



## CHOATE STUDENTS EMBRACE LEARNING ABROAD

By **Sofia Rubenstein '27** and  
**Ha Jin Sung '28**  
*Reporter and Copy Editor*

Over spring break, Choate students embarked on various science, history, and cultural journeys abroad — each offering unique global experiences. From the rich marine life in Bermuda to the cultural heritage of Bhutan and the history of Ireland, students explored topics ranging from environmental science to cultural traditions. Students returned to campus with a broadened perspective, closer relationships with their peers and teachers, and memories that last a lifetime.

### Marine Science Research in Bermuda

During Choate's science trip abroad, students traveled to Bermuda and dove straight into researching local environmental impacts. "We were exposed to current research, met with professors and students, contributed to citizen science projects that are happening in Bermuda, and got to experience a whole new ecosystem," Science teacher and chaperone on the trip Mr. Chris Aguiar '11 said.

A highlight of the trip, the group had the opportunity to explore marine life and observed native organisms while snorkeling at North Rock. "[We saw] some of the most beautiful coral in a really unique and pretty untouched ecosystem," Mr. Aguiar said. At the same time, "We got to see how climate change is damaging [corals] firsthand, and it's really sad — but it's really important to see," Karli Batty '26 said.



Photo courtesy of Mr. Chris Aguiar '11

Students in Bermuda stand on stage with an autonomous underwater vehicle.

Students also collected samples from two beaches to analyze in the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS) lab as part of a citizen science project on the impact of microplastics on the ocean. Mr. Aguiar said, "There has also been a lot of research lately on microplastics and impacts on human health and other organisms ... One of the most rewarding [activities] that we did was being able to contribute [to that research]."

Science teacher Ms. Mallika Beach-Mehrotra, another chaperone on the trip, emphasized the hands-on experiences that the students engaged in. "There was a really nice mix of doing hands-on things and learning that I think all the students were really visibly interested and engaged in," she said. "Getting people to get to experience the true ocean or snorkeling and

getting to have those moments is really special."

### Tradition and Innovation in Bhutan

In Bhutan, students embarked on an in-depth exploration of Bhutan's cultural heritage and traditional art, which is expressed through a wide range of artwork on Bhutanese buildings. Students visited traditional art schools, learned from the religious practices of Bhutanese monks, and immersed themselves in cultural activities.

Throughout the trip, the group learned how various wellness and mental health initiatives in the country boost Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index. "We sat in on a wellness lesson, and it was just about talking about and understanding our emotions, and understanding how no emotion that you feel is good or bad. I thought that

that was a really important and powerful lesson," Sophie Eliades '27 said.

Along with happiness and well-being initiatives, students explored how Bhutan culture incorporates traditional art into every building and home in Bhutan. "As soon as you land [in Bhutan], everything, every building has art. Every single one ... even if it was simple, it was still there," Technical Director Mr. Mark Gostomski, a chaperone on the trip, said. The continuation of traditional art showcased how "even as we move forward in technology, traditional art forms can still move forward with us," Mr. Gostomski said.

The group also had opportunities to engage with the local community and immerse themselves in culture throughout the trip. Bowen Jin '26 said, "We got to try cooking their local dish [ema datshi] our-

selves." On the last night, the group also "did karaoke with [students] at a Bhutanese high school at night, and it was really fun ... It was lovely to bond with them," Eliades said.

### Peace is a Process in Northern Ireland

The week-long trip to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland offered an intimate look at the peace process in Northern Ireland. With the guidance of All-PeopleBeHappy (APBH), a volunteer program that works with locals to provide visitors with an intercultural experience, students explored religious neighborhoods, visited historical sites and national parks, and learned more about Gaelic culture.

Students had the opportunity to take a first-hand look at the history of the "Troubles" in Ireland by meeting with ex-combatants and

youth workers with experiences in both the conflict and the peace processes. They also worked alongside community organizations focusing on peace and anti-prejudice activities in the Belfast and Derry communities. HPRSS teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano, a chaperone on the trip, said, "There is still lasting sectarianism and violence between Protestant loyalist unionists, and Catholic republican nationalists, and it was seen very clearly in the communities that we visited."

The group also interacted with locals and immersed themselves in the community. "[The locals] really wanted to teach us about their country, including the history. We met these little kids at a youth center, and they danced with us," Yui Sugimoto '28 said. "They started playing music, and we all danced with them. It was just a really nice experience because they were all so welcoming, and they wanted to hang out with us and didn't judge us or anything."

All around the world, students gained firsthand knowledge and formed connections with the people and environments they encountered. These trips highlighted the importance of stepping outside the classroom to understand the world through a new lens. As these students return to campus, they bring with them stories and new perspectives that will impact others in and outside of the classroom.

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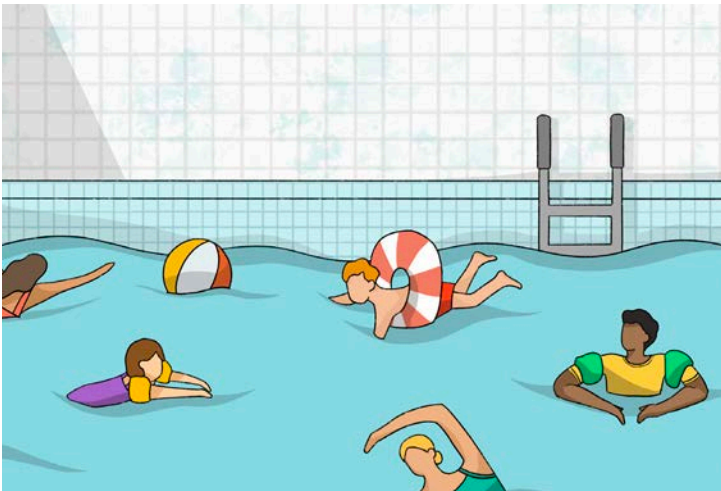
## CHOATE SPLASHES JOY WITH SOCIAL SABBY

By **Sabrina Liu '28**  
*Reporter*

Choate recently reintroduced its adaptive swimming program in collaboration with Social Sabby, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing resources and programming for children on the autism spectrum. The program, held every Sunday at the Larry Hart Pool, offers a unique opportunity for students to volunteer and engage with local children with disabilities, fostering social connections and inclusivity within the Wallingford community.

Social Sabby is a nonprofit organization that provides resources and programming specifically designed for individuals on the autism spectrum. Founded in memory of a young man with autism, Social Sabby offers various activities throughout the year, including summer camps and after-school programs. Choate's partnership with Social Sabby ensures that children with special needs in the Wallingford community can access the resources and experiences they might otherwise not have access to.

This partnership marks the revival of Choate's Special Population Swim program, which had been a part of the School for over two decades before being paused during the Covid-19 pandemic. After the hiatus, Janice Wu '25, Zaki Shamsi '26, Kate Tortorella '26, Nani Keyes



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

'25, and Alex Zhao '26, took it upon themselves to reintroduce the program.

Community Service Advisory Committee member Mr. Ben Small emphasized the importance of this initiative, noting that students had previously enjoyed the opportunity to engage with children with disabilities through Social Sabby. "It's really great that it's happening again, and Sunday was a really big success," Mr. Small said. "There were so many smiles on the faces of both the swimmers and the mentors from Choate."

Students involved in the program act as mentors, helping the swimmers build social skills and enjoy a supportive, fun environment. Girls' Varsity Swimmer Claire Liu '28 and Girls' Varsity Swimming Captain Nicha Tongdee '26 were partnered up, and they spent their time teaching swimmers the proper tech-

niques to dive as far as possible. "I just really love that I could use my passion to engage with other kids," Liu said.

Emerson Renshaw '27, another student volunteer, spent his time swimming and playing in the water. "[My swimmer] just loves swimming away and going into the deep end. We would play with the paddle boards, jump in the pool, and catch and throw the beach balls," he said.

Although Social Sabby Swim at Choate is still in its early stages, its success so far has encouraged plans for future expansion. As the program continues, it is clear that the connections being made will have a lasting impact on the students and the children they mentor.

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## Andy Stahlman '26 Achieves Debate Ambitions in Malaysia

By **Chloe Yeung '28**  
*Reporter*

From March 30-April 6, Andy Stahlman '26 attended the World Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships (WIDPSC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The WIDPSC is a prestigious qualification-based international debate and public speaking competition featuring the best high school speakers from around the globe. Students participated in parliamentary-style debates, impromptu speaking, interpretive reading, and either persuasive speaking or after-dinner speaking.

Qualifying for WIDPSC was no easy feat — Stahlman has been working towards representing Team USA since his freshman year when he joined the Debate Team. "A lot of my friends were debaters. My mentors were debaters. And so I really spend my weekends competing like [it's] a sports team. Debate is a [huge] part of my life now," he said.

Debate Team advisor Dr. Amber Hodge accompanied Stahlman on the trip. "I've been working with [Stahlman] since he was a freshman ... He's always been super committed ... so I think he knows what it takes to compete [at a high level]," Dr. Hodge said. In preparation for the big event, Stahlman met with Dr. Hodge every week to perfect his speeches.

Two years later, Stahlman officially earned a bid into the Worlds competition after receiving con-



Photo courtesy of Andy Stahlman '26

Andy Stahlman '26 poses with Team Thailand and Team Bermuda.

sistently high scores in advanced tournaments. "I've been to almost every tournament this year, [so] getting that bid was super meaningful because it validated all the work that I've put into this year," Stahlman said.

Amidst the competition, Stahlman developed strong bonds with both his teammates and international competitors whom he now calls his friends. "Exploring and learning more about Malaysia and all the nations that attended the championships together helped unite us in a uniquely strong way," Stahlman said. During their breaks, they also participated in various activities to support the local community: "Team Thailand, Team Bermuda, [and I] built chairs together on the first day ... Our friendship really just blossomed from there, and I think these are friendships that will last a lifetime," Stahlman said.

After days of competing, Stahlman earned a spot in the Finals round for impromptu speaking,

earning him a Top 16 spot in the world. Reflecting on his experience, Stahlman recalls that participating in Worlds has forever been his ultimate goal in debate. "Every freshman debater dreams of going to Worlds," he said. "To be here means so much. It's almost surreal."

Having achieved his ultimate goal, Stahlman aspires to place high on the leaderboard and win Worlds next year. "Now that I've achieved some of what I thought was impossible, [I want to] set the bar higher for next year and hopefully win Worlds," he said.

For other debaters and individuals in the Choate community, Dr. Hodge hopes that they can feel inspired by Stahlman's journey. "My hope is that debaters see [Stahlman's] dedication — how much he's talked about and worked on this — and feel inspired," Dr. Hodge said.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Ben Lee, Eliza Aldrich, and Emma Scherwin.



## CHOATE OPENS ITS DOORS TO ACCEPTED STUDENTS

By **Harry Kim '28**  
*Copy Editor*

On April 1, 3, and 4, Choate's Boar Pen and Gold Key members welcomed prospective students and their families to get a glimpse into life at the School. This year, 214 admitted students and their families took part in Revisit Week to decide whether to call Choate their future home.

Each day began with check-in at Ann and George Colony Hall, where prospective families took photos with the School's Boar mascot. Here, they were serenaded by the Jazz Band. Guests could enjoy a spread of cookies, chocolate croissants, and other treats before the Symphony Orchestra performed "Swan Lake" by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Once settled in, Chief Enrollment Manager Mr. Jeff Beaton officially kicked off the day with a welcoming speech.

Following a final performance by the Step Squad, prospective students met their student hosts, who were paired based on shared interests and backgrounds. Together, they walked through an array of flags, representing the School's diverse student body, on their way to their first classes.

Classes were shortened to 50 minutes long so that four class blocks could take place in a single day. In class, prospective students collaborated with their hosts and received a taste of a typical class experience. Curtis Mbaya '28 took his prospective student to Peace and Justice, physics, and English class. Reflecting on the experience, Mbaya said, "Especially in my physics class, I enjoyed working together with my student ... He really enjoyed the class."

During free blocks, many student hosts brought their prospective students to Lanphier Cafe, where they hung out and

bought beverages throughout the day. One incoming student said, "During my revisit to Choate, I noticed the tight-knit community that gathered at the Lanphier Cafe. There was a pretty long line, but I loved the smoothie, and it made the wait worthwhile."

While the admitted students experienced classes, their parents attended the Community Life Panel led by Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98, Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long, Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers, Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott, and five current Choate students. One of the student panelists and former Student Body President Robert Haik '25 said, "My role was to help answer questions about life at Choate from the newly admitted students' parents ... I enjoyed meeting and connecting with families and sharing what makes Choate special, and I hope I was able to positively affect their decision to choose Choate."

At the end of each academic day, revisiting families gathered at Seymour St. John Chapel for a round of closing remarks. Newly-elected Student Body President Zaki Shamsi '26 gave a final speech, sharing why he chose Choate and the many opportunities he has pursued since coming to the School. This year, Choate alumni from Yale University also spoke to give accepted families insights into lives after graduating from Choate — Maxwell Brown '21 spoke on Tuesday, and Hugo Chung '22 spoke on Thursday and Friday.

Each Revisit day concluded with the Community Fair held in the Student Activity Center (SAC). Prospective students explored Choate's vast range of programs, with booths representing signature programs, summer programs, athletic teams, and academic and



Sophie Chung '27 and Dylan Kim '26 host dorm tours for revisit families. art departments. Another prospective student said, "I really enjoyed the Community Fair. I was able to explore so many opportunities that Choate provided for students, and I got to meet some of the Varsity soccer players."

Isabelle Jiao '26, who was stationed at the Swim and Dive table, said, "I loved how everyone was so excited about being at the booths, and I really enjoyed talking to prospective students about the Swim program and its team spirit."

These Revisit days were made possible thanks to months of behind-the-scenes preparation by the Admission Office. They began planning in January by coordinating lunch locations, changing the daily schedule, and preparing event logistics. Assistant Director of Admission Mrs. Beth Berestecky said, "It is showcasing our school, so it takes a lot of planning and work. Most of it gets done around spring break, and it is a long process."

During the week, all Admission Officers worked together to ensure every moment ran smoothly. Mrs. Berestecky said, "Teamwork makes the dream work. People were assigned to different locations, jobs, and duties ... We were all 100% those three days." She added, "But most importantly, students played

## UNITING SENIORS AND ALUMNI

By **Katelyn Nguyen '27**  
*Reporter*

Held on March 27, the annual Alumni Dinner celebrated the graduating Class of 2025 and welcomed back former Choate students from across the years. The event invited seniors to connect with former students and learn more about life after Choate. Each senior was also given an official alumni vest, marking their upcoming transition from students to alumni.

Each table brought together seniors and two alums, which created a space for open and thoughtful conversations. Throughout the dinner, seniors reflected on their time at Choate and heard stories from former students about their lives since graduating. Nao Murata '25 said, "It was very inspiring to hear [the alumni's] story of how he had this goal for himself and set his mind on chemistry, but then decided to become a lawyer later in his college years. It made me feel less pressure and stressed about the future."

During the dinner, students were also introduced to resources such as College Connect, which allows college-age students to mentor current Choate students who are interested in hearing more about their college, and the ChoateNexus Career Networking program, which connects new gradu-



Students take photos with the Choate Boar at Alumni Dinner.

## CHOATE COMPETES AT YALE ETHICS BOWL

By **Drew Wolfson '27**  
*Reporter*

On March 15, the Choate Ethics Bowl team competed in the Yale Ethics Bowl Invitational, sponsored by the Yale Undergraduate Society of Ethics. Eight teams competed, including four from China and four from the United States. Six students represented Choate's team: Isa Marvin '26, Anne Coady '26, Maya Salisbury '26, Andy Stahlman '26, Ella Fraser '27, and Will Garcia '27.

At Ethics Bowl competitions, teams debate real-world ethical issues related to politics, medicine, and technology. The Choate team debated topics surrounding sports activism in major international sporting events and the growing concerns about tourism in the U.S. The teams are judged on their ability to present logical and thoughtful arguments as they defend their position, creating an environment where critical thinking and collaboration are needed. "The best part of the Ethics Bowl Debate is that we get to create our own stance and defend it using logic to the judges. We really get to understand how we feel about the cases," Coady said.

The Yale Ethics Bowl Invitational was online due to its international participants, and it showcased the Choate team's talent and was a particularly special event for Marvin and Coady, as it marked the passing of the leadership baton from the graduating seniors to the juniors. This was also the first time that Choate competed on a global Ethics Bowl stage. "The

international teams brought up really interesting perspectives on issues, and it was cool to think about the cases with completely different views in mind," Coady said.

While the team experienced many positives during the competition, they also faced challenges while preparing and deliberating for the competition throughout the winter term. Since the Invitational took place virtually, scheduling challenges became an obstacle. According to Marvin, navigating multiple time zones and getting teams to agree on a schedule was difficult. Given the 12-hour time difference, teams from China and the United States had to demonstrate flexibility to find acceptable time slots. "Because we were competing internationally, the time of the tournament stretched late into the night ending just before midnight — the experience necessitated persistence and commitment, willingness from the team," Marvin said.

The Choate Ethics Bowl team engaged in multiple rounds of competition en route to the finals. Marvin and Coady found the event to be a learning experience and believe that this experience will pay dividends toward their teams' success in the future. They hope to use this competition as a chance to learn and improve. "The competition was a great opportunity to compete, and it was good practice moving forward. Winning hopefully means a promising team next year," Coady said.

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## Seth Myers to Speak at Class of 2025 Commencement

By **Eliza O'Neil '27**  
*Reporter*

Announced at the annual Alumni Dinner on March 27, Emmy Award-winning writer and *New York Times* bestselling author Seth Meyers will return to Choate to deliver the Commencement Speech for the Class of 2025.

Meyers is best recognized as the host of Late Night with Seth Meyers on NBC, a role he has held since 2014. Before that, he was a cast member on Saturday Night Live (SNL) for 13 seasons (2001-2014), where he served as head writer and anchor for nine years of the iconic "Weekend Update" segment. His impact on the show

has earned him a lasting reputation as one of its most memorable contributors.

Since departing SNL in 2014, he has continued to showcase his comedy aptitude with specials such as Seth Meyers: Lobby Baby and Seth Meyers: Dad Man Walking. Beyond television, Meyers has expanded his creative work to other media. In 2022, he published *I'm Not Scared, You're Scared*, a *New York Times* bestselling children's book that explores the meaning of bravery through humor and heart. He also co-hosts two podcasts: Family Trips, with the Meyers Brothers with his brother Josh Meyers, and The Lonely Island and Seth Meyers Podcast alongside actors Andy Samberg, Akiva Schaffer, and Jorma Taccone. In

addition, he frequently performs stand-up comedy and sells out venues nationwide, including a recurring monthly performance at New York City's Beacon Theatre.

Over the course of his career, Meyers has received 48 "Primetime Emmy" nominations and six awards, including 2024 Nominee for Outstanding Talk Series and 2023 Nominee for Outstanding Writing for a Variety Series. He was also a 2025 Golden Globes nominee for Best Performance in Stand-Up Comedy on Television.

His upcoming Commencement speech to the Class of 2025 is expected to exemplify what he is best known for: a creative blend of humor and wisdom. "I've heard from faculty that his last commencement speech was the

best one they had in a long time, so I'm super excited to hear him speak," Fiona Fu '25 said. "I think he will give us some good insights to take with us post-graduation while keeping the audience engaged with his humor." Likewise, Jayden Dai '25 said, "I'm a super big fan of Seth Meyers and I really like his humor on his late-night show. I'm hopeful that he will deliver a memorable speech — it will be a great way to send off the Class of 2025!"

The Choate Class of 2025 looks forward to welcoming Meyers back to campus for what promises to be a memorable send-off on June 1.

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Seth Meyers prepares for his late night talk show.

# BEYOND BOOKSHELVES: WPL INCARCERATION SERIES

By **Eshana Hora '27**  
Copy Editor

Libraries are often pictured as quiet spaces brimming with books. While this may be true, the Wallingford Public Library is redefining this cliché to make room for community conversation and connection. In collaboration with the Wallingford Racial Justice Team, the town library is planning upcoming spring events to raise awareness about the experience of incarcerated individuals in the U.S.

According to Wallingford Public Library Director Ms. Sunnie Scarpa, “[The Library’s] main goal with this series is to bring information forward to the community and raise awareness ... it’s information that most would never get firsthand,” Ms. Scarpa said.

This year, the library focused on racial justice as part of its *One Book, One Wallingford* program. This year’s selection, *How to Read a Book* by Monica Wood, focuses on the main character’s life after incarceration.

An earlier event hosted by the Wallingford Public Library was *Words from Wallingford: Letters to Incarcerated Youth*, from March 10-27. Over two weeks, the library encouraged the Wallingford community to send letters and drawings to support and uplift young incarcerated individuals across the U.S. “Children as young as 10 can be arrested in Connecticut,” Wallingford Racial Justice Team Coordinator Ms. Judah Lopez said, highlighting the importance of empathizing with and reaching out to incarcerated youth.

The library also hosted a poetry reading on April 1 featuring Mr. Reginald Dwayne Betts, the author of *Felon* and one of Choate’s 2024 featured summer reading authors. Mr. Betts read excerpts from his new



Photo by Ben Lee '27/The Choate News

Mr. Reginald Dwayne Betts performs his new poetry collection, *Doggerel*. Ms. Scarpa said, “It was really, really awesome, and [there was] such a great crowd ... it was packed.”

Lastly, the library is planning the *Libraries & Literature in Prison Cellblocks: A Conversation about Freedom Reads* on April 15. Members of Freedom Reads, an organization founded by Mr. Betts, will speak about their experiences and perspectives surrounding mass incarceration and the value of reading. Freedom Reads works to provide books to incarcerated individuals and encourage literacy among felons and the formerly incarcerated. “Half of their staff are formerly incarcerated individuals, so they can really talk about the impact they see of books on people serving time,” Ms. Scarpa said.

Events like these not only strive to inform the community about disproportionate incarceration based on race, but they also aim to foster participation and strengthen commu-

nity connections in Wallingford. “People are really asking genuine questions, showing a lot of interest, [and] coming with lots of passion and curiosity,” Ms. Scarpa said.

While community responses have been positive, planning events on sensitive topics like incarceration can be challenging. The Library works closely with the Wallingford Racial Justice Team to ensure that their events include differing perspectives, particularly from formerly incarcerated individuals. “We want to include formerly incarcerated people in some meaningful way, whether that means actually having them on as part of our programming, or having their input into the planning process ... [and] when we’re purchasing books for our collection, we are intentional about making sure we have stories written by the folks who are represented in the stories,” Ms. Scarpa said.

Ms. Lopez further emphasized the importance of hon-

oring and recognizing the real people and community members serving time behind bars. “Incarcerated individuals are our neighbors. They are mothers and fathers and siblings, and they are valued members of our society who are often overlooked or forgotten because they are in prison,” she said.

Members of the Wallingford community are encouraged to participate in the upcoming community conversation about the Freedom Reads organization to learn from and listen to the individuals who have personally faced racial injustice and incarceration. As the Wallingford Public Library plans to host more events over the next few weeks, members of the Library and the Wallingford Racial Justice Team remain focused on educating the wider community and raising awareness for incarcerated individuals.

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# WALLINGFORD TABLE SHARES CULTURE THROUGH CUISINE

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

The Wallingford Public Library collaborated with the Wallingford Racial Justice Team and several local organizations to launch an initiative called The Wallingford Table. The program aims to create a space for dialogue and cultural exchange through sharing meals, allowing local residents from different cultural backgrounds to share family traditions. The Wallingford Table initiative aims to foster dialogue between Wallingford residents through shared culinary experiences to build a stronger, more connected town. The initiative invites individuals of all ages, races, ethnicities, identities, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds to “have a seat at the table.”

The Wallingford Table is not just about enjoying diverse cuisines — it also focuses on fostering deeper connections within the greater community. The Wallingford Public Library says that the program allows participants to “share traditions, build personal connections, and experience Wallingford as a warm and welcoming community.” By using food as a tool for communication and understanding, the program provides an opportunity for individuals to learn from one another, celebrate differences, and form new friendships.

One recent event featured Eastern European traditions celebrated the week before Lent. Attendees sampled dishes like pierogies and crêpes, listened to speakers from Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary,

and watched a performance of “Busójárás,” a traditional Hungarian folk dance meant to “chase away winter” and welcome spring. Vintage cultural objects were also displayed, offering further insight into Eastern European heritage.

The heart of the initiative is the belief that sharing a meal is one of the most powerful ways to break down cultural barriers and foster shared understanding. The program encourages conversations about inclusivity, equity, and multiculturalism, which are all essential values for creating a more cohesive society.

According to the Wallingford Public Library’s advertisement for the event, “Food is part of the human experience and an essential tool for building community.” By creating a space for residents to share their cultures and traditions, the Wallingford population is able to gain a deeper appreciation for its diverse members.

The Wallingford Table’s supports the mission of its parent organization, the Wallingford Racial Justice Team, which strives to build “an equitable, more connected society where everyone is happier, healthier, and more successful.” In doing so, the program helps break cultural barriers and shows that everyone deserves a seat at the table. Through the Wallingford Table, the town can not only experience diverse dining but also strengthen community bonds.

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Graphic by Cora Slowe '26/The Choate News

# CHOATE SUPPORTS VETERANS THROUGH HOUSE OF HEROES



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Alexis Lee '28**  
Reporter

Every day, veterans throughout Connecticut quietly live in homes in need of repairs they can’t afford. To mitigate this struggle, House of Heroes Connecticut (HOHCT), a Hamden-based non-profit, provides no-cost home repair services to veterans. Their mission is to ensure these heroes can continue living safely and comfortably in their homes regardless of financial circumstances.

The organization operates through an online application system where veterans or their families can request assistance. Selection is based on available sponsors, local needs, and urgency. With the motto “make a difference in a day,” HOHCT completes all repairs within 24 hours. The program relies on local community involvement, school partnerships, and community groups, in addition to sponsors such as American Veterans (AMVETS) Post 18 in Enfield and the New England Financial Group in West Hartford.

On March 29, HOHCT celebrated its 14th year of service with a volunteer day in Wall-

ingford. With support from Choate and Quinnipiac University, the organization assisted three veteran households.

Mr. James Shea, a U.S. Air Force veteran, received help from Choate students who made tangible improvements to his home. His wife, Mrs. Martha Shea, spoke highly of the students’ work. “It was unbelievable. I could not believe how much they accomplished in just one morning. They replaced the numbers on the house, painted the railings, repaired a fence, and filled a huge dumpster with debris. The front of the house looks brand new,” she said.

Mrs. Shea also emphasized how meaningful it was to receive support from young people and students. “When we came home from the Vietnam era, people wouldn’t even talk to you. And these people on Saturday were just so supportive, and they understood,” she said, expressing gratitude for the empathy shown by the volunteers.

Ellie Porter '25, who helped organize Choate volunteers, found the experience equally rewarding. “The folks at House of Heroes were incredibly kind, and it was a pleasure to work with them. The program itself was extremely well organized,” she said. She also ap-

preciated the honoring event after the home repairs were completed. “We participated in a ceremony [where] HOH presented our client with a flag box dedicated to her late husband. It was beautiful,” Porter said.

Ms. Carol May, the executive director of HOHCT, similarly shared a moment that captured the organization’s impact. “We had a veteran in Marlboro, [who] needed to get dialysis three times a week. A dangerous [rotted] 52-foot staircase [stood in the way],” she said. In response, HOHCT mobilized 20 carpenters and 25 volunteers to rebuild it. “We feel like we really saved that veteran’s life,” Ms. May said.

Since its founding in 2012, HOHCT has repaired 260 homes in 71 cities and towns. With monthly plans to help more than 30 veterans this year, the group continues to expand its reach. “The most important tenet of our mission is safety, accessibility, and sustainability,” Ms. May said. HOHCT offers dignity, grace, and respect to Connecticut’s veterans, reminding us of the power of local action and showing appreciation for veterans’ sacrifices.

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# Lyman Hall’s Top Drawer Store Promotes Sustainable Style

By **Reid Bock '27**  
Copy Editor

At the intersection of style and sustainability, thrifting offers a unique opportunity to make a positive impact. Lyman Hall High School has transformed one of its classrooms into such a store, providing an affordable, environmentally friendly, and innovative resource for the student body. The Top Drawer thrift store opened in October 2024, providing students with clothing, shoes, and accessories free of charge. The store has already significantly impacted the school community, with over 400 students utilizing the store since its opening.

The idea for the thrift store came from Ms. Kristina Jensen, a social worker at Lyman Hall. Inspired by a similar program at Branford High School, where her children attend, Ms. Jensen saw an opportunity to introduce this concept to Wallingford. “I live in Branford, and my high school students had a thrift shop that started about a year ago. I thought it was a really cool idea,” Ms. Jensen explained.



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

After securing funding last spring, she collaborated with staff to bring the idea to fruition.

The thrift store operates through donations from staff within the school system. Items are carefully sorted to ensure they are appropriate for high school students. Any unsuitable items are sent to Goodwill or other charities. The store is organized seasonally, with spring clothing now replacing the jackets and sweaters that were in stock during the winter. The inventory includes everything from brand-new makeup and accessories to gently used clothing in all sizes and styles.

Lyman Hall High School English teacher Ms. Jennifer Castelli has been instrumental in running the store alongside Ms. Jensen. She dedicates her time to volunteering at the shop and finds great personal fulfillment in the project. “The most rewarding aspect of being involved with the thrift store is seeing the positive impact it is having on our students,” Ms. Castelli said.

While the store has been successful, its establishment came with challenges. Finding an ap-

propriate space was initially difficult until Lyman Hall High School Principal Mr. Joseph Corso offered a classroom within the library — a central location accessible to students during study halls. Staffing is also another challenge; however, teachers volunteer their time to keep the store open consistently. Retired staff have also stepped up to help maintain operations.

Currently, students are not directly involved in running the thrift store, but plans are underway to incorporate more student-led initiatives. Next year, the National Honor Society at Lyman Hall will assist with donation drives, while older students in the life skills programs may take on roles like laundry management and job site tasks with coaches.

The thrift store has garnered strong support from Lyman Hall and the larger Wallingford community. Donations have been rolling in, ensuring shelves remain stocked with high-quality items. While additional donations are not needed, future drives will involve broader community participation. Members from the Wallingford community, including Choate students, are highly encouraged to donate.

Lyman Hall High School’s Top Drawer thrift store has quickly become a vital resource for Lyman Hall students, providing free clothing and accessories since its opening in October 2024. The store’s success is a testament to the collaborative efforts of staff and community members who have supported it through donations and volunteer work. Ultimately, Ms. Castelli advocated for the idea because “It’s a small thing that we can do to make a difference — and isn’t that the point?”

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# The Choate News

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## UPGRADE? NO THANKS: THE TOASTER MAY BURN, BUT IT BELONGS!

By **Rhea Doshi '27**  
Copy Editor

In the center of the dining hall, beside plexiglass containers of bread, lies something strangely symbolic to the Choate community: the toaster. At first glance, it doesn't appear special — a conveyor-style machine near the beloved bagel and bread stand. But anyone who has ever attempted to toast their breakfast knows this unassuming piece of machinery has a reputation far more significant than its size. Despite its notorious unreliability, it is a “slice” of Choate tradition that should be protected.

At Choate, the toaster in the dining hall is not just “kitchen equipment.” It's tradition. It has its moments, but it's a job well done when it works. It's logical: place your bread or bagel on the conveyor, let it cruise along the warm tunnel, and retrieve your slice of toast from the bottom. Theoretically, it's easy. Practically? Far from



Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27/The Choate News

it. This toaster is temperamental and moody, but most of all, it has a personality. It might reward your patience with a warm, golden snack — or char it to bitter oblivion. Sometimes, it skips the toasting process altogether, casually delivering a slightly warmer, slightly softer piece of bread. Occasionally, it swallows things whole. I've seen bagels vanish, burnt completely to a crisp. Every encounter with this toaster is a gamble.

Yet, despite the chaos, as long as it's able to heat up bread (even if into flames), its home in the dining hall must be reserved.

A newer toaster might be much more efficient, safer, and faster — but it wouldn't offer the same shared experience. A true Choate breakfast experience demands gazing into that metal contraption, praying your food emerges unscathed. It levels the playing field, hum-

bling the overly optimistic and rewarding the patient. It makes you run late to class and gives you a story to tell along the way.

It's not just about breakfast. It's about tradition. It's about staring in disappointment at a piece of burnt toast or celebrating the success of a perfectly toasted bagel. It's about praying it won't set off the fire alarm during peak rush hour. It's about knowing you've survived yet another encounter with a finicky, half-broken appliance — and, inexplicably, feeling proud of it.

So yes, the toaster is far from perfect. But that's why it's just right for us. In a world obsessed with upgrades, there's something beautiful about keeping something deeply flawed but richly loved and uniquely ours.

It's not the best toaster. But at Choate, it's our toaster.

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## JUSTICE FOR DEEPSEEK

By **David Ionescu '27**  
Opinions Writer

A few weeks ago, without informing the Choate community, the School's Generative AI Committee (GAC) quietly banned DeepSeek AI — a Chinese generative AI website — from the School's WiFi networks, sparking confusion and debate among students. While faculty at Choate have raised concerns about data privacy and national security, many are questioning the consistency of Choate's technology policies, especially since other generative AI sites and Chinese apps remain accessible on school WiFi networks. Choate's ban on DeepSeek was rushed, violates student choice, and contradicts the School's existing stance on AI.

The GAC, which consists of Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 and other faculty, said that the federal government's warnings about user data and the unknown capabilities of foreign AI tools — particularly concerning DeepSeek AI and other Chinese generative AI sites — greatly influenced the School's decision. Director of Information Technology Services Mr. Andrew Speyer said that the School is uncertain about what is happening with the data users input into DeepSeek, which is sent to China. He said, “Any information uploaded to an AI model becomes part of the generative model that helps other people's queries. China does not have [robust] data protection policies or laws regarding

the use of private information. Security is the primary reason to block DeepSeek.”

Despite similar privacy concerns surrounding TikTok — which prompted congressional hearings, bans on federal devices, and multiple investigations into its data-sharing capabilities to the Chinese government — Choate has chosen not to restrict access to it. Mr. Speyer explained, “I recommend not using TikTok for the same reasons. However, there are legitimate business and social media aspects that prevented us from blocking it.”

The same applies to WeChat, a widely used messaging app in China that most Chinese students at Choate use. The app is obliged by law to share data with the Chinese government. Yet, the School has not blocked it. This raises the question: Why should DeepSeek be banned while TikTok and WeChat continue to roam free?

Although TikTok and WeChat remain accessible despite scrutiny, DeepSeek has been banned before any real government inquiry is conducted. Students were not even notified or consulted about the ban before it was implemented. The ban was rushed and contradicted the School's attitude towards other Chinese apps such as TikTok and WeChat. Rather than quickly dismissing an unfamiliar technology, the School should more thoroughly assess its risks and make a more educated decision. Furthermore, the ban infringes on students' freedom to choose what resources they use.

Historically, Choate's network restrictions focused on websites

that contained a few categories of content: pornography, hate speech, and gambling. Now, DeepSeek AI has joined that list. The fact that an AI tool with academic applications is grouped with such content is puzzling. Pornography or gambling websites go against the School's values and rules, and there is a clear case for applications that endanger or harm the student body to be banned.

DeepSeek — a website that can aid students in idea generation and problem-solving — provides services like any other American AI website. However, it is banned simply because the School is concerned about student data privacy. While it may be true that DeepSeek stores user data, even American AI websites, such as ChatGPT, save data that users input into the chat.

The School should not tell students what AI websites they can access — or, to put it bluntly, what companies they feed their data to. It is explicitly outlined in DeepSeek's terms that data is transmitted to China, and if a student would rather have their data be sent to DeepSeek in China instead of being kept by ChatGPT in America, so be it. Even if the data is found to be sent to the Chinese government, it is a student's decision whether they consent to that, and the School should respect that freedom.

Choate's widely publicized attempts to embrace AI only add to the irony. Some teachers encourage using AI as a learning tool, some even have access to premium ChatGPT accounts, and during School Meetings, the Administration often discusses responsible AI usage. Amid this push towards

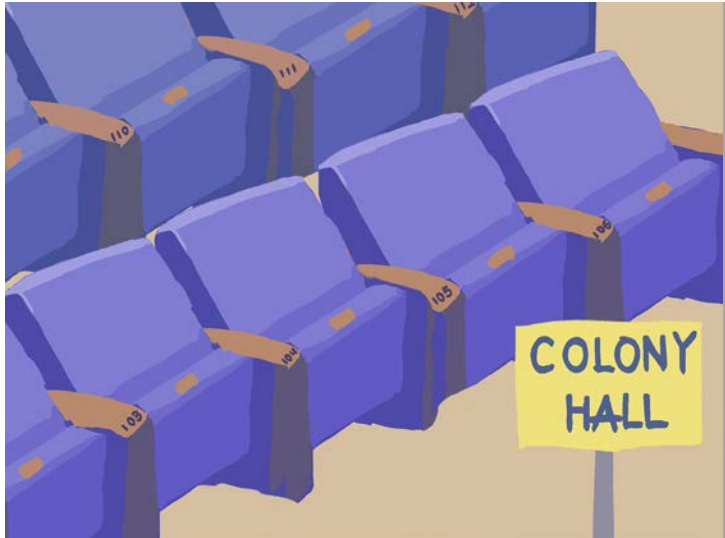
embracing AI, Choate's decision on DeepSeek is inconsistent. DeepSeek, a technology that many praise for its powerful AI capabilities — so much so that it sent American tech stocks crashing upon its release — is targeted only based on its location of origin.

DeepSeek is at the forefront of the AI space, yet it is being shut down by a school that prides itself on embracing and adapting to new technologies. When ChatGPT first came out, the School did not disable access to the website. Instead, Choate investigated the best way that it could be implemented and welcomed its use. The same treatment should be given to DeepSeek, which could also have a place in academic environments. The School's ban on DeepSeek is hypocritical as it contradicts its current stance on AI.

For now, the ban on DeepSeek stands. Whether for data concerns or questions surrounding its place in an academic environment, the School's lack of restrictions on ChatGPT, TikTok, and WeChat proves that it is reasonable for students to access DeepSeek at Choate. The School should reconsider the ban on the website as the decision was rushed, violates students' freedom to choose academic resources, and contradicts the School's position on embracing AI. The School needs to take advantage of technological advancements and not quietly shove them under the rug.

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## Assigned Seats, Divided Opinions: School Meeting



Graphic By Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**  
Copy Editor

Every Tuesday morning, Choate students gather in Colony Hall to attend School Meeting in assigned seats. Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, assigned seating was implemented, requiring students to sit with their advisory groups rather than by grade level — where seniors sat in the orchestra rows at the front of the auditorium, freshmen sat in the balcony, while sophomores and juniors sat in between. But is assigned seating by advisory really necessary? Both systems have their advantages, and a mixed system should be implemented for students to maximize the benefits.

The previous by-grade seating format reinforced a sense of progression through the Choate experience. Furthermore, it allowed students to experience School Meetings, guest speakers, and Community Conversations from different parts of the auditorium throughout their Choate careers. In contrast, the current system creates the possibility of binding students to one section for their whole Choate experience. Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott explained, “Initially, students — mostly seniors — expressed disappointment about the change.” She pointed out that students “enjoy having the choice and autonomy to sit where they want, with whom they want.” Additionally, she noted, “While the administrative goal was to foster stronger connections within advising groups, many students felt left out of the decision process.”

On the contrary, advisory-based seating has its benefits maintaining order and organization during meetings. Edward Jeong '27 said, “It keeps us focused on the meeting, and it doesn't allow us to talk with our friends and be unfocused.” As Ms. Elliott noted, the current setup “affords an additional connection point for advising groups,” and the faculty presence among students “has led to more attentive and respectful audience behavior.” Math teacher Mr. Jorge

Olmo added, “I do enjoy just sitting with my advisees and talking with them, even if it's cracking the occasional jokes.” Advisory-based seating creates an opportunity for forming connections among advisories during a busy school day.

Both systems have clear advantages, and they can be combined into a mixed seating system to maximize benefits for the community. Under this mixed system, School Meeting would use advisory-based seating every three weeks. This seating would also be used during every Community Conversation or when guest speakers visit. These events require more structure, and advisory seating reduces distractions as a result of sitting with friends while ensuring that all students are present and engaged. Mr. Olmo supports this balance, suggesting that he “likes the way we sit in advisory groups, but having the occasional freedom, where, maybe, you check in with your advisor, and then you go sit with your friends, I think the students would appreciate it.”

For the other two weeks of each three-week cycle, students revert to the previous grade-level seating arrangement. This seating recognizes the progression students make throughout their Choate careers, a valued part of the Choate experience — as seen through our senior section in the dining hall — while also allowing students to develop grade-level camaraderie, as well as giving students more freedom over choosing their seats. Will Garcia '27 said, “I'd prefer sitting by grade level because it builds more form camaraderie ... lately, our forms have been a little disconnected.”

The Administration should consider this mixed model — or, at the very least, remain open to student and faculty feedback. Finding common ground is an opportunity for collaboration and models the very ideals that School Meeting aims to promote.

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Graphic by Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

# TESLAS BURN WHILE MUSK PLAYS POLITICS



Graphic by Cora Slowe '26/The Choate News

By **Josh Pan '27**  
*Opinions Writer*

From exploding Molotov cocktails to spraying graffiti on doors, Tesla cars across the globe have come under attack from, what President Donald Trump P'oo has named, “terrorists.” The vandals are infuriated at Elon Musk for being a far-right backer and have defaced Cybertrucks and other Tesla models. In response, seven Tesla cars were set aflame in Los Angeles within one week; another was punctured with bullets and then set ablaze in Las Vegas.

The recent widespread destruction of Tesla cars across the globe is a stark reminder of the consequences of integrating oneself into politics. The bottom line is that Elon Musk has angered too many people and is now facing the grim consequences of his actions, which harm others besides himself — the only way to stop these acts of domestic terrorism is for Elon Musk to stop meddling in U.S. politics. His political ambitions have made him a target for public outrage, and it's everyday Tesla owners who are paying the price.

Musk's poor reputation affects all those associated with Tesla as he is synonymous with the company. In the risk section of its comprehensive annual report, the compa-

ny discloses that it is “highly dependent on the services of Elon Musk, Technoking of Tesla and our Chief Executive Officer.” By extension, consumer sentiment regarding Musk's public persona is inseparable from that of Tesla. This intertwining of personality and product has made Tesla uniquely vulnerable to political backlash.

Musk has been scrutinized for his murky government actions since his current position as a Senior Advisor to President Trump. Many question the validity of the newly established Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), headed by Musk. The wealthiest man in the world holding so much power in the government is something that many, including myself, are deeply anxious about. This political polarization has also left many of his previous left-leaning consumers stunned.

Surprisingly, the destruction of Teslas has extended beyond the United States. Seventeen Tesla cars were burned in a parking lot in Rome. In Ottawa, protestors dumped buckets of paint onto a Tesla dealership. In Berlin, another seven cars would be set ablaze. In some cases, Tesla owners have been destroying their own vehicles or taking the Tesla logo off their cars.

Musk named these widespread attacks as “wide-scale domestic ter-

rorism” and demanded authorities “go after the generals” behind the violence. Strangely, I find myself agreeing with Musk's statements. Violence should never be the right way to protest, especially with the blatant vandalization of property owned by those who are completely uninvolved in politics. At the same time, however, I believe the root cause of these protests — the alarming concentration of political power in the hands of a tech billionaire — must not be ignored. It is terrifying to understand that one of the wealthiest men in human history holds this much sway in our democratic government.

The future is bleak for Tesla as the desecration of dealerships continues to spread across the globe. Unless Musk separates his business from his politics, both Tesla and its innocent consumers will continue to suffer the consequences. The only clear way to end these raids would be for Musk to step away from his political position. As long as Elon Musk continues to meddle in U.S. politics, the actions of these firebrands will likely persist — waging a war over legislative influence with Molotovs and spray paint.

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# WILL AI REPLACE US OR WORK WITH US?

By **Ayaz Zuberi '27**  
*Opinions Writer*

“AI doesn't just take jobs, it transforms them,” ChatGPT said when prompted with the question “Will AI replace jobs?” AI is a fascinating new technology — generative AI models are capable of creating images and writing essays while machine learning algorithms utilize advanced image recognition and deep data analysis. But despite its power, it still falls short of something essential: being human.

There is a growing fear that AI will replace human workers altogether, but this anxiety oversimplifies a more complex truth. While it's true that AI has begun to automate many tasks, the broader picture reveals a different story: one where AI still deeply depends on human oversight. One such example would be the adoption of machinery on automobile assembly lines. While the job of tediously crafting automobile parts was replaced, companies were able to output far more cars at a far cheaper price. The new jobs created? Less intense, higher-paying management jobs within the automobile industry and a whole new industry of assembly line

development and research. By embracing assembly lines as a tool instead of a job-stealing terror, more job opportunities were created, and society benefitted from cheaper and more accessible cars.

So, it is imperative to acknowledge that AI will replace some jobs — in fact, it already has. Customer service representatives, for example, are increasingly being replaced by bots. Tasks like data management, pure quantitative fields, will likely be taken over by AI because of its superior ability to process information miles faster than humans. Jobs including bookkeeping, financial reporting, and administrative assistance are just a few that may be on the AI chopping block.

However, this is not something to be afraid of. Looking at this list, you can notice a pattern in the kind of jobs being replaced. These are all industries where companies employ high numbers of employees to process information. However, with the integration of AI, these jobs will become obsolete — the data processing power of AI is far more time-efficient and inexpensive for larger corporations. But just like assembly lines, this will create higher-paying, less tedious job

opportunities while simultaneously benefitting society. More accurate data analysis will result in better research in industries such as healthcare, food safety, and engineering — all fields crucial to human safety and happiness.

AI will not replace current workers in the data analysis industry — if and only if they embrace and adopt AI as a tool. Learn how to use it, improve it, and make your own jobs easier. Because, if you aren't able to analyze number better than a machine, you better know how the machine works and how to improve it.

Many high-level machine learning specialists such as Andrew Ng compare AI to electricity, and when electricity was invented, the factory workers who lost their jobs were unaware that the new innovation would end up creating far more opportunity in the future. Jobs will shift. Some will disappear. Others will be born. We've seen this cycle before, and we'll see it again. Electricity brought so much positive change to society; AI will too, if we embrace it as a tool, not a threat to employment

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Graphic by Eliza Aldrich '27/The Choate News

# THE DEMOCRATS' IDENTITY CRISIS

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**  
*Opinions Writer*

As President Donald Trump P'oo settles into the first few months of his presidency, his administration has already made many missteps that are raising domestic and international concerns. His shortsighted tariffs, questionable deportations, and isolationist foreign policy have deepened divides within our nation and undermined America on the global stage. Despite these failures, the Democratic Party has failed to launch a solid opposition, becoming an afterthought on Capitol Hill. Instead of capitalizing on his glaring mistakes, the party has been bogged down in disagreement and division. To regain power, Democrats must embrace more moderate, unifying policies that reconnect with the working-class base and focus on practical concerns over cultural battles in the party.

The lack of clear leadership is a major problem. There's no clear, unified vision of what the party stands for anymore. After her loss in November, Kamala Harris has all but disappeared from the public eye, resulting in a power vacuum that remains unfilled. On one hand, you have strong, established leaders like Chuck Schumer, who is willing to reach across the aisle and work with Republicans, as seen with his fantastic efforts to rally Democrats to help pass Trump's budget bill. Unfortunately, he is constantly undermined by uber-progressive voices, like Al-



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

exandria Ocasio-Cortez, who will tear into anyone who doesn't align with her radical agenda. The disarray in the party is extreme and growing worse by the day. If Democrats intend to have any chance at taking back power in 2028, they need to come together around a leader who can unify the party.

As of now, Gavin Newsom, the governor of California, has been one of the few to come out on top amidst the chaos of

Trump's second term. He has distanced himself from the infighting and is trying to haul California politics closer to the middle. His departure from the far left and his willingness to restrict transgender athletes or to debate with prominent conservative personalities like Charlie Kirk will serve him well when appealing to moderate voters. He's clearly lining himself up for a presidential bid, and if he continues to take prag-

matic stances, he will be a strong contender. Even so, he is just one voice in a party that has struggled to relinquish ultra-progressive stances to properly reconnect with its base.

At this point, the Democratic Party has become effectively synonymous with elitism. It has lost touch with regular, working-class Americans, and focuses on issues that are simply insignificant to the average voter.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, leniency on illegal immigration, and an intense focus on transgender rights should not be the focal points for the party's energy. While they may be important issues for some, they are not the top concerns of working-class families. As prices tick up and school systems struggle, Americans do not connect with the party's constant emphasis on cultural battles.

The Democratic failure to recognize the disconnect between the party and the broader electorate has given Trump a free pass to keep a hold on voters who feel forgotten by their party leadership. His populist message might be based on some pretty divisive rhetoric, but he's done an excellent job appealing to the anger and frustration of voters who feel left behind. The Democrats cannot let their radical social justice causes be prioritized over the everyday concerns of normal people. The party needs to stop being so beholden to the far left and return to policies and issues that matter to the majority of Americans.

Ultimately, the future of the Democratic Party lies in its ability to push past the image of elitism that has alienated so many and to focus on the issues that matter to average Americans. If the Democrats can find a way to put their disagreements aside and rally behind a pragmatic leader who will present a unified front to the public, they will have a much better chance at winning back over the American people. In the meantime, President Trump is doing a great job at making headlines for all the wrong reasons. If the Democrats can get their act together, they'll have a golden opportunity to step in and seize the presidency in 2028.

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# A CAMPUS GUIDE TO STUDY SURVIVAL

By **Rachel Fan '27**  
*Local News Editor*

You flip open the textbook for your Psychology class on a Monday morning. “Effective studying,” the chapter reads. You rub your sleep-deprived eyes, attempting to absorb the words in front of you. Before you can fully grasp the material, your teacher’s voice cuts through: “Students, how do you study?”

If your mind goes blank at that question or if you’re still searching for a better strategy, look no further! Here are some effective studying tips from fellow Choate students and faculty.

## Teams Make Dreams Work

Math teacher Mr. Nick Tagge recommends students collaborate with each other and form “study teams” to handle challenging work. “Reaching out for help and studying in groups is essential,” he said. This approach allows students to clarify challenging concepts and support each other both academically and emotionally. Studying with others also averts procrastination and keeps motivation high, especially during the more stressful stretches of midterm assessments and Term-End Experiences.

According to Mr. Tagge, the most successful students consistently communicate by “reaching out for help quickly via email, during Conference, and more.” Whether it’s asking a question over email or sitting down for a group study session, building a strong support system not only makes studying less stressful but also allows students to study with more confidence.

## Cutting Distractions, Finding Focus

The most significant study distraction for Victoria DeVito ’27

is “definitely my phone,” she admitted. “I watch a lot of TV, and I always check for messages when I have it next to me.” To avoid temptation, DeVito hides her phone under her bed covers, wedges it between books on her shelf, or puts it in a designated box. “One of the first things I do when I sit down to study is putting my phone away. It helps limit distractions and keeps me focused on the work that I have to do,” DeVito said.

She also listens to an instrumental playlist called “Crazy Fast Piano” when she needs energy without lyrical distractions. “Having music that keeps you alert but not distracted is a game changer,” DeVito said. Quiet, distraction-free spaces like the Andrew Mellon Library or her dorm room also help her focus.

## Know Yourself, Rest Well

Instructing psychology courses at Choate, HPRSS teacher Ms. Nickie Paul believes that effective studying starts with self-awareness. “Successful students know what they need and don’t compare themselves to others,” she said. For Ms. Paul, understanding your habits is more important than copying someone else’s study method.

Ms. Paul also emphasized sleep. “Sleep is so much more important than people realize,” Ms. Paul said. “It consolidates your semantic memory, which is what you use when studying information.” Without adequate sleep, your attention span shrinks, making studying less effective. “People think cramming works, and sure, maybe for the short term. But long term, you’re going to forget it all and have to relearn it later,” she said.

## A Smart Tool (If You’re Smarter)

Ms. Paul describes technology as a double-edged sword.

“Phones, socials, [and] smart-watches all break your focus. Students think they’re studying for hours, but it’s fragmented. You’re constantly shifting attention,” Ms. Paul said. She recommends turning off notifications or putting devices on focus mode to avoid distractions.

But not all technology is a problem. Ms. Paul is a fan of ChatGPT — when used with caution. “[ChatGPT] is one of my favorite tools. If you understand that it’s not always right, it’s incredibly useful,” she said. Ms. Paul recommends it for generating tutor-style explanations to break down topics covered in class that students may not have grasped completely, “especially if you don’t have someone to explain it to you in person.”

## Discipline in Progress

For Ana Isabella Bury-Negron ’25, learning to study effectively has been a long-term process. “Last year, I was new [to Choate] and totally overwhelmed,” she said. “I’d never had a course load [so difficult] before.” To combat this, Bury-Negron started creating structure in her day. “I started plugging work into small gaps in my schedule. That helped me get to sleep earlier and feel more in control,” she said.

As a “Humanities kid,” Bury-Negron deals with large volumes of reading and assessments. Her advice: avoid saving everything for the last minute. “If you know you have a test in a week, don’t wait to start preparing. Take notes while you read. Write down definitions as you go,” she said. “That way, you’re not stuck later trying to both gather and learn the material in one go.”

If you’re seeking studying methods proven by science, Bury-Negron recommends the Pomodoro Technique, which consists of 25 minutes of uninterrupted work followed by a five-minute break, as well as the simple “3-2-1, go!” method. “If I don’t feel like working, I count down from three, two, one ... and just start. It sounds basic, but it works,” Bury-Negron said.

So the next time you flip open that textbook, try your hand at any of these reliable study methods. Go lock in!

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# A SCHOOL AND A HOME: LIVES OF FACULTY KIDS AT CHOATE



Photo courtesy of Violeta Rodriguez '27

Violeta Rodriguez ’27 poses for a picture with her dad Mr. Jorge Rodriguez.

By **Tori Vollero '27**  
*Reporter*

What’s even is a faculty kid? Are they day students? Are they boarders? Where do they fit in the unique world of Choate students? Faculty kids Violeta Rodriguez ’27, Emilia Stahura ’26, and Ella Morris ’25 help unpack what it means to call our School upon the hillside both a classroom and a home.

## Violeta Rodriguez ’27

Violeta Rodriguez ’27, daughter of Language Teacher Mr. Jorge Rodriguez, described her experience navigating Choate as both a student and faculty child. Rodriguez was initially skeptical about matriculating as a student and worried about being treated differently than everyone else. “I was nervous at first because I didn’t know what to expect and how people would view me,” she said.

Yet, as Rodriguez spent more time as a Choate student and formed close relationships with her peers, she realized what she brought to the community. “I think everyone deserves to be here for their own reasons because everyone contributes something different,” Rodriguez said.

Despite the unfamiliar and new dynamic, Rodriguez has developed an even stronger relationship with her dad, Mr. Rodriguez. During the academic day, she looks forward to bumping into and catching

up with him. “I have a really great relationship with my dad and we’re super close. The privilege of being a faculty kid is that I get to practice my independence but it’s also really convenient to have my dad right there, whether for a motivational talk or to just chat about our day,” she said.

## Emilia Stahura ’26

For Emilia Stahura ’26, Choate holds a close place in her heart as she has lived on campus since she was one month old. “I’ve always known Choate as my home. I’ve never known anything different, so that’s why I feel so comfortable. I’ve always been here,” she said. Throughout her time on campus, Stahura and her family have lived in Homestead House, Spencer House, and currently reside in Hemingway House.

During her childhood, Stahura enjoyed attending Choate football games with other faculty kids, and developed close bonds with the senior girls in the Homestead dormitories. “Choate’s campus was like our own backyard,” she said.

Since Stahura entered high school at Choate, she has noticed a clearer distinction between the campus’ academic setting and her home. “Over time, I’ve been able to differentiate them and that has helped me with finding my place [as a faculty kid],” she said.

“My freshman year, I knew more teachers than students. One of my teachers was my neighbor, and I would have ex-

tra help sessions on my patio,” she said. While Stahura admitted the familiarity was awkward at first, she has managed to settle into Choate life. “Now that I’m an upperclassman, I know a lot more people which is nice,” she said.

“I think it will be nostalgic in a way, but also, it is all I have ever known,” she said.

## Ella Morris ’25

Now a four-year senior, Ella Morris ’25 has lived as both a faculty kid and student for the last four years and summed up her entire experience. She said, “It’s the best of both worlds. There are definitely downsides, but mostly it’s the perfect blend between being a boarder and a day student.” Morris appreciates the short commute to the classroom, enjoying home-cooked meals, and hanging out with friends in a more personal space.

Morris’ dad is Science teacher Mr. Will Morris’ and recalls fond childhood memories in his office. “The Science Center used to be just my dad’s office,” she said. “But now it’s where I have classes and do homework.”

Overall, faculty kids on campus navigate a unique experience of Choate, balancing the privileges of both day-student and boarding life while fostering deep connections to the people around them. They are not quite one or the other but something uniquely in-between.

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# STUDENTS TAKE ON DOG WALKING AND BABYSITTING

By **Jocelyn Rivard '28**  
*Reporter*

With spring in full swing, the Choate campus feels especially alive — dogs trotting along on walks, rain or shine, and little kids darting around the winding paths are everyday scenes. Despite these sights being so familiar to us, we hardly stop to think about the care that goes into the pets and children on campus. After all, our teachers need a break every once in a while, too! That’s where students come in, often helping teachers walk dogs and babysit children.

## Nila Rajan ’26

Nila Rajan ’26 babysits for her advisor HPRSS teacher Mr. Jesse Minneman’s children, Grace and Ward. A typical session includes hanging out with the kids, playing games, and creating fun activities to pass the time. “One of my favorite moments has been building Tinkercad projects with them one night and teaching them about the solar system,” Rajan said.

From her experience babysitting in her hometown and at Choate, Rajan has approached challenges such as adjusting to the behavioral styles of younger kids. “Living with teenagers can get me adjusted to our teenage lives and how we cope with stress



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

and other emotions, which is obviously very different from how a younger kid deals with it,” she said. “Learning how to manage that is something that has been a challenge with both babysitting at school and at home.”

Nonetheless, Rajan thoroughly enjoys the process and finds it to be meaningful. “I think babysitting, in general, is something that allows you to develop many life skills, and learning how to get along with children and adapt to their lifestyle is something that I find incredibly valuable,” she said.

## Tessa Wilhelm ’27

Over breaks, Tessa Wilhelm ’27 takes advantage of being a day student to walk English teacher Mr. David Loeb’s dachshund named Jeeves. Typically taking him for a quick 15-minute loop in the morning, afternoon, and evening, Wilhelm’s home near campus is convenient for this task. Her favorite part about the job is the photos she takes of Jeeves, which she sends to Mr. Loeb so he knows that Jeeves went on his walk. Wilhelm recalls a particularly memorable experience: “Once I couldn’t find him [Jeeves], which was re-

ally scary because I really only go into certain rooms [in Mr. Loeb’s house], and I didn’t want to search his house. But he eventually came once I got his food because he’s a big foodie,” she said.

One of the challenges of the job is punctuality and finding time between holiday commitments. “It’s hard because over break your body just wants to relax. So it’s definitely hard to get yourself up and be like, ‘okay, I still have commitments and responsibilities,’” Wilhelm said. Despite this, she still recommends the job because it’s a great way to learn essential skills of commit-

ment and responsibility. “You can get a little cash, but it just shows your teacher, the rest of the community, and your family [that] ... you are responsible, and you could take on the job,” Wilhelm said.

Mr. Loeb also reciprocally appreciates the opportunity. “It’s a help for me, [especially] if I’ve got an away game and I’m off campus for hours and hours. Students often like some dog time, particularly those whose dogs are far away,” he said. He encourages the job to anyone “for whom a visit with an affectionate little dog would be a treat.”

## Ellie Silva ’26

Admissions officer Mr. Lawrence Spinnato has Ellie Silva ’26 babysit his two children, Sam and Josie, when he and his wife spend time away from campus. He loves seeing photos that Silva sends. “We always get a kick out of those shots knowing they are safe and having fun,” Mr. Spinnato said. “Choate kids are responsible and trustworthy — wonderful to work with,” he added.

During a babysitting session, Silva typically spends more time with Sam, as Josie is usually asleep. The two play with dinosaurs, draw, and eventually Silva reads Sam a bedtime story to put her to bed. Silva finds the experience to be meaningful: “At Choate, I don’t really get to hang out with [younger] kids in general. So it’s really fun to have that outlet for me to just go play with kids and relax,” she said.

If you are looking for a fun and quick way to make some money and help out of one of your favorite faculty members, take this as your sign to look into babysitting and dog walking! This engaging campus job is rewarding, allowing students to interact with pets and children while teaching them lifelong lessons of responsibility and adaptability.

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# Where Steps Meet Stories: Behind the Scenes of the Spring Dance Concert

By **Sabrina Liu '28**  
*Reporter*

Every spring, the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) stage becomes a canvas for storytelling through movement. But what audiences see under the stage lights — synchronized motion and emotional expressions — is only a glimpse of the months-long journey leading up to Choate's Dance Concert.

For many dancers, preparation begins months in advance. "Most of the dances we've been preparing since September," said Hip Hop Club cabinet member, dancer, and choreographer Nao Murata '25. "For Dance Company, Hip Hop, SYNK, and Step [Squad], we've been doing it every Sunday. And this week, it's tech rehearsals — with costume, with light, everything in the program order."

Tech week, though essential, is physically and emotionally demanding. "We're working really [hard] every night," explained Dance teacher Ms. Pamela Newell, "some of the students are involved in several pieces, so it's really important for them to pace their energy." She described the week as a careful balance between repetition and preservation. "You want to be able to go through the choreography so that it becomes second nature... you're not thinking about anything, you're letting your body feel the steps and the intentions of the choreographer and the music and the dance."



Student Choreographers pose for a photo after Dance Concert.

Despite the intensity, dancers consistently emphasized the sense of connection that grows backstage. "Getting closer with the girls in the dressing room has always been my favorite part of this whole dance concert since I was a freshman," said Murata. "This year, my friends and I are the oldest, but I still get to make friends with the freshmen ... and get to talk to them."

Choreographer and dancer Lucy LaPlaca '26 similarly appreciated the positive community. "Mostly just the people — that is what makes it fun. Getting to experience choreographing too and having that opportunity has been really good." As a choreographer, one of her most memorable moments came during a high-energy move: "At the beginning

[of Hip Hop], we do like a flip, which we hadn't really done before. So, it was really exciting to see everybody do that and make it work out."

For choreographers, inspiration came from many places. Murata said her Dance Company piece was a long-held dream: "We're doing La La Land ... I choreographed it with my best friend, Libby [Dai '25] ...

It's kind of like our love letter to our four years at Choate in terms of our friendship and just the general experience."

Other choreographers took on the challenge of pushing dancers artistically. Leanne Parks '25 said, "I didn't want to make my choreo easy, so it would look good. I wanted to make a challenging choreo for my dancers, to challenge

them, to challenge myself, and to make an interesting piece." The payoff came "when everything was put together, and then my dancers just showed up and showed out."

In contrast, Dana Tan '25 used choreography as a form of emotional expression. "I usually choreograph according to the music and the music that I enjoy. It typically follows a period of my life," she explained. "I had a lot of fun choreographing with these dancers ... I'm really glad of how they managed to pull it together, and I'm very, very proud of them."

For Lily Honney '26, the highlight came when "everything just clicked." Getting to view her work from an audience perspective was rewarding. "That's my piece. Those are my dancers. And they just nailed that," she said.

Though the concert mesmerized audience members, the real magic was in the hours of rehearsal, small moments backstage, and student artists growing into confident leaders. When the final bows came, emotions ran high. There were laughs, tears, shoutouts, and even a surprise Last Hurrah proposal during the final curtain call. Ms. Newell said, "It's really a wonderful blend of what we have at Choate in terms of different voices, different artistic voices ... and it shows the range in our community."

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## CHOATE CHORALE MAKES MEMORIES IN GREECE



Photo courtesy of Dr. Julie Hagen

The Choate Chorale poses for a group picture in front of the Parthenon.

By **Bridget Rivard '28**  
*Reporter*

Walking down the roads of Greece, singing, performing in an ancient ruin, seeing historic Greek instruments — sounds like a scene straight out of *Mamma Mia!* This spring break, 35 singers in the Choate Chorale traveled to Athens and Nafplio to immerse themselves in Greek culture for a week. During the trip, they expanded on their choral skills, made meaningful connections with singers from across the Atlantic, and plunged themselves into the Greek way of life. With the help of their tour guides from Atlas Workshop and the School's faculty chaperones, these performers had a memorable spring break filled with music and culture.

This adventure, however, wasn't easy to plan. Preparation for the Chorale trip to Greece started almost two years ago, and Choir Director Dr. Julie Hagen finalized the plans this last fall. In order to carefully plan, Dr. Hagen went on a scouting trip to Greece, looking at various places to bring the Chorale. Dr. Hagen said, "[I had] conversations with the tour companies, [and] with [The Director of Global Engagement, Ms. Ashley] Sinclair," to decide which tour company

offered the best guides around Greece. Section Leader Leanne Parks '25 said, "the guides became some of our best friends on the trip, and it was sad to leave those connections at the end." Although chaperoning a large group around the country was difficult, Dr. Hagen said, "the kids were just polite and kind ... it was fun for everyone to be together and connect."

The students sang every day, whether it was while walking through the streets shopping or performing with Greek students. Farrah McQueen '25 spoke about Eliana Gol, a singer she met in Nafplio — the first place the Chorale visited. McQueen said, "Eliana was really nice, and [we] clicked immediately ... In general, the students were really nice, friendly, and curious."

In addition to meeting fellow students, everyone on the trip experienced meaningful connections with each other. The group's favorite restaurant was A Little Taste of Home, a Syrian-Greek fusion restaurant. The students loved the food, so they invited the cook to their table, and everyone sang for him. The head chef, Mr. Ahmad Alssaleh, immigrated from Syria to Athens and started the restaurant to raise money for those strug-

gling in his hometown. McQueen said "I especially love these moments during the trip that were just kind of spontaneous. These types of moments are what the choir is about."

Layering on the feeling of community and camaraderie, trip chaperone Mr. Jorge Rodriguez shared a moment that he felt represented the whole trip. The group was walking down a pedestrian street when some of the students started singing "Dancing Queen" by ABBA. Slowly, the rest of the Chorale joined in, as well as Greek locals passing by. These impromptu performances helped the students improve their singing skills, adapting to singing whenever, wherever, and without warming up. Ultimately, their harmonies improved, and they were less afraid of performing without practice.

This trip to Greece left lasting memories, filled with ancient ruins, vibrant museums, and meaningful connections. Students not only strengthened their Chorale skills but also gained a fresh perspective on music and Greek culture. Their experiences and lessons will stay with them for years to come.

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## BEYOND THE MAGAZINE: LIT LAUNCHES

By **Bruce van Wingerden '28**  
*Reporter*

Amidst the busy last stretch of winter term, the smell of chocolate-dipped pretzels and other snacks wafted through the air. Listeners excitedly awaited open-mic poetry and musical performances, forgetting all about their Winter Term-End Experiences and spring break plans. This was The Lit's annual Launch Party.

For over five decades, Choate's student-run literary magazine, The Lit, has fostered creativity by bringing students together to celebrate writing and art. Meeting biweekly, the club hosts literary and artistic activities — such as a "Halloween Poetry" event — but its most memorable moments come three times a year when it publishes The Lit magazines.

The winter edition launched on March 1 with the annual Lit Launch Party — an event open to the entire Choate community. The celebration has featured acapella performances,

musical acts, live readings, and even stand-up comedy.

According to club members, the planning process is quite extensive. Of the many writing and art submissions they receive each term, about two-thirds are accepted. The club meets regularly to review submissions, host workshop writing, and organize events like the Lit Launch. The editorial team ensures that the selection process highlights various works, making space for new and experienced writers. Writers are encouraged to present their work at the event. Editor-in-Chief John Markley '25 added, "[I enjoy seeing] people going out of their comfort zone, reading in front of a whole bunch of people."

This year, the Lit Launch was held in the main space of the Student Activities Center. Snacks ranged from chocolate-covered pretzels to delicately crafted fruit tarts. Low lighting gave the space a cozy glow, with The Lit magazines scattered throughout the

space. Parker Jackson '28 said, "I felt at home and safe; there was a fuzzy vibe, as though you were wrapped in a warm blanket." He added, "[It was a] thought-provoking experience. It allowed people to express themselves uniquely in front of an intimate audience."

The event featured various performances, including acapella, acoustic performances, and poetry recitations. After listening to a poem recited by Rachel Fan '27, Jackson said he felt inspired to submit his writing to a future Lit issue.

The Lit Launch remains a meaningful publication in the Choate community — a celebration of creativity and self-expression. Whether through the magazine, workshops, or events like the Lit Launch, the club remains committed to nurturing a community of writers and artists, ensuring students have the opportunity to share their work.

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Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Piper Cameron '25 and Sofia Fronzi '26 perform at Lit Launch.

FIELD REPORT

Choate Spring Record

17 - 8 - 0

Varsity Games

Boys’ Lacrosse (4-0)  
vs. Berkshire, 10-5

Girls’ Softball (3-0)  
vs. Green Farms, 4-0

Boys’ Golf (2-0)  
vs. Avon Old Farms, 5-4

Girls’ Water Polo (1-0)  
vs. Williston, 12-4

Boys’ Volleyball (0-3)  
vs. Andover, 0-3

Girls’ Tennis (0-1)  
vs. NMH, 1-8

Boys’ Baseball(1-2)  
vs. Loomis, 0-3

Girls’ Lacrosse (2-1)  
vs. Exeter, 10-21

Boys’ Lacrosse (0-1)  
vs. Loomis, 6-10

Boys’ Tennis (1-0)  
vs. Westminster, 7-0

Boys’ Golf (1-0)  
vs. Avon Old Farms, 3-0

Boys’ Baseball (0-1)  
vs. Hopkins, 10-14

## SCHWERIN SCALES SEVENTH SUMMIT



Photo courtesy of Emma Schwerin '26

Schwerin poses on the summit of Mount Vinson in Antarctica.

By **Eliza O’Neill ’27**  
*Reporter*

From sleeping at base camps, carrying heavy loads, crossing large cracks in the ice, and facing unexpected weather, mountaineering pushes mental and physical endurance to the maximum. Yet, for Emma Schwerin ’26, a mountaineer from Montana, climbing to the peaks of the world’s tallest mountains is her passion. This spring, Schwerin is climbing Mount Everest — and when she reaches the peak, she will become the youngest woman ever to conquer the Seven Summits, the highest mountains of each of the continents.

Schwerin’s love for climbing began in her eighth-grade classroom when she watched a documentary about Mount Everest. “As I watched the documentary ... I [thought] ... ‘this is so cool,’ and I look[ed] over at all my friends ...they were terrified,” Schwerin recounted. Since then, she has pushed the limits of her physical and mental endurance while overcoming gender stereotypes in a “male-dominated sport.”

For Schwerin, physical training was the foundation of her preparation. “I train six days a week, anywhere from two to six hours a day,” she said. Since there is limited mountainous terrain near Choate, Schwerin

utilized the StairMaster in the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC) during the winter to simulate Everest-like conditions. She also used a high-altitude machine that helped her acclimatize to the reduced oxygen levels she would face on the mountain. “It ... takes a certain amount of oxygen out of the air ... I sleep with it, [and] I can use it while exercising,” she said.

Schwerin also highlighted the value of mental preparation. She met weekly with a coach on Zoom to review route videos, discuss potential disaster scenarios, and plan how she could manage unexpected obstacles or weather. “I have the route [to the summit] memorized... [but] if something kind of crazy happens, I’ll be prepared ... I’ll [know] in the back of my mind that I’ve [gone] through this [scenario] before,” she said.

Schwerin’s father and their guides will join her on the trek up Everest. “There’s a lot of people on the mountain, so you’re never really alone,” Schwerin said. There may be a possibility that her father will separate from her to summit at his own pace. Nonetheless, her guide will remain with her throughout her journey.

For Schwerin, Mount Everest presents a different cultural experience. “The Nepalese culture is really [represent-

ed] on the mountain ... there are prayer flags and prayer wheels everywhere,” she said. Schwerin also highlighted the distinct physical challenges each of the Seven Summits offered. “[Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania] was pretty easy, but there’s a different amount of ... trekking ... [compared to] Denali [in Alaska], which has a lot of heavy weight [carrying] ... Everest is different. It’s less strength and more endurance.”

While reflecting on her journey to climb the Seven Summits, Schwerin also shared the importance of establishing herself in a sport dominated by men. “[On every trip,] I’ve been the only woman or one of two ... and definitely the only kid ... it’s hard because I feel like a lot of times I have to prove myself,” she said. Schwerin added that she wanted to break through the gender barriers and “prove that women are able to do things that men haven’t done.”

Soon to be the youngest woman ever to climb all the Seven Summits, Schwerin’s accomplishments are more than just milestones — they embody her limitless mindset and drive to achieve greatness despite any underestimation.

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## NEW GOLF MONITORS

By **Teya Tejavibulya ’28**  
*Copy Editor*

This spring, Choate’s golf teams acquired two new personal launch monitors: tools that provide instant feedback to help players refine their swings. This advanced technology helped golfers track their progress in real time. Girls’ Varsity Golf Coach Will Morris shared that the monitors provided “more purpose and ... more structure” to their practice sessions and viewed them as a “game-changer” to the teams’ training.

“This season, [we are] looking at [each] individual, ... [reviewing] some of their shot qualities ... and then setting some goals [to make] progress,” Coach Morris said. By utilizing precise data from the monitor, players will work on specific areas of their game in preparation for future tournaments.

The portable launch monitors can track essential statistics such as ball speed, carry distance, and trajectory — data that professional golfers also rely on to improve their game. In addition to the statistics, the built-in camera captures a video after every shot, allowing golfers to analyze and fix their swings.

Boys’ Varsity Coach Eric Stahura shared that the data gathered from the monitor helps golfers “develop consistency, control distance, and understand how much spin they’re putting on each shot.” He also explained how the launch monitors were crucial in helping students develop their techniques. “Golfers can improve their swing through repetition and through getting consistent feedback ... the new technology is yet another tool for the golfers to get [more of] that feedback,” he said. These monitors provide information like spin rates and yardages to players to help them track their progress.

With the new technology incorporated into their regular training routines, Choate’s golfers will enhance their techniques with the new form of data analysis and step up their game with confidence.

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Photo by Yuki Suzuki '27/The Choate News

The new Rapsodo launch monitor stands in front of the hitting bay.

## CHOATE’S SPRING PRESEASON TRIPS

By **Rhea Doshi ’27**  
*Copy Editor*

Over the break, several of Choate’s spring sports teams went off-campus for preseason trips. The trips offered opportunities for athletes to bond and lay the groundwork for the upcoming season.

The Boys’ Varsity Baseball Team traveled to Davenport, Florida. “We made a concerted effort to schedule tough matchups against other quality teams.” Captain Simeon Levesque ’25 shared. The players also had the chance to cook, relax, and live together in shared Airbnbs. “We really [got] to know each of our teammates [on and] off the field,” Levesque said. “[I gained] a newfound appreciation for all the [team members’] different personalities and perspectives.”

Spring break was a landmark year for the Girls’ Varsity Water Polo Team. “This is ... the first trip Choate Girls’ Water Polo has ever been on,” Captain Maddy Childs ’26 said. The team had the opportunity to play clubs and high school teams in Irvine and Laguna Beach, California. They also had plenty of downtime for team bonding. “It gave us a chance to ... build connections ... we all just felt more comfortable together the next day in the pool,” Childs said.

The Girls’ Varsity Lacrosse Team took a high-intensity, game-play-focused approach on their preseason trip to Naples, Florida. “We focused on maximizing the amount of lacrosse we played,” Captain Alex Buterbaugh ’25 said. “We were finally able to identify areas we needed to improve as a team, which helped us set goals for the season.” Team camaraderie was strengthened by “randomly as-

signed roommates, which helped forge new relationships between different grade levels.” The team also had a practice with professional lacrosse player Kylie Ohlmiller of the New York Charging. “Kylie is an amazing role model for women’s sports. The team was very grateful for the opportunity to learn from one of the best in the game,” Buterbaugh said.

The Boys’ Varsity Lacrosse Team’s preseason trip to Conshohocken, Pennsylvania was different from previous years, focusing more on building relationships within the team. “We spent a lot of time building team chemistry off the field,” team member Oliver Nappi ’25 said. “Instead of two practice periods a day, we opted for one and then filled the other time with team bonding exercises.” During their downtime, the team played a paintball game, golf simulator, and watched an evening lacrosse game between Dartmouth College and the University of Pennsylvania.

The Girls’ Varsity Crew Team traveled to DeLand, Florida this spring. “We genuinely felt like a connected family,” Captain Cawthra Burns ’25 said. Burns also shared how Head Coach Stephanie Neul introduced a new team tradition, awarding an alligator figurine to “honor a player’s hard work after a practice game.”

Through their preseason excursions, Choate’s teams developed their technical skills and strengthened their camaraderie through team bonding events on and off the playing fields. As Buterbaugh said, the teams are ready to “get the most out of [their] practices and prepare better for games” this spring.

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## “DREAM SEASON:” CHOATE GIRLS WRESTLING MAKES HISTORY



Photo courtesy of @choatewrestling on Instagram

The Girls’ Varsity Wrestling Team poses for a photo after finishing 3rd overall at Prep Nationals.

By **Karolina Zaccareo ’27**  
*Reporter*

Due to their “total team effort,” the Girls’ Varsity Wrestling Head Coach Ryan Roddy described this wrestling season as a “dream.” The Girls Varsity Wrestling Team defeated the two-time defending winners, Phillips Academy Andover, at the New England Championships and took the gold for the first time in Choate history. Adding to their list of accomplishments this season, they became the first team in Connecticut to ever win the Beast of the East Wrestling Tournament, beating out more than 90 teams from all over the country.

Girls’ Varsity Wrestling Captain Elsa Holmes ’25 described winning the New England Championships and the Beast of the East Tournament as “a goal that we have been building up toward.” Lily Runez ’26, a new member of the Girls’ Varsity Wrestling Team echoed this sentiment. “The Beast of the East win and the early season wins really propelled us forward and gave us the confidence to do well later in the season,” Runez said.

Runez also believes that the Girls’ Varsity Wrestling Team’s achievements have “really put [them] on the map.” While re-

counting her experiences, she shared, “I don’t think we’ve ever been seen on a national stage like this ... it’s really huge for the program ... This is just the start, with a snowball effect that I think is going to keep growing.”

Holmes also emphasized how “all of the hard work has brought the team closer together ... Keeping each other motivated throughout the season has helped the program grow.” She also shared that some of her favorite moments were “watching [her teammates] dominate in their matches.”

Runez credits her teammates’ unwavering dedication and how every optional practice had large attendance. “These practices ... really strengthened our team bond, and also made us improve [over the course of] the season,” she said.

To add to their list of successes this season, the Girls’ Varsity Team won their division for the first time in school history in the Class A Championships. During Prep Nationals on February 22, Coach Roddy was named the Girls National Prep Head Coach of the Year. Furthermore, the team placed overall third at Prep Nationals out of 37 teams, while

Gilchrist celebrated her 125th career win. She also earned the Jimmy Detrixhe Memorial Scholar-Athlete Award at the tournament and gained the All-American title at the 6th U20 World Team Trials in Spokane, Washington from April 4 to 6.

With a winter season filled with numerous achievements and new titles for Choate’s Girls’ Wrestling Team, Coach Roddy shared that “every single match ... [was] really a testament to what our girls’ program has [achieved].” He added, “I’ve coached for 15 years ... [but] the past three years have been some of the most fun years of [my] coaching [career] ... Every single one of our matches, we have girls on the sideline cheering you on. Win or lose, someone is going to be there for your best or worst times.”

As the Choate Wrestling Teams’ Instagram page @choatewrestling stated, these athletes are looking ahead to the “brightest of futures” after their accomplishments this season.

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