tickets to *Moulin Rouge* and a late-night trip to Juice Generation for an acai bowl. But, if you’re Jacob Elordi, bring her a ring, and she’s all yours.



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

Don’t let the Busan boy’s 500-pound bench press or buzzcut scare you. Secure a date with Choate’s premiere mathematician-scientist by reading his *La La Land* review on Letterboxd, listening to his psychedelic rock and jazz rap Spotify playlists, and commenting on his blog. Be warned: if you can’t break his heart, désolé!



Yoyo Zhang ’24 – Features Editor

If you haven’t seen this STEMInist whizzing around campus in cotton-candy jeans, pick up almost any school publication to find her name. Looking for her favorite love language? Choose between English, Chinese, Spanish, and Japanese, or better still, serenade her with the clarinet or the oboe (preferably both). Bonus points if you spar with her in boxing or spot her in the gym.



Laya Raj ’24 – Arts & Leisure Editor

Who wouldn’t adore a dancer who might just know the cure to your neuropathic pain? The grace of this biology wizard shines beyond the Colony studio. Want to be blessed with her signature deadpan humor and crazy concoctions (e.g., yogurt-covered Cocoa Puffs)? Get in line with a Lanphy chai latte in hand and insights into the latest Modern Math problem set.



Lauren Hsu ’24 – Sports Editor

Score yourself the perfect date with a cashmere shopping spree at J. Crew. Win Lauren over with an oat milk matcha latte — add boba for extra points. Impress this ex-swimmer by reciting swimming world record times. Finally, challenge her to a mahjong game set to Hans Zimmer’s *Interstellar* soundtrack. (She’ll probably beat you, but the goal’s to have fun.)



Junho Lee ’24 – Layout Editor

This panda is looking for his bam-“boo-boo.” Requirements: 5’4”; rivals his InDesign skills; says “Faaaaaacts” with him; and matches his unhealthy late sleeping schedule. What you get in return: this second Clarinet refuses to wear any of his jackets no matter how cold, so they’re all yours. But rumor has it, a certain ballerina has already hopped her way into his heart.



Melody Qian ’24 – Graphics Editor

Good luck finding Melody around campus: she’s probably in Colony Hall practicing her viola (NOT violin). This Phantom Thief of Hearts (and of cats, if you have one) will take you on elaborate Minecraft dates. If she’s not playing Candy Crush or covertly listening to the Undertale soundtrack with earbuds hidden under her messy hair, you know you’ve won her over.



Toffy Prakittiphoom ’24 – Photo Editor

With boundless wisdom towering over his stature, look no further than this competitive swimmer, charismatic scientist, and dining hall enthusiast. Ladies, to score this Bangkok bullseye of a man, don’t get caught breaking the Honor Code, keep your cameras charged, pull up to Burger Thursday, and stay firm when convincing this Keoghan that he’s an Elordi.



Emily Ma ’25 – Photo Editor

Sephora package? You know you’re in for a haul from this skincare fanatic. She’s longing for an iced matcha and boba buddy who can double as a chef at 2 a.m. when she’s craving some ramen. If your rizz is stellar enough, she’ll agree to take your picture. But first, cheer her on with a front-row seat at the Spring Dance Concert.



CHOATE’S TOP TIER PLACES FOR TEARS

By Steven Kee ’27  
Staff Reporter

Whether you’re looking for a nice place to let loose some sobs because you have a history essay due in 10 minutes, or because the dining hall was out of sesame bagels, read on to discover the Choate community’s favorite campus crying spots that *The Choate News* collected from a survey. Sometimes you just need a private place for a cathartic release of tears, so discover what options are available around 333 Christian Street.

Colony Hall Rooms:

Soundproof walls, large rooms, empty spaces, and paper towels: the practice rooms in Colony Hall have it all. Shawn Yang ’24, who spends much of his time in Colony Hall as a student in the Arts Concentration Signature Program, is partial to Room 124 because of its privacy. “I feel like the artistic atmosphere of Colony Hall lends itself to crying and emotional expression,” he said.

Kaylin Lam ’27 added that the L-shaped Room 112 is also an excellent place for a healing release of tears.

The Waterfall:

The waterfall, a short hike from the Remsen Arena, is a popular spot to let the water fall from your eyes. Athena Robinson ’24 appreciates this secluded cove — the waterfall is a great place to spend time alone in nature, away from the stress on campus.

Bathrooms:

The most popular destination for disappointment is, by far, the bathrooms. They are ubiquitous and easily accessible private spaces. Kristie Lu ’26’s favorite spot



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

is the bathroom next to Lanphier Center’s Elman Auditorium. “It’s such a quiet and peaceful place, so I can listen to my thoughts and cry it out,” Lu said. “Also, in my experience, people don’t usually go into that bathroom, so I feel safe.”

Amber Yung ’26 prefers the Colony Hall bathroom: “It’s just a lot better, it’s cleaner, and fewer people go there.” Alexander Schultz ’27’s favorite spot is the third-floor Humanities Building bathroom, Sunny Vo ’24’s is the Hill House bathroom, and for Ethan Zhang ’26, it’s the third-floor Student Activities Center bathroom.

Most people credited bathrooms for their privacy, as they have stalls with locked doors. So whether you just failed your math test or were rejected by your crush, there’s always a bathroom around the corner.

Your Room (or your car):

You’re there for at least nine hours a day, so the chances of you

ending up in your room if you’re crying are pretty likely. For most people, their dorm room is probably as close to home on campus as it gets.

Leah Han ’27 said she likes to cry in her room because she would rather cry in a private space than in places that are easily accessible by other people.

Day students who don’t have the luxury of having their own permanent, residential space on campus cry in their cars instead. Gavin Boudreau ’24 said, “In my car, I have agency; I have control over the environment. I feel free to cry in there because no one else will see me and I can just let it all out.” Another day student, Reagan Colton ’24, feels the same way: “I feel like it’s pretty private, and I’m a private person.”

Tennis Courts, the Black Box Theater, and the Cross Country course:

Other less popular responses still deserve mention. Jai Midha ’27 likes to cry on the tennis courts, especially in the cold at night, while Zoe Plunkett ’24 likes to cry on the steps of the tennis court. The Chase Bear Theater (Black Box) is also a favorite because it is usually empty during off hours and is equipped with speakers to blast music from. Boudreau likes to go to the cross country course when it’s raining, while some students prefer to go during sunset.

It can be difficult to find a private spot to process your feelings in a close-knit community like Choate. Hopefully, the next time you need a me-time moment, you can find one of these locations for some privacy. The Choate Counseling Team is also available to support you through your troubles.

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A GUIDE TO CHOATE’S STUDENT PUBLICATIONS: PART ONE OF TWO

By Sophia Liao ’25  
and Reinah Lee ’26  
Associate Editors

Choate boasts 12 active student publications covering topics from science and engineering to identity and satire. This is Part 1 of the ultimate guide to all 12. Whether you’re an aspiring artist or a driven scientist, all students are welcome to submit a piece of work to any of these publications.

1. The Lit:

Short for *The Literary Magazine*, *The Lit* has been a long-standing platform for creative writing since its founding in 1914 at The Choate School, before being joined by Rosemary Hall in 1972.

Originally devoted to creative writing, *The Lit* has since evolved to include artwork, photography, and QR codes to skits and musical compositions. *The Lit* welcomes both seasoned creators and those who are still discovering their creative outlets. In their biweekly themed meetings, attendees make vision boards for the new year, blind draw their friends, and create art to submit to *The Lit*.

Submissions are always open, with options to submit anonymously as well. All submissions are voted on by members of the club to “make sure that we’re publishing what people actually want to see,” Editor-In-Chief Cassatt Boatwright ’24 said.

One of the goals of *The Lit* is to drive up submissions and engagement, especially through the termly Lit launch parties in the Student Activities Center (SAC). Students can get involved with *The Lit* through submitting a piece from Drawing 100 or attending their winter term launch party on February 23.

2. Lorem Ipsum:

Known for its light-heartedness and ability to make its readers laugh, *Lorem Ipsum*

headlines its paper with its motto, “Don’t believe a thing we say.”

Launched in 2015 by James Rose ’18, *Lorem Ipsum* is Choate’s only satire publication, which aims to provide a humorous perspective on student life while discussing and critiquing it.

Since its founding, the publication has undergone some changes. “I think maybe we’ve generalized a bit and started talking about general Choate life instead of making fun of specific events,” Editor-In-Chief Chen said.

With goals of publishing high-quality issues consistently and upholding the cheerful spirit captured in past issues, the masthead of *Lorem Ipsum* hopes its writer and viewer base will increase. Chen is looking forward to hosting events, such as launch parties, and wishes to collaborate with other clubs and publications on campus to aid with the involvement.

“*Lorem Ipsum* is unique in that it contrasts many other publications on campus with its non-serious tone and use of satire and comedy,” Chen said. “I think that including things like quizzes and silly articles makes it easier for potential writers to approach the publication and write for it, spreading its light-hearted reach.”

*Lorem Ipsum* is looking for writers with a creative spark and the willingness to brainstorm outside-the-box ideas. Writing skills and the ability to meet deadlines are appreciated, but most of all, a love for laughter is needed.

3. The Choate Inquiry:

*The Choate Inquiry*, overseen by Co-Editors-In-Chief Katherine Chong ’25 and Will Colasanto ’24, addresses controversial topics in the form of side-by-side pro-con articles. “What distinguishes *The Inquiry* is that there’s a focus on contemporary political issues,” Chong said. “I think that healthy discussion and opposing viewpoints instead of reaffirming the

same beliefs are helpful for intellectual diversity.”

Recently, their most notable topics have included discussions on banning pornography, legacy admissions, and affirmative action. “The publication is more daring and has less restrictions on the topics that we discuss,” Chong said. “The whole point is to break through echo chambers on campus.”

The publication releases termly issues but seeks to solidify its editorial process. Plans include setting up an archive system, establishing editorial guidelines, and introducing thought-provoking topics. The masthead is searching for writers with distinctive voices and the ability to confront difficult topics.

“I think our masthead brings together people that usually might stand on opposite sides of the political spectrum, or have completely different identities, which is something I appreciate and want to continue into the future,” Chong said.

4. SciTECH:

Established in 2016, *SciTECH* (science, technology, engineering, culture, and hacks) is a platform for promoting science on campus. Pick up a copy of *SciTECH* to read up on Google’s LaMDA AI model, recent developments in NASA’s Artemis Program, or Alzheimer’s disease’s connection to sociology and neurology.

Managing Editor Isabel Wu ’24 hopes to expand the depth and breadth of the topics by allowing writers to choose their own subjects. “I really value student opinion, so having that option for people to come up with their own topics [allows] for more diversity,” Wu said. With an emphasis on student research, *SciTECH* is working to publish Science Research Program (SRP) and Environmental Immersion Program (EIP) features in a coming issue.

Published once a term, *SciTECH* is looking for writers who are strong communicators and are excited about science and its potential to shape our future.

5. Voices Magazine:

*Voices Magazine* was founded in the 2020-2021 school year by Emma Hermacinski ’22 to uplift LGBTQ+ voices and discuss LGBTQ+ issues.

“As the only identity-based publications on campus, it’s very freeing to be able to represent the LGBTQ+ community,” Editor-in-Chief Gigi Chen ’24 said. Many of the articles are journalistic, but creative submissions are also welcome. In each biannual issue, expect to find a mix of queer media critiques, personal poetry, pride-themed music playlists, and queer news.

6. The Artist:

Rooted in its mission of promoting diversity, identity, and culture, *The Artist* is a fluid space for anybody to unleash their creativity through any medium.

When founded in the 2021-2022 school year by Abby Lu ’22 and Audrey Kaye ’22, its purpose was to promote its mission solely through visual art. However, that shifted last year when the editors began accepting music, writing, and multimedia. In the fall issue this year, *The Artist* experimented with having the head editors annotate submissions related to identity to foster community.

“The whole point of the name is that anyone can be an artist and that art comes from embracing our identity and culture,” Editor-in-Chief Mikayla DaSilva ’24 said. “We’ve had a lot of interest from younger students — third-formers — which is really affirming that the direction we’ve taken is the right one.”

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# KATHERINE CHONG '25 EXPRESSES HERSELF THROUGH ART

By **Grace LaPlaca '25**  
*Associate Editor*

Bent over a fresh canvas, framed on either side by bottles of paint strewn messily across the table, Katherine Chong '25 begins work on her newest piece.

Chong, an Arts Concentration student with a focus on visual art, was first introduced to the medium as a child via classes in sketching, oil painting, watercolor, and acrylic paints. These classes required her to produce complete pieces in a short two hours, often leaving Chong unsatisfied with her work. Yet, it was this restrictive time frame that taught her to generate many ideas and develop strong skills in multiple traditional art mediums.

In seventh grade, during the Covid-19 lockdown, she discovered contemporary art. Unable to attend studio classes, Chong researched art online and discovered Ai Weiwei, a famous Chinese activist and artist. His commemorative piece about refugees, in which he installed lifejackets onto pillars of Berlin's Konzerthaus, piqued Chong's interest in untraditional materiality. Discovering Weiwei's art was a watershed moment for Chong, and her perception of art shifted from a hobby to a medium for the expression of personal identity and social issues.

Likewise, her portfolio is composed of pieces that represent different social issues. One piece, titled "Occupy," is about living on the margins of society. "If you're not seen or witnessed, how are you occupied? How do you occupy space for yourself?" Chong asked.



Chong's "The Death of a Native Tongue," which was featured in the exhibition at National YoungArts Week in Miami.



Chong's "The Life You Can Save" mixed media piece on display in the Paul Mellon Arts Center Gallery.

Chong's work addresses abstract concepts that may be difficult for those who aren't experiencing them first-hand to understand. "My goal is to take art, and make this imagery memorable, substantial, something that is in your face," she said. "But not too direct, like I'm telling you. I'm showing you. So it's a method of persuasion and helping people be more empathetic and planting an idea."

Chong also draws inspiration from personal biases. "I'm really interested in how people live through the same experiences and walk through the same world but have very different opinions based

on their upbringing and backgrounds," she said.

From January 8-12, Chong went to Miami for National YoungArts Week. She was one of 155 winners with distinction chosen from more than 9,000 applications across all artistic disciplines in the National Young Arts Competition. Different from other competitions where winners are chosen based on one piece of artwork, YoungArts requires applicants to submit an entire portfolio, including meditations on each piece and an artist statement, to judge each artist holistically. In Miami, Chong and other winners attended work-



Chong's "Status Quo(s)," which explores color emission and perception, features red and blue lasercut plexiglass.

shops and performances. She also met with the panelists who selected her work, interacted with other winners, and presented her work at an exhibition.

Meeting the panelists was particularly memorable for Chong. She noted the unusual nature of their first meeting: unlike most interactions, where people see the external factors of a person first, the panelists were introduced to her through her most personal, vulnerable ideas. "They saw all the things that were most intimate and deep to me first," she said. "They saw what I care about and what I do."

Chong submitted eight pieces that showcased her versatility as an artist. For example, a piece entitled "Status Quo(s)," explored color emission and perception. Part of the piece was drawn in red marker, while the other was drawn in blue. She submitted multiple serial images of this work, one taken through a red-tinted lens and the other with blue, to show the work comprehensively.

Another one of her submissions, titled "The Death of a Native Tongue," is about native language attrition, which is the process of forgetting one's native language. Chong drew inspiration from her

own experiences as an international student and the process of losing fluency in her native tongue, Chinese. "It's trying to capture that feeling and memorialize the cultural connection that I've lost over the years," she said.

The time frame for completing her pieces ranged from two weeks to multiple months. Her submission was a culmination of her work in Arts Concentration for the past two years, as well as over the summer.

Chong carefully considers the materials she uses in her work. For example, she is particularly drawn to paper and its ability to record history. "When you fold paper, the creases never go away," she said. "I think it's very romantic, how paper is a literal vessel for memory and experience, especially weathered paper."

On the other hand, she also integrates plastic into her work. To Chong, the artificiality and flexibility of plastic stands in juxtaposition to the organic qualities of paper. Combining the two very different materials speaks to the abstract nature of her ideas and articulates the intangible social forces that fascinate her.

Chong's ultimate goal for her art is for it to be a medium of societal change and make people more reflective and aware of certain issues. "Art is a great medium for that," she said. "It's taught me so much about how to bring something to life, how to test materials, how to elicit ideas and speak to people about my creations."

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# FROM SESAME STREET TO JAZZ ELITE



Mr. Noah Baerman teaches a private piano lesson to Jeremiah Olubowale '25.

By **Francesca Howard '26**  
*Staff Reporter*

Choate piano teacher Mr. Noah Baerman's introduction to music began with an episode of *Sesame Street*. As he watched Stevie Wonder take to the stage on his TV screen during his special appearance on the show, the realization that music was Mr. Baerman's true calling slowly dawned upon him.

In the following years, Mr. Baerman dedicated himself to music. He began learning the piano in second grade and quickly displayed a natural aptitude for the instrument. Mr. Baerman's zeal for jazz led him to Rutgers University, where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Jazz Studies in the 1990s. Under the tutelage of revered professors and jazz maestros, he immersed himself in the discipline, soon becoming a fixture in the Connecticut jazz scene and making a name for himself by playing at an array of venues.

Aside from performing, Mr. Baerman loves composing music. He finds that while playing preexisting music involves memorizing notes and replicating sounds, whereas composing requires a broader understanding of musical theory and how notes fit together.

Mr. Baerman's evocative compositions have become a conduit for his social activism. He is open about his experience with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), a congenital, irremediable connective tissue disorder. The condition causes discomfort in the hands, fingers, and wrists, which inhibits the strength and skill needed for playing instruments. EDS nearly caused Mr. Baerman to give up the piano, but his perseverance and openness about his condition have now become a powerful part of his narrative as an artist, inspiring others and raising awareness about EDS and similar conditions.

Mr. Baerman explained, "It is an amazing gift to have a bright future in spite of adversity. I hope to create things of sufficient beauty that I can give that gift back many times over."

His dedication to sparking passion in others encouraged him to teach jazz and popular music at Wesleyan University and, later, Choate. He relishes performing and teaching as he finds that the two vocations are closely linked. Mr. Baerman regards music as a "beautiful ecosystem," in which there is an intergenerational exchange of ideas and knowledge — artists learn from veterans in the field and pass their insights along.

One way Mr. Baerman shares his knowledge is through publishing instructional books on piano.

In addition to Stevie Wonder, one of Mr. Baerman's biggest inspirations is John Coltrane, a saxophonist whose expressiveness, spiritual depth, and work ethic are a template for who he aspires to be. Mr. Baerman hopes to be that same inspiration for the next generation of musicians. He thinks he has a broader responsibility to synthesize what he has learned, experienced, and observed to help students achieve their long-term goals.

Mr. Baerman considers himself more of a mentor than a teacher. He describes the two roles as related but separate. "You can teach someone how to do something without mentoring them," he said. He believes in the power of music to shape characters, not just careers.

But teaching isn't always a one-way exchange. Sometimes, he becomes his own teacher. When he struggles with a song and is frustrated, he thinks of what he'd tell a student in his position. For both him and his students, Mr. Baerman's classes turn black-and-white keys into a colorful experience.

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# Student Directors Bring Plays to Life at SDS

By **Eva Swanson '25**  
*Associate Editor*

On January 26 and 27, students and faculty filled Gelb Theater to watch the annual production of Student Directed Scenes (SDS), a collection of short plays chosen and directed by members of the Honors Directing class.

SDS is the culminating project of the two-term-long course for developing student directors. With six members of the class staging a production, the Gelb saw the work of directors Ryder Rubenstein '25 with "The Art of the Duel," Leanne La '26 with "The Future of Sincerity," Andra Ionescu '24 with "Murder by Midnight," Qin Caldwell '24 with "Because the World Needs Unicorns," Nick Rubino '24 with "A Tale of Two Spectators," and Grace Walters '24 with "Midnight Cafe."

In the Honors Directing class, students directed excerpts of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and took a deep dive into the logistics of theater production and behind-the-scenes work. "The first term, which is the fall term, we work on just learning the craft of directing," acting teacher Ms. Deighna DeRiu said. "In the winter term, I'm just there to help the students or ... [keep them] on track with what they're supposed to

do with their rehearsal schedules [for SDS]."

"The Art of the Duel," directed by Rubenstein, is a witty and amusing take on pistol duels in the modern era. Though it covers an intense confrontation about honor and character, the play portrays the subject matter comically.

"The Future of Sincerity" was directed by La. It "is essentially a romance scene set a little bit in the future, but it has a few twists and turns," actor Alexandros Antonopoulos '26 said.

Growing up in theater, La said she looked up to her directors, "who led the company with a vision." She enjoyed choosing and directing a short play, an opportunity that La would not have explored without the Honors Directing class.

"Murder by Midnight," directed by Ionescu, follows detective Dick Piston in New York City as he attempts to solve a murder in 10 minutes. Jordan Dodd '25, who played Piston, enjoyed the rehearsal process and working with his fellow peers. Namely, Dodd enjoyed working with his co-star, Valentina Askar '25. "We're very close, and it's been fun playing her love interest," he said.

Caldwell's "Because the World Needs Unicorns" details the story of a legendary

creature attempting to board a boat and find refuge from an impending flood. A veteran "techie," or worker of the tech booth, Caldwell was familiar with the typical constraints of a stage production. He directed with the an idea of what other elements he could put on stage with his actors, and his experience allowed him to both articulate and execute his vision for lighting and setting.

"A Tale of Two Spectators," directed by Rubino, follows two strangers who spy on their partners, and they become unlikely friends.

Finally, Walters's "Midnight Cafe," a vintage horror and murder mystery, opens with a screaming girl running onto stage covered in blood. "A little mysterious and unsettling," described actor Friday Acuna '26, "Midnight Cafe" is a gripping thriller that keeps the audience on the edge of their seats.

With a unique lineup of plays and talented students, this year's SDS treated the Choate community to an entertaining theatrical experience. "The whole point of SDS is for the audience to enjoy themselves," Dodd said. "I looked forward to the entire ensemble of SDS giving something to Choate."

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Connor Zeitlin '25 and Alexandros Antonopoulos '26 share the stage in "The Future of Sincerity."



FIELD REPORT

Choate Winter Record

81 - 39 - 5

Varsity Games

Girls’ Ice Hockey (13-5)  
vs. Millbrook School, 3-2

Boys’ Basketball (10-6)  
vs. Trinity-Pawling, 65-48

Girls’ Basketball (8-8)  
vs. Taft, 44-34

Girls’ Squash (9-2)  
vs. Sacred Heart, 5-2

Boys’ Squash (11-4)  
vs. Trinity-Pawling, 8-0

Girls’ Swimming (8-8)  
vs. Exeter, 119.5-64.5

Archery (1-0-1)  
vs. Meriden, 518-518

Boys’ Swimming (3-3)  
vs. Exeter, 73-111

J.V. Games

Boys’ Basketball (6-3)  
vs. Suffield, 33-7

Girls’ Basketball (9-0)  
vs. Taft, 35-12

Boys’ Ice Hockey (2-5-1)  
vs. Hamden Hall, 6-1

Girls’ Ice Hockey (7-3)  
vs. Kent, 3-1

CHOATE TEACHERS: ACADEMIC AND ATHLETIC WEAPONS

By **Lauren Hsu ’24**  
and **Sky Hinton ’26**  
*Sports Section Editor and Reporter*

Though we mostly see them teaching in the classroom, many Choate faculty members are accomplished athletes. Through rain, mountains, and woods, Choate faculty have braced many terrains in preparation for marathons and triathlons, including the notorious Ironman triathlon.

Physics teacher and Boys’ Varsity Crew Head Coach Mr. Pat Guelakis has had a packed triathlon race schedule. In July 2023, he competed in his first race, the Litchfield Hills Triathlon in New Hartford, Connecticut. The Olympic-length race consisted of a 0.93-mile open-water swim, 24.8-mile bike, and 6.2-mile run.

In late July, Mr. Guelakis finished an Ironman 70.3 in Augusta, Maine. The race consisted of a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike, and 13.1-mile run, which is half the length of a full Ironman race.

Next, he participated in a sprint triathlon (0.47-mile swim, 12.4-mile bike, 3.1-mile run) in Madison, Connecticut in September of 2023. In the fall term of this academic year, he ran four road races and is currently preparing for a fifth.

Mr. Guelakis ran cross country in high school and rowed at Trinity College. After focusing on coaching crew for years, he recently got back into competing athletically. “I’ve been here [the School] 12 years; the first 10 years here, I wasn’t very active. Ahead of health concerns, I started getting into biking, and that turned into running, which turned into triathlon,” he explained.

Mr. Guelakis dedicates around two hours a day to training, sometimes going on bike



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

rides with Chemistry teacher and Varsity Boys’ Squash Head Coach Mr. Will Morris.

According to Mr. Guelakis, a long-time triathlete, Mr. Morris first encouraged him to sign up for a Half Ironman in December 2022. Since then, he has served as a valuable source of support and information on triathlon training. On July 21, both teachers will compete in a full Ironman in Lake Placid, New York; this will be Mr. Guelakis’ first full Ironman race.

Growing up, Mr. Morris played many sports, such as soccer, squash, and lacrosse as a student at The Taft School. He watched his father compete in triathlons as a young child before enrolling in a physical education class on the sport of triathlons at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to fulfill degree requirements.

Since 2002, Mr. Morris has consistently competed in triathlons. With decades of experience under his belt, he is self-coached and occasionally trains with his brother and Mr. Guelakis.

In addition, Mr. Morris exercises with student-athletes to get more training. “For in-

stance, the squash team did a slow 30-minute run. I did that with them,” he said. “That was part of their training for the squash team, but it also overlaps with some of my preparation for triathlon.”

Humanities teacher and Sixth-form Dean Ms. Amy Howland is also an avid athlete. Ms. Howland competes in trail half-marathons, which consists of running 13.1 miles in the woods on hiking trails, sometimes at high elevations. Although this is only her second year in the sport, Ms. Howland has a rich background in athletics.

In high school, Ms. Howland was involved in track and volleyball. After quitting track to get an after-school job, she ran and lifted weights for fun and has continued the activities ever since. As a college student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, she rowed for two years.

After graduating college, Ms. Howland moved to Seattle and played on a women’s rugby team for eight years. In her 20s, she became interested in

running marathons and triathlons and has since racked up 15 years of experience.

To prepare for competitions and maintain a strict training schedule, Ms. Howland uses a fitness app called TrainingPeaks, where she buys training plans that fit the duration of the race and how long she wants to train for.

Ms. Howland typically runs outside for one to three hours with her dog, and occasionally, a friend. She and French teacher Dr. Katie Jewett are preparing to run a half marathon road race in the spring.

Ms. Howland’s favorite part of the sport is spending time outside on the trails. “It’s just beautiful to be in the woods. I get to see the woods in different seasons and change throughout the course of the year, and it’s so peaceful,” she said.

Balancing her training with being a dean, teaching, and raising two children is challenging. Ms. Howland typically wakes up at 5 a.m. to run and credits her partner for supporting her athletic pursuits.

“I have a really amazing partner who is cool with me going on a Saturday and leaving him at the house all morning with the kids while I drive into a mountain and run for three hours,” she said.

Ms. Howland, who used to wake up early to rollerblade before school as a teenager, is not intimidated by her early training hours. “One of the keys is that if you have a busy life, you can’t put it off; if you put it off, something will always come up or get in the way,” she said.

However, the grueling nature of distance sports can trigger a wide range of feelings. Over a decade ago, Ms. Howland ran the Maine Half Marathon in Portland, Maine on a cold day in heavy rain. “The last mile or two, I was just crying; I wanted to stop,” she recalled. “I was so miserable because of the weather and my own headspace. Sometimes it’s brutal, and you just have to put one foot in front of the other.”

Mr. Guelakis experienced similarly intense emotions running the final portion of his first Half Ironman. With three more miles remaining at mile 10, he began to cry. “I was like, ‘Oh my god, I’m going to finish this.’ It was going very well, and it was emotional,” he said. “All of that was pushing me to cross the finish line. And then I crossed the finish line, cried for a good three minutes, and then ate some food and went home.”

While crossing the finish line comes with pride and joy, the moments right before the start of a race are most special for Mr. Morris. “You’ve had this amazing journey that’s behind you that’s prepared you for it... I spend those moments before the race with one of the most profound senses of gratitude that I think you could ever feel,” he said.

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GIRLS’ VARSITY HOCKEY RULES THE RINK

By **Lucy Domingo ’26**  
*Reporter*

Girls’ Varsity Hockey is going strong this season with a record of 12-5 (as of January 27), including a five-game winning streak. Their success this winter is rooted in their resilience, strong team bond, and diligent practices.

One standout moment was their 2-1 win over Phillips Academy — Andover on January 6. Although Choate was tied 1-1 with Andover for nearly the entire game, Caroline Holm ’24 scored the winning goal with just a couple minutes left on the clock. Not having won against Andover since the 2015-2016 season, this was an important victory for Girls’ Varsity Hockey.

Although the game took place on Andover’s campus, Choate’s other ice hockey teams were present to support from the sidelines. Head Coach Laura DiCarlo recalled the lively atmosphere of the game. “Our Boys’ Varsity team played right before us and upset Andover for the win, so we had some really good energy going.”

Goalkeeper Elsa Haakonsen ’24 appreciated the excitement in the air. “You could tell from the beginning of the game that it was going to be a good one; it was just electric... It was a great way to start January,” Haakonsen said.

Another memorable match for the team was their victory over The Hill School on January 12. A massive third-period comeback, with goals from Co-Captain Norah Morris ’24 and Maggie Swanson ’26, earned Choate a 3-1 win.



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Girls’ Varsity Hockey plays Pomfret School on December 13, 2023.

Goalkeeper Clara Kang ’26 enjoyed the Choate fans’ school spirit during the gold-themed Friday night home game. “Everybody was so fired up. The bench was going crazy, too. I loved it. I thought we had a good team vibe.”

Coach DiCarlo acknowledged the team’s improved record compared to previous years. “We’ve always been a competitive team, but this year, we are finding ways to win, which has been a difference-maker for us. You can see it in our record,” she said.

Coach DiCarlo’s coaching style focuses on individual skills, team dynamics, and effective communication. She emphasized that all players, regardless of how much time they spend on the ice, have a place on the team. “It’s still

important to be ready and to know that they have a valuable role on the team,” she said. “Getting everybody to buy into that has been the most important piece of our success.”

In addition to leadership from the senior class, Coach DiCarlo also appreciated contributions from underclassman players, both on and off the ice.

“We have girls that are freshman and sophomores that are contributing in different ways, whether that’s on the scoreboard or just making really good plays and being leaders in the locker room,” she said.

Despite their frequent wins, the team has faced hurdles this season, from injuries and sickness to tough opponents. “It’s a resilient group, and we’ve done a lot of work to be able to support each other and bring each

other up. It hasn’t all been great, but we’ve worked through the tough moments, whether that’s in practice [or] in games, and tried to be as mentally tough as we can,” Coach DiCarlo said.

A game against Canterbury School on January 20 tested the team’s resilience when multiple players on the team suffered injuries. Even with three injured defenders unable to play, the team showcased their competitive spirit and secured a 7-2 victory.

Morris emphasized the importance of playing their best regardless of circumstances. “It’s a very competitive league. The challenge for us is always being on top of our game; there’s no game off, we always have to be ready to go,” she said.

The team’s persistence is reflected in their attitude to-

wards practice. The time commitment is significant: practice takes place six days a week, in addition to two weightlifting sessions and two to three games per week.

During practice, the team focuses on making continuous improvements. “One of the goals we had was to get a little better every day, so we always come into practice ready to work hard,” Morris said.

According to Haakonsen, the team’s positive attitude is a motivating factor during practice. “Everyone always tries to bring the energy. We say, ‘Bring 100 percent of what you have that day,’ and I think we do a great job of doing that,” she said.

With a month remaining in the season, the team will continue to work towards their goals of making it to the playoffs and winning the New England Preparatory School Girls’ Ice Hockey Association (NEPSGIIHA) Championships. “We want to win, win big, win it all. But we’re taking it game by game and focusing on what’s next,” Haakonsen shared.

The team’s friendship and shared love for the sport of hockey shine through their success. Morris especially appreciates the presence of her teammates during training. “My favorite part is the team dynamic. We get along really well, and we are all super close,” she said. “We all love to play hockey, so it’s fun doing that together as a team with some of your best friends.”

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