



THE CHOATE NEWS

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Photo by Renee Jiang / The Choate News

On December 18, Meagan Best '20 took second place in the under-19 U.S. Squash Open. See **SPORTS**, Page 8

MURPHY ZINK '21 COMPETES IN COMPUTER-AIDED DESIGN TOURNAMENT

By **Varun Ramamurthi '22**
Reporter

This past December, Declan Murphy Zink '21 placed seventh out of seventy-one contestants at the F4 CADathon, a biannual competition in which teams of one to three students are given a set period of time to create a CAD model of an object that can perform a specific task. Murphy Zink represented the Wired Boars, Choate's robotics team, in the three-day online contest.

CAD stands for Computer-Aided Design. At Choate, CAD is used by the Wired Boars to construct virtual models of prototype competition robots, which can then serve as a 3D blueprints.

CAD is similar to modeling software used for other tasks, including 3D printing. Max Zhang '22, a member of the Wired Boars and the Advanced Robotics Concentration program, summarized his experience with CAD in the robotics lab: "Everything in robotics is modeled with CAD," he explained. "There's a CAD team and a build team that together make up the Wired Boars." Zhang explained that Murphy Zink is the official captain of the CAD team within the Wired Boars, which uses the program "Solidworks" to develop their designs.

As Murphy Zink put it, "It's essentially just 3D modeling

Everything in robotics is modeled with CAD. There's a CAD team and a build team that together make up the Wired Boars.

Max Zhang '22

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NEW FACULTY GROUP EXAMINES WHITE PERSPECTIVES ON RACE

By **Alexis Lien '23**
Reporter

White Anti-Racist Educators (WARE) is a recently established group of white-identifying Choate faculty devoted to understanding the roles that white individuals play in conversations about racism. The group acknowledges that as educators, their approach toward race-related issues will directly impact how students who identify as white perceive and understand racism.

WARE, which was formed last fall, meets monthly on Saturday mornings at Director of Faculty Development Mr. Thomas White's house. Discussions have been focused on the cultural and racial history and development of "whiteness" and the evolving meaning of what it means to be white. The team has also examined how these views are translated into today's laws and statutes. WARE has analyzed passages from the book *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race*, by Debby Irving, to guide their learning. Members have shared personal testimonials during meetings, and journaled to reflect on their roles in the community.

Each member of WARE joined the group in a different way. French and English teacher Dr. Katie Jewett said, "I came to it in large part because of my students. I had a French 300 class in the fall of 2016 where I was for the first time a racial minority in my classroom, and I had some really outstanding, outspoken students who opened up some really good conversations."

Mr. White shared how he became part of the team. He

said, "So there are a couple of us who had been to the White Privilege conference and had seen and heard in other places and other contexts about White Anti-Racist Educator groups, and so we thought that this would be a valuable group to have here at Choate."

The sessions examine the inherent biases and judgments that one is likely to hold as a white person, and how to reconsider the experiences of a person of color. These findings can be integrated into the Choate community as the team discusses issues of racism and white supremacy that have emerged locally, such as flyers that were posted around Wallingford last fall that read "It's okay to be white." The group believes that people who identify as white should utilize their race as a platform to advocate against racism.

Spanish teacher Ms. Amanda Arcand said that the role of WARE on Choate's campus is to use "white privilege to help dismantle the inequitable structures in place, making sure, for example, that if there is a committee, the demographics of the committee represent the demographics of our school at large — or if I have a reading list, that my authors are appropriately diverse."

As white educators who firmly hold anti-racist beliefs, faculty who are a member of WARE believe it is important to understand ways to make the learning environment safe and respectful for all races. Ms. Katie Levesque, Dean of Faculty, said, "If I better understand whiteness in the history of racism, in the United States, I hope that that helps me to better sup-

port both my white students in my work in the classroom, and my students of color."

The group's overarching goal is to foster an environment where individuals are more conscious of how their own implicit biases influence their perspectives and their interactions with members of the Choate community.

Reflecting on her takeaway from the WARE sessions, Ms. Arcand said, "I've primarily just come to recognize how my own white identity through much of my life was largely unexamined...it is helping to better understand how racism works in this country, how it is an inevitable part of my socialization as a white person."

Math teacher Mr. Zachary Kafoglis explained that he believes it is important to both be proactive and willing to step back and listen. He said, "I think that it is really important for a white person to not just be a listener. I think that a white person needs to be a do-er but also needs to worry about the traps of white saviorism. So I think it involves being really attentive to the folks around you, being willing to acknowledge your mistakes and understand that that is part of growing."

Not understanding the role white people can play in conversations about racism can undermine the conversation for both whites and people of color. WARE hopes their mission to raise awareness of a broader societal racial empathy gap can help further discussions of diversity at Choate.

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With Less Student Interest, Number of Campus Publications Drops



Photo by Ula Lucas / The Choate News

Volumes displayed in the library are often outdated as publications fail to reach deadlines each term.

By **Claire Yuan '21**
Associate Editor

From magazines that cover the latest sports games to those that discuss the newest fashion trends, Choate boasts a rich variety of publications. Unfortunately, members of Choate's Committee on Student Activities (COSA) have noted a decline in campus publications over recent years, both in number and activity: not only are there fewer publications, but many that exist simply do not publish regularly enough to maintain an active presence on campus.

According to COSA, the number of publications on campus fell from 13 publications last spring to 8 this fall and of the 8 publications that were recognized this fall, 3 of the clubs missed the publishing deadline set by COSA's Publication Committee.

One of the major issues publication mastheads face is a decrease in interested writers.

[The Currency] used to have 30 or 40 writers my freshman year and sophomore year, but this year we probably only had about 10 writers.

Kate Spencer '20

Allen Zheng '21, a member of COSA's Publication Committee, said, "When publications don't get enough writers, what happens is you get a bunch of publications with huge mastheads of five or ten people but not enough writers.

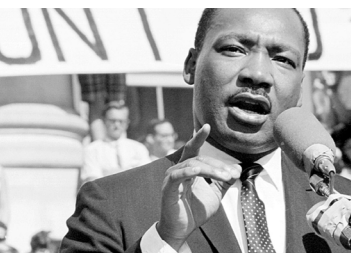
They just end up writing their own articles, which is not what we want for the publications on campus. We want the community to be involved in them and invested in them."

Many publication leaders agree that the foremost obstacle to more frequent publishing and increased activity is a general decline in interested student writers. Kate Spencer '20, Editor-in-Chief of *The Currency* and *Envision*, said, "This year, we really experienced a decrease in writers. For *Envision*, we postponed our fall issue to winter because we didn't have enough articles. And I think interest has gone down for *The Currency*; we used to have 30 or 40 writers my freshman year and sophomore year, but this year we probably only had about 10 writers."

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APPROVED SIXTH-FORM CONSOLE INITIATIVE STILL NOT IMPLEMENTED

By **Praj Chirathivat '22**
Staff Reporter

At the beginning of the winter term, the Student Council and Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez approved an initiative granting sixth formers Wi-Fi access for video game consoles in their rooms. The Information Technology Services department, however, has yet to actually extend those privileges to the entire senior class. Currently, Mr. Velez is working to establish a timeline with Mr. Speyer.

Sixth former Gavin Galiardo '20 voiced his frustrations: "I thought I would be able to have the privilege to use my console in winter term, as the student body president informed us that the decision was passed. I have been waiting since the start of the term but am continually denied access to connect to Wi-Fi."

"All seniors should get the same privileges. We are trustworthy," said PJ Sethbhakdi '20, a prefect at the KEC. Although prefects have already had video game console privileges since the start of the school year, the deans have been discuss-

ing when to give the green light to the entire form. Mr. Velez said, "While we want to extend gaming opportunities to the senior class, we are looking at their moral conduct and responsibility with commitments. Collectively as a class, if they are doing those things, it will push the timing in terms of when we will allow gaming consoles to be registered by IT."

The deans are also aware of the potential dangers that come with allowing more technology use in dorms, such as possible invasions of privacy. "The policy has evolved, and we are seeing more VR and other forms of gaming. For some of these devices, we need to be mindful of privacy issues. Are we protecting individuals' privacy when these technological devices are on our network?" Mr. Velez asked.

This potential risk is partly why initiatives like video gaming console privileges generally take longer to be approved.

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Graphic by **Sesame Gaetsaloe**/The Choate News

Exactly when seniors will be granted console privileges remains unclear.

You've Got Mail: A Peek into Choate's Mailroom

By **Grace Liu '23**
Reporter

To Mr. Peter Dupont, the most significant trend during his time as Choate's mailroom supervisor has been a drastic increase in the number of packages received from e-commerce sites. "When I started here, we were receiving around 70 packages per day. Now, we get around 350, mostly from Amazon. We've passed 500 packages in a day eight times since September. Some faculty have gotten over 400 packages since the start of the school year because that's just how they do all their shopping," Mr. Dupont said. Indeed, the online shopping market has grown exponentially in the last decade. According to a study by Internet Retailer, e-commerce sales have gone from being just 5.1% of all retail sales in 2007 to 14.3% in 2018.

Though the mailroom is a place that Choate students and faculty frequent on a regular basis, many are not fully aware of the process behind the arrival and organization of their Amazon packages or parcels from family.

A group of three Choate staff — Mr. Dupont, Ms. Sarah Case, and Mr. Nermin Duracak — make everything possible.

Incoming mail from outside shipping carriers such as the United States Postal Service (USPS) or United Parcel Service (UPS) is first separated by category of recipient: faculty or student. The mail is then organized according to shape, divided based on whether an item is



Photo by **Renee Jiang**/The Choate News

The mailroom has had to adjust to an influx of packages from Amazon in recent years.

a flat letter or a package. Both types of mail are then sorted alphabetically by last name.

The mailboxes are in alphabetical order like the sorted mail, which expedites the delivery process by eliminating the need for staff to constantly move back and forth across the mailroom.

Larger packages are scanned into a computer program that automatically identifies the recipient of the package and sends an email to their Choate account, notifying them to pick up their mail. The box is then marked on the outside with the recipient's name and shelved according to last name.

With the opening of St. John Hall in 2017, the previous Student Activities Center was vacated, including the old mailroom that was located in the basement. Mr. Dupont has worked in the mailroom since

2009 and is grateful for the change in location. Mr. Dupont believes that, overall, the new space makes the jobs of the mailroom staff much simpler.

"The old mailroom was terrible. The mailboxes were only three by four inches long, preventing us from fitting mail inside, and the locks were finicky and always broken. The only downfall I can see to the new setup is that bigger mailboxes mean that the room is bigger, so it takes more time to walk around and deliver the mail," Mr. Dupont said.

Despite the drastic increase in packages, Mr. Dupont has not noticed a considerable change in mailbox usage during his time working in the mailroom. He theorizes that this is because when he started, email and text messaging were already well-established

methods of communication. Overall, Mr. Dupont estimates that only around 1% of students regularly receive personal mail in their mailboxes.

A service in the mailroom that Mr. Dupont wishes was more used among students is the lost-and-found. He said, "I can tell students aren't aware of the lost-and-found because some of the things in there are expensive. We get a lot of coats, sweatshirts, phone chargers, and earbuds. By the end of the year, it's always packed." At the end of spring term each year, the contents of the lost-and-found are displayed in St. John Hall, and what is not claimed is donated. The lost-and-found is open whenever the mailroom is open.

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CHOATE PUBLICATIONS IN STEEP DECLINE

Continued from Page 1

Cici Curran '20, Editor-in-Chief of *The Press*, also noted the challenge in getting enough articles for an issue. She said, "Some clubs publish a lot the first year, but then after that they don't get as many writers. Or sometimes, if you only publish once a term, you expect longer articles, and then people are less motivated to write [them]." Curran also noticed a disparity in the quality of writing: while freshmen might be more willing to write for more publications, they often have less experience writing than upperclassmen.

Another major hurdle for publications on campus is the lack of student interest in learning layout. As the number of writers has decreased, the ability to create effective publication layouts has lagged even further behind. Kiki Kim '20, chief layout editor for numerous publications on campus including *Choate Public Health*, *Envision*, and *Valour*, stated, "As far as I know, I am one of

the three people that do layout for multiple publications. I can sympathize with people that hesitate to get into layout as there is a steep learning curve. This requires a large time commitment for people to reach a level of proficiency with the software, which can be challenging for Choate students with busy schedules."

Producing a magazine, in general, takes a lot more thought and planning than a club. It's a very slow process.

Nico Campbell '21

Some publications have also found it difficult to follow a more rigid, fast-paced publishing schedule. Nico Campbell '21, editor-in-chief of *Lorem Ipsum** and *Voices*, said, "People tend to underestimate the time spent between a club and a publication. Some clubs

do a lot, obviously, but producing a magazine, in general, takes a lot more thought and planning than a club. It's a very slow process."

In order to help guide mastheads through the publication process, COSA created its Publication Committee last year, providing support to publication leaders and instituting deadlines each term that publications must meet. Zheng said, "When you're starting a new publication, it can be hard to know how to get writers, how to format — those kinds of things. And obviously COSA realized that a lot of publications were struggling."

Zheng continued, "We sent out a pamphlet in the beginning of the year teaching publications how to format, and we set a guideline for publications to publish once a term before a certain deadline. We want to be a resource to publications, so if they need help, they can just reach out to us."

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MURPHY ZINK IMPRESSES AS ONE-MAN TEAM

Continued from Page 1

for structures." Murphy Zink found out about the competition, F4 CADathon, by doing some reading on the robotics forum Chief Delphi. In the competition, each team of up to three contestants had three days to make a CAD model of a robot that would take hockey pucks and slide them into rings for points.

Despite the rules allowing him to participate with teammates, Murphy Zink participated as a solo competitor over

the winter break. There were three criteria the judges used to rank each CAD model: creativity, level of detail, and potential success of the design. Due to his lack of teammates, Murphy Zink explained that his experience competing in the F4 CADathon was very different from his work in other CAD competitions in previous years: "I worked at home on my computer for days, so it is interesting to go through that as opposed to a physical tournament where you can see who you are competing against."

Despite the long hours of individual work, Murphy Zink sees a lot of potential in the program: "For the future of CAD, I see a movement towards generative design, which is when you define certain parameters of what you want. Then, the computer can create a shape to fit those parameters. Essentially, it is a movement towards computers doing more and more of the actual design work."

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A Preview of Diversity Day 2020



Graphic by **Chandler Littleford**/The Choate News

Around eighty student facilitators have received training throughout the year to prepare for workshops.

By **JeeHwan Kim '21**
Associate Editor

Every year, preparing for Diversity Day requires an immense amount of effort and collaboration by Director of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Keith Hinderlie, Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion Mr. Filipe Camarotti, students on the Planning Committee, and Diversity Day student facilitators. Although this year's preparation process has been largely consistent with that of previous years, there are two major changes to this year's program: all students will hear a keynote speaker instead of watching a film, and fourth, fifth, and sixth formers will be participating in discussion-based workshops on a variety of topics that students themselves have chosen.

Choate invited facilitator and educator Dr. Liza Talusan to be this year's keynote speaker. She appeared in the film, *I'm Not Racist... Am I?*, which was shown as part of last year's Diversity Day program. According to Dr. Hinderlie, Dr. Talusan's speech will focus on how

to engage appropriately in difficult conversations concerning diversity and inclusion. He hopes that Dr. Talusan will help members of the Choate community better communicate across differences.

Another major change for this year's Diversity Day is that fourth formers, along with upperclassmen, will not only be engaging in activity-based workshops but in discussion-based ones as well. According to Dr. Hinderlie, feedback from previous years indicated that the activity-based workshops were repetitive, and fourth form students were already familiar with the themes that the activities aimed to introduce. As a result, a survey with potential topics for discussion were sent out to the Choate community on November 21. The discussion topics that received the most votes in the poll were then sent out in another survey on Friday, January 10, to fourth, fifth, and sixth formers, who were asked to rank their top five interests. The 15 workshops covered topics like how to be an effective ally to marginalized groups,

the inner workings of affirmative action in the college process, and how colorism affects hookup culture at Choate. The Diversity Day Planning Committee plans to take the information from this survey to assign students to the workshops focused on the topics they are most interested in.

The Diversity Day Planning Committee, which consists of the leaders of student clubs that have a major focus on diversity, have met weekly since late October to help plan the events of the day and generate discussion topics. In addition to the committee, there are approximately 80 student facilitators this year. Before Diversity Day, which will take place this Monday, they will have participated in three training sessions led by members of the planning committee to practice managing difficult situations and leading safe discussions. Dr. Hinderlie said that the facilitators are excited and prepared and expect the discussions to flow smoothly.

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NEW HAVEN PROTESTERS CALL FOR U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM MIDDLE EAST



Photo courtesy of Liberation Newspaper

Anti-war demonstrators gather in New Haven on January 5 to protest the escalation of U.S.-Iran tensions.

By **Amanda Li '21**
Associate Editor

On Sunday, January 5, more than 150 citizens gathered on the New Haven Green to demand the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Middle East as part of the Act Now to Stop War & End Racism (ANSWER) Coalition's National Day of Action. The hour-long event was endorsed by many anti-war organizations including Codepink, Popular Resistance, Veterans for Peace, and World Beyond War. Protests were also organized at more than 40 locations across the country, including in Times Square, in front of the White House, and at the doorstep of Trump Tower in Chicago.

In response to the December 31 attack by Iranian protesters on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, the National Day of Action was cre-

ated with the hope that it would "catalyze a new anti-war movement to challenge the unfettered military of the Trump administration," said Ms. Maia Leonardo, an ANSWER coalition organizer and one of the speakers at the New Haven protest. Frustrated with recent military actions taken by President Donald J. Trump P'oo, the protestors expressed their dissatisfaction through chants, posters, and speeches.

Speakers from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), 350CT, and Connecticut Progressives spoke about the repercussions of U.S. military intervention in the Middle East. "We tried to present as diverse a message as we could while still giving the same message: withdrawing the U.S. out of the Middle East," said Ms. Leonardo.

Mr. Fahd Syed, the imam of the United Muslim Mosque in Waterbury and a member of CAIR, reflected on his personal experiences in his speech, recalling, "When I travel abroad, one of the first things [Middle Easterners] tell me is 'Why do Americans hate us? Why do they want to kill us?'"

"There was a fiery passion; people felt very impassioned about what they were believing in," said Ms. Shawnte Passmore, a WFSB reporter who covered the event. According to Ms. Passmore, chants of "Who's the biggest terrorist? U.S. imperialism!" and "What do we want? No war!" echoed throughout the area.

The assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, which occurred two days prior to the protest, highlighted the severity of the issue for the protesters. "It

heightened the focus: this is not just about getting U.S. troops out of Iraq; this is about preventing a catalytic war with Iran," said Ms. Leonardo. Each of the speakers took time from their speech to condemn the drone attack as unlawful and unjust.

Ms. Leonardo closed the protest with a speech criticizing the hypocrisy of current U.S. military policies, arguing that excessive military spending has, in part, neglected the needs of citizens and veterans. "There's not enough money to fund the V.A. and get veterans the healthcare they need. There's not enough money for education. There's not enough money to combat global warming. But there's always money for war," she said. She emphasized the devastation inflicted upon Iraq by U.S. and coalition forces and the deaths

of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the country.

According to Ms. Leonardo, the ANSWER coalition hopes that these protests will change public opinion and pressure the U.S. government to withdraw U.S. troops from the Middle East. "If [the protesters'] objective was to reach the news and have a presence on social media, then those objectives were met," said Ms. Passmore.

With the ANSWER coalition's next Global Day of Action scheduled for January 25, the organization hopes that attendees will continue to stay active and vocal about the movement. "Ultimately, change must come from globalized people rather than depending on elected officials," Ms. Leonardo said.

Amanda Li may be reached at ali21@choate.edu

Community Calendar

JAN. 17, 8:00 p.m.

Snoop Dogg: "I Wanna Thank Me" Tour
Jam out to some classic rap anthems with hip hop legend Snoop Dogg.

Oakdale Theater
\$60 general admission

JAN. 18, 10:00 a.m.

51st Annual Hartford Boat Show
Check out hundreds of luxury motor yachts, sport-fishing boats, pontoon boats, inflatables, and paddle boards.

Mohegan Sun, Uncasville
\$15 general admission

JAN. 18, 10:00 a.m.

Around the World: China
View a screening of Redoubt, a dialogue-free film following the Roman goddess Diana's hunt for an elusive wolf.

Davis Street School, New Haven
Free admission; no registration required; \$20 car ride

JAN. 18, 11:00 a.m.

Disney on Ice
Watch your favorite Disney movies come to life on the ice.

XL Center, Hartford
\$15-\$80 admission; tickets available online; \$30 car ride

JAN. 18, 2:00 p.m.

Wallingford Writers Community
Meet up with local authors to learn about the writing craft.

Wallingford Public Library
Free admission; no registration required

HISTORIC HARTFORD FIREHOUSE CLOSES



Photo courtesy of NBC Connecticut

The 102-year-old firehouse closed on January 6.

By **Linda Phan '22**
Reporter

Having served the local community for over a century, a historic firehouse in Hartford left a void in the hearts of many citizens after it closed its doors on January 6.

Located on Pearl Street, the 102-year-old firehouse operated as a headquarters for firemen protecting downtown Hartford. Firemen stationed at this firehouse have responded to countless emergencies over the past century, including the 2003 Greenwood Health Center fire, which killed 10 residents.

In recent years, the conditions of the firehouse have deteriorated. Water damage and mold have penetrated the walls of the building, and plumbing, heating, and ventilation systems have worn down.

Over the past four years, Hartford has allocated approximately \$40,000 to renovating the fire station. However, the city's attempts to restore the building have been mostly unsuccessful. According to the *Hartford Courant*, retired Fire Chief Charles Teale, who served as the chief of the station from 2000 to 2010, said, "It would be wonderful to see it saved, but I don't think it's possible."

Many downtown Hartford residents and businesses are concerned about how the closing of the firehouse will affect emergency response times in the area. "Every morning when my mom drove me to school, we would see the firehouse. The presence of the firehouse was a symbol of peace and security to me," said Edwin Lopez '23, a Choate student who lives in downtown Hartford. "I think it is quite sad that symbol won't be there any longer."

The sixteen firefighters that were stationed at the firehouse and their equipment have been relocated to the Sisson Avenue firehouse. Still, Lopez said, "It won't be the same drive by the firehouse with no firefighters."

While many developers have demonstrated interest in the building, no plans have been confirmed yet. Because the fire station is listed under the National Register of Historical Places, and is protected under the Hartford Preservation Ordinance, no changes can be made to the exterior of the building. As of now, the future of the 64,000-square-foot building remains unclear.

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By **Peter DiNatale '21**
Associate Editor

Perhaps the most popular restaurant among Choate students, Colony Diner has served inexpensive yet tasty meals to the Wallingford community since it opened in 2004.

Located on North Colony Road in Wallingford, the restaurant offers a variety of meal options. For breakfast, one of the most popular items on the menu is the "craft your own omelette section," which allows the customer to choose from several combinations of toppings. The diner also offers dishes for lunch and dinner, including Italian classics such as shrimp scampi and chicken parmigiana.

The owner of Colony Diner, Mr. Eric Celik, went through an exciting journey in order to pursue his culinary career. His path began in Turkey, and from there he immigrated to Connecticut in search of opportunity. Mr. Celik started his career working as a dishwasher and busboy at 91 Diner in New Haven, CT. "My first job gave me the time and experience I needed to learn English, admire American culture, and develop a passion for food," he writes on Colony Diner's website.

After working at 91 Diner, Mr. Celik worked at Pop's Fami-



Photo courtesy of Happy Cow

Colony Diner serves a variety of dishes, including quesadillas and homestyle fries.

ly Restaurant in Milford, CT. He worked there for seven years as a chef, further exploring his pas-

Colony Diner
611 North Colony Rd.
Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner

sion for cooking. Before opening Colony Diner, he purchased Miss Washington Diner in New Brit-

ain, CT, the first business that he managed. "I have navigated every part of the restaurant chain, truly starting at the very bottom and slowly but surely working my way up," Mr. Celik writes.

Finally, after spending several years building his culinary career, Mr. Celik opened Colony Diner. The restaurant has grown to be one of the busiest eateries in town. Mr. Celik keeps the diner open 15 hours

each week day and 21 hours on the weekends.

"My team, my family, and I are proud that Colony Diner can provide the best dining experience we know how," Mr. Celik writes. "Colony Diner is where people go to eat great food at fair prices, receive exceptional service, and enjoy a cozy, family atmosphere."

Peter DiNatale may be reached at pdinatale21@choate.edu



The Choate News presents...



The Great Debate

Should the U.S. have killed Soleimani?

<p>By Alex Aronov '22 <i>Staff Reporter</i></p> <p>General Qasem Soleimani, former commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, was a vicious terrorist, heartless mass murderer, and military leader with no respect for human life. He was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans in the Iraq War, re-armed the radical Islamic terrorists Hezbollah near Israel, aided the terrorist Houthis, contributed to the building of Islamic Jihad along the Gaza Strip, supported the Assad regime fighting for control of Syria, and was responsible for terror attacks against the U.S. in Iraq and worldwide. The idea that killing Soleimani was morally wrong is simply untrue. Looking back, was it a viable strategic and diplomatic move to kill Soleimani, and what should the U.S. do moving forward?</p> <p>There are many arguments against killing Soleimani, one being that this attack was an assassination, which is in violation of American law under Executive Order 2.11: Prohibition on Assassination. The Left pointed to this executive order created by former president Ronald Reagan, which banned assassinations of foreign officials by the U.S. The key difference in the killing of Soleimani was that he and the</p>	<p>Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps were categorized as terrorists earlier in the year, making Soleimani not an official in a legal government but a criminal. Additionally, because he was outside of Iran at the time of his death, this was merely the elimination of a terrorist in an ally's territory.</p> <p><i>Iran abused its situation, and after years of taking the hits, the United States finally defended its citizens, its allies, and its sovereignty.</i></p> <p>Democrats further cited that President Donald J. Trump P'oo delegated the use of military force without Congressional approval. This is not true, however, as the attack happened in Iraq, where there was already an American military presence, granting Trump, as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. military, the authority to act based on past authorization. The other narrative brought forth by opponents of Soleima-</p>	<p>ni's death is that Trump's strike exacerbated the pre-existing tensions between the U.S. and Iran. This statement completely disregards Iran's actions in the past and pushes blame onto Trump instead. In the past two years alone, Iran has attacked internationally flagged ships in the Strait of Hormuz, fired rockets upon Americans in Iraq, downed American drones flying over Iraq, and most recently, attacked and burned down the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Iran abused its situation, and after years of taking the hits, the United States finally defended its citizens, its allies, and its sovereignty.</p> <p>The goal of the attack was to re-establish deterrence, something lost under the Obama administration with the signing of the Iranian Nuclear Deal. Now, Iran will threaten and try to intimidate the U.S. — in fact, it has already attempted to do so — but it ultimately wouldn't dare risk war with us. And if they do, we will fight back with minimal U.S. casualties. Although the killing of Soleimani can be seen as a risky and alarming move, it gives the United States the best strategic outcome to end terror in Iran and finally establish a democratic Middle East.</p> <p>Alex Aronov is a fourth-former from Chicago. He may be reached at aaronov22@choate.edu</p>	<p>By Sabahat Rahman '21 <i>Staff Reporter</i></p> <p>Two weeks ago, the death of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani took the media by storm with what one American expatriate in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia described as “the most major development in the Middle East of the last ten years.” The events following the attack demonstrated that the top Iranian general's assassination was a brash, unmediated, and dangerous move.</p> <p>For one, President Donald J. Trump P'oo carried out the attack without Congressional approval, leaving many in Congress feeling frustrated and overlooked. Democratic Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy, tweeted, “Did America just assassinate, without any congressional authorization, the second most powerful person in Iran, knowingly setting off a potential massive regional war?” President Trump's spontaneous decision to kill Soleimani left his fellow lawmakers more mistrusting of him than ever. In a time of American bipartisanship and political polarization, the last thing President Trump should have done was make such a risky decision without first consulting members of Congress.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is clear that the repercussions of Soleimani's assassination have had disastrous effects on many people's lives, both in the United States</p>	<p>and Iran. Memes and TikTok videos of getting drafted into the U.S. military, which went viral in the days following Soleimani's death, hinted at a much scarier reality: thousands of American soldiers have already been sent to the Middle East. Following Soleimani's death, Iranians across the country rallied for revenge and unified behind the front of defeating the U.S. The Iranian government went so far as to launch missiles at two American bases in Iraq.</p> <p><i>Trump's killing of Soleimani only jeopardizes principles of justice and decency fundamental to the U.S.</i></p> <p>The assassination of Qasem Soleimani was a poor decision by the White House because its repercussions have not only hurt Iranian citizens, but also those aboard a Boeing 737. The Iranian government launched two surface-to-air missiles at a Boeing 737, thinking they were hitting an American plane. The crash resulted in the deaths of all 176 people on board. Trump may have intended to kill a single man, but he inadvertently endangered or killed thousands of others. The danger</p>	<p>within Iran has exponentially increased, and the country now fears that even a passenger aircraft may be a threat to its sovereignty.</p> <p>When U.S. President Barack Obama ordered the raid that killed Osama bin Laden in 2011, the White House was relatively solemn and subdued about the killing. On the other hand, President Trump tweeted an American flag minutes before the Pentagon confirmed they had killed Soleimani. He cheered at his first rally of 2020 in Toledo, Ohio, saying that Soleimani “was a bloodthirsty terror and now he's no longer a terror, he's dead.” His death could be argued as a necessity, but the fact that it was celebrated is perhaps just as “bloodthirsty.” How barbaric is it to celebrate murdering someone, especially when the victim was shot unaware? And what positive effect did it produce, except to further infuriate Iranians and incite their anger? Trump's killing of Soleimani only jeopardizes principles of justice and decency fundamental to the U.S.</p> <p>In killing Soleimani, the White House aggravated its already fragile relationship with Iran. Now, if tension isn't resolved, we will all suffer its consequences.</p> <p>Sabahat Rahman is a fifth-former from Dhahran. She may be reached at srahman21@choate.edu</p>
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FLAWED IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS: AN ATTACK ON AMERICAN VALUES



On January 15, the House voted to send the articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump P'00 to the Senate.

Photo courtesy of Politico

<p>By Niki Gummadi '21 <i>Associate Editor</i></p> <p>On December 18, 2019, the United States House of Representatives approved articles of impeachment against President Donald J. Trump P'00, making him the third U.S. president in history to be impeached. The House charged Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress in the wake of the Ukraine scandal, in which Trump was accused of soliciting the help of foreign powers to help him win a 2020 reelection. Regardless of whether or not Trump is guilty of all the allegations, there is no doubt that the method with which congressional Republicans have handled the impeachment process will only hurt the American public in the long run.</p> <p>On January 6, John Bolton, former National Security Adviser to President Trump, announced that he would be willing to testify in Trump's impeachment trial if</p>	<p>the Senate were to subpoena him. After hearing this, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced that he would move forward with the impeachment trial without making any deals about which witnesses would be called to testify or which evidence would be considered. This was a thinly veiled attempt to block Bolton, someone with deep knowledge of Trump's activity in Ukraine, from testifying against his former boss. In light of McConnell's announcement, the American public must ask itself what the Majority Leader is trying to hide. If, as congressional Republicans insist, Trump truly has done nothing wrong, there would be no harm in allowing Bolton to testify. Republicans have a responsibility to prioritize protecting their constituents from a corrupt government over adhering to party loyalty.</p> <p>Throughout the impeachment process, Republicans have consistently shown that they are</p>	<p>more dedicated to their president than they are to the truth, and, by effect, their country. During the House impeachment inquiry, the White House successfully blocked the subpoenas of important documents and stonewalled testimony from many of Trump's advisers. Despite this blatant attempt at a cover-up, congressional Republicans have yet to put their foot down. In fact, they have done quite the opposite. For weeks, McConnell has promised a “speedy acquittal,” a promise that is concerning when one takes into account that McConnell has yet to see any evidence. Essentially, McConnell is promising to allow President Trump to get off scot-free, regardless of innocence. The American people deserve a fair trial — one that is influenced by evidence and reliable testimony, not a Republican power grab.</p> <p>Republicans in the Senate, McConnell in particular, have been claiming that their handling of the trial is based on the nation's most</p>	<p>recent example: the impeachment of former president Bill Clinton. However, this argument is invalid for many reasons. For one, there are stark differences between the two president's attitudes about their impeachments. Clinton spoke about his impeachment in 1998, saying, “It's not in my hands. It's in the hands of Congress and the people of this country.” Trump has echoed the exact opposite sentiment by sending out multiple tweets calling his impeachment a “hoax” and a “witch hunt.” His use of Twitter is a desperate attempt to undermine the impeachment process. Through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the United States Constitution says that no one government official is above the rule of law, not even the president: “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based</p>	<p>on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.” Clinton acknowledged this Constitutional cornerstone, but Donald Trump choose to neglect it, which is why McConnell cannot simply use the same “template” as the Clinton hearings. In addition, because Clinton was aware that he was not above the law, the House of Representatives was able to carry out an impeachment inquiry with all the relevant documents and necessary witnesses. Because of this, the 1998 Senate was able to hold a trial that took all the available information into account. This is not the case with President Trump. The current Senate will be operating on a completely different playing field because they will not be privy to the same amount of information that the 1998 Senate was. So, Mitch McConnell must create a new set of rules to govern Trump's trial so that the Senate can make an informed decision.</p>	<p>Congressional Republicans might think that their stonewalling of the impeachment trial is giving them more power, but they are only undermining American strength in the process. If we allow this president to invite foreign interference in American affairs and later meddle in the impeachment process when he gets caught, what is stopping a future president from doing the same? Republicans would do well to realize that there is no guarantee that this will not happen again, and it might not be a Republican president next time. If the Republicans are able to hold Donald Trump accountable and set a precedent of fair, unbiased trials, it will be not only a show of good faith to the American public but, ultimately, an act of self-preservation.</p> <p>Niki Gummadi is a fifth-former from Ocala, Fla. She may be reached at ngummadi21@choate.edu</p>
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Joe's Customs, Choate's Newest Student-Run Business

By **Natarsha Yan '21**
Staff Reporter

As countless entrepreneurs have proven time and time again, the merging of passion and work has the potential to produce innovative and successful businesses. But businesses don't need to be on Shark Tank to thrive; here on campus, we have some of our own developing businesses. Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Macie Simmons '22 and Alex Reitman '22, the two students behind the newest business on campus: Joe's Customs.

Joe's Customs, a custom phone-case business, began as a casual joke between friends. Reitman often posted photos of his artwork online, and friends around him soon began taking notice of his paintings and drawings. After people saw a phone case cover that Reitman designed for himself, they began to wonder

if he might be able to paint their phone cases, too.

After an increasing number of requests from fellow students, Reitman asked fellow art student Simmons to collaborate. Last fall, just before Thanksgiving break, they officially established Joe's Customs as a business.

Reitman and Simmons painstakingly paint all of their products by hand, and each phone case is a careful artistic rendition characterized by bold strokes and bright colors. Though it's only been two months since the advent of Joe's Customs, the business has sold fifteen phone cases, and all customer feedback has been resoundingly positive.

When asked about the origins of the name "Joe's Customs," the pair immediately turned to each other and laughed. "There is no specific meaning behind the name," they explained. "We just thought of the most generic name



Alex Reitman '22 works on a new design. Photo courtesy of Macie Simmons

— Joe — and came up with the whole thing randomly."

The actual process of designing the phone cases is surprisingly simple, but the task of painting is anything but. Reitman explained that they first tape over the edges of the

phone cases that will not be painted. Next, they cover the case in white acrylic paint, and then draw over this painted background using permanent marker. Once these preparatory steps are complete, they paint the design onto the case

over the permanent marker outline. "But it doesn't just end here!" Simmons cautioned. "You can't forget to cover the whole thing with nail polish at the very end. This is the absolute most vital step." Without the nail polish cover, the paintings on the cases can smudge and won't stay on for long.

Designs for the phone cases are varied; several of their past products have been posted on their Instagram page @joes.customs. They use a zero in place of the "o" because, as Reitman put it, "Someone already took the username @joes.customs, so we had to get creative" — much like the phone cases they make.

Prices for the products range from \$15 to \$20. Typically, a buyer will bring in their own phone case for Reitman and Simmons to design and paint over. However, if their order numbers significantly increase from the fifteen they've already sold, the pair is consider-

ing buying their own phone cases in bulk so that customers will then be able to purchase phone cases without bringing their own in.

Simmons and Reitman have high hopes for their business. They envision expanding their business to the painting of more than just phone cases: already, they have painted sneakers for customers, an endeavor that proved to be a hit. Reitman and Simmons are also considering painting tote bags and dorm room posters.

Business promotion has occurred through word of mouth and social media. For Simmons and Reitman, this method has proved successful. Without a doubt, Simmons and Reitman's excitement for art and their business will continue to drive growth of Joe's Customs.

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Inside the Kitchen with EAC: Plant-Based Blondies



Photo courtesy of AdaptedEats

Plant-based blondies are a more sustainable option than traditional blondies.

By **Sidharth Rao '23**
Reporter

Choate's Environmental Action Coalition (EAC) recently held a festive holiday event during which community members could buy plant-based blondies made in the Student Activities Center kitchen. The sale was held in order to promote the mission of the EAC, which is to encourage sustainability and environmental awareness. The EAC used plant-based ingredients, rather than the traditional eggs and butter, in order to be more environmentally conscious.

Peter Di Natale '21, a member of the EAC board, was in charge of

planning the event. "Overall, it was a really fun and exciting event. I'm glad we did it," he said. The event not only raised money to support future EAC events, such as hosting speakers on campus and off-campus field trips, but it also allowed the club to connect more directly with the larger Choate community.

- Ingredients**
- 1 15 oz. can of chickpeas, drained
 - 1/2 cup nut butter of choice
 - 1/3 cup maple syrup
 - 1/4 cup oats or oat flour
 - 1 tsp. cinnamon
 - 1 tsp. vanilla extract
 - 1/2 tsp. baking powder

- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4–1/2 cup vegan chocolate chips or carob chips

- Preparation**
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
 - Add all ingredients except the chocolate chips into a food processor or blender and mix well.
 - Fold in the chocolate chips.
 - Pour batter into a pre-greased or pre-lined 8 x 8 baking dish.
 - Bake for 30 minutes. Let cool before cutting into squares.

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A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO KEEPING STUDENTS ATTENTIVE IN CLASS

By **Richard Chen '22**
Staff Reporter

After vacations at sunny resorts and long, jet-lag-inducing flights, returning to campus from break can be disappointing to students. Approaching midterms pile onto the disappointment from the start of school. Fed up with drowsy classes and inattentive students, teachers find creative ways to keep students focused.

Science teacher Ms. Casey Kelsey finds it is helpful to allow students to eat in her class. "We let kids eat if they're bringing food in from lunch," she said. "If students are hungry, they have trouble paying attention in class, so having a little bit of food helps with that."

Ms. Kelsey is also known for sharing fruit and tea with her students: "I got the idea from [arts teacher] Mr. Aaron Sober who was making a big pot of tea for his ceramics classes. One day I saw him doing it, and I thought, 'This is so lovely. I should do this in my classes.'" However, food is often not allowed during classes, especially in settings with strict safety rules such as labs, so depending

on food for an energy boost is not always possible.

HPRSS teacher Mr. Jim Davidson prefers telling jokes in class in order to keep students focused. He said, "I have known for a while that humor can catch one's attention and offer a new perspective." He explained that in class, whether students are falling asleep or simply struggling to understand the material, a change in pace makes it easier to refocus groups. "We are all very serious, so a simple nod of humor can help students shift gears and react differently. I've heard that a good smile or laugh moves 23 facial muscles, which is also good for our brain."

In many cases, lack of energy isn't the primary issue for students struggling to maintain focus in class. Students find difficulty in concentrating in long, arduous classes. Seventy-minute classes are notorious for their length, leading students to embark on "water breaks" in the middle of classes to wake themselves up, often sitting in the Humanities Rotunda or meandering around hallways for a few minutes.

When asked about ways to maintain focus in class, Mr. Davidson suggested, "Sit up. Look

for opportunities to speak up and answer questions. Take orderly notes, think about the notes you are taking, and try new styles of organizing them."

History teacher Ms. Cindy Okrah uses yet another method to keep students engaged: meditation. Rhea Shah '22, one of her students, said, "Meditation is nice because it gives us some time to recollect our thoughts and allow us to get into the class mindset. It is one of the few times in the day when I can allow my thoughts to slow down." Such meditation is easily accessible through apps such as Headspace which gives daily reminders and tips on what kinds of meditation to do before different activities.

Many approaches have been attempted over the years at Choate as teachers try to refocus their students with varying degrees of success — all with seemingly distinct effects on student well being. However, the majority of the weight still lies on students' shoulders to maintain their focus in class despite post-break dreariness.

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TikTok Craze Hits — And Hurts, Many Say — Choate's Campus

By **Brian Harder '23**
Reporter

The use of TikTok, a video sharing app created by a Beijing-based company, has become widespread on the Choate campus, particularly with the underclassmen. Like other social media, TikTok is entertaining, but it can become quite addicting. While some Choate students fully enjoy using the app, others have found it harmful to student life.

TikTok became extremely popular in October of 2018, but it was actually released a year before. Some Choate students, such as Alex Skrypek '23, were introduced to the app from ads. Others saw it on other social media platforms and were intrigued.

TikTok is a video-creation app, and it is similar to Instagram in that people can follow other users, post comments, and like posts. Most of these clips tend to be amusing, and this is what draws many students in. "With so much content on the app, it is an endless source of these funny videos," said Wylee Fichera '21. "Users can also make their own videos. Since they tend to be ridiculous as opposed to serious, this is fun as well."

Fichera, along with Skrypek, views TikTok as similar to Vine, a video sharing app that shut down in 2017 on which users could view and create six-second video clips. The app can also be interactive,



Graphic by Chandler Littleford/The Choate News

Choate students' use of TikTok has risen dramatically since the start of the school year.

just like other social media. Users can meet people on TikTok and see their ideas.

Despite the entertainment that TikTok can provide, there are obvious drawbacks to the app. Skrypek has found that he wastes a large portion of his time on the app. "It's pretty bad. A lot of people are addicted to it. I put a screen time limit [on TikTok], which is the first app I've ever used one on." Overuse can impinge on a student's academic performance and overall

wellbeing. Scrolling through social media distracts students, and it keeps them from studying and doing homework.

According to Fichera, the app has had negative effects on students' body image: "You see a lot of people on the app that don't look the same as you, and you get a little self-conscious."

"People have shown me some TikToks, and the trend is that girls only get likes when they objectify themselves, which really upsets me

and makes me question the platform itself," said Serena Levin '20. "I don't subscribe to the app because of that reason. I don't want to be using an app that is fueled by the objectification of young girls."

As with any social media, usage of the app is difficult to keep under control. Levin explained, "I don't personally use the app because I have seen how addictive it has become for some of my friends." With many using the app for hours a day, it makes sense that those who have

not downloaded it would be skeptical of trying it. In fact, avoiding TikTok could be a better option, especially for those with time management issues.

Unfortunately, the app has become so popular that many people download it despite its negative effects on their productivity. Levin and her fellow Nichols prefects made a rule banning TikTok in response to the amount it was used by Nichols residents. Although the rule was a joke and

not really enforced, the message is still clear: TikTok is constantly being used by students — even when they should be getting work done or going to bed.

Another concern with TikTok is data privacy. Just like other social media apps, including Facebook, users take the risk of their data being stolen and distributed when they download the app. However, social media tends to be very engaging, which distracts users from this problem. "People are mindlessly using it for entertainment but not thinking about the consequences," Levin said.

With users constantly uploading new content to TikTok, it seems that the app will be around for some time. "I think it'll be like Vine. It'll keep on being used until it gets shut down," said Skrypek about the app's future. He continued, "Facebook, another popular social media platform, has been around for over a decade and remains relevant. I think TikTok will likely stay this way as well, especially in teenage age groups where the app is most popular," said Skrypek.

Will users ever be able to curb their TikTok addiction? Who knows.

"I honestly think TikTiok is stupid," said Fichera. "But it's still fun."

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DECENNIAL REVIEW ASKS ARTS DEPARTMENT TO EXAMINE THYSELF

By **Tony Lee '21**
Associate Editor

While teachers have regular course evaluations, each of Choate's academic departments reflect upon their curricula, programs, teaching methods, and all other facets of the department in a holistic internal review every ten years. The Arts department has recently completed its one year of internal reflection and welcomed a panel of guest artists and, last week, art faculty from Phillips Exeter Academy, Rutgers University, and other institutions for external review of the department.

The internal review process first began with one year of internal review, in which all faculty assessed the work of the department. "In the year of internal reflection, the department spends time really re-evaluating and thinking about what we do and how we do it," Ms. Kalya Yannatos, Head of the Arts Department, said. "We're identifying areas in which we should grow, or change, or think sensitively about. We look at areas in which things are doing great, and areas that have changed that might need further thought."

The internal review mainly consisted of frequent conversations within the department. According to Ms. Yannatos, equity and inclusion, as well as the general student experience in the arts, were key topics. At the end of the year, the Arts department's reflections culminated in a 103-page document.

The reflections document was compiled with an extensive list of other documents, including the department handbook, resumes, statements of teaching, and course syllabi, and it was sent to a panel for external review. This panel consisted of

the Head of Arts from Northfield Mount Hermon School, Head of Music from Phillips Exeter Academy, theater faculty from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and others.

The visiting committee's experience at Choate began with a tour of the campus with Arts Concentration students and Gold Key tour guides Di'anna Bonomolo '20, Eliana Kim '20, Yasemin Cobanoglu '21, and Derek Ng '20. Then, the Arts department welcomed the guests with a dinner last Sunday.

Ms. Yannatos said, "They'll arrive here having read a lot about us, and they'll spend a whirlwind two days with us from Sunday afternoon to Tuesday after lunch. They will observe classes and interact with the arts students, meet with us faculty program by program, discipline by discipline. They'll also meet with the administration and various constituencies."

On Monday, the guest panel learned about the upcoming PMAC renovation from Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis and enjoyed lunch with Choate students in the dining hall. Noting the lack of a large, secure space for faculty and student art exhibits in the current PMAC, Ms. Mona Seno, a member of the visual arts department at peer school N.M.H., suggested creating an enclosed gallery. Other common topics discussed were the active student participation in the various arts disciplines at Choate, as well as a rising need for schools to increase diversity in their arts department.

"They reflect as a group on what they've seen and what they've heard, and then think about some key questions," Ms. Yannatos continued. "Are we doing what we say we're doing?

Are we doing it well? Do you see ways that we can improve? Do you see ways we can enhance the student experience? They'll mull over these questions and write a document with their reflections and suggestions."

The Arts department will receive the comments and thoughts from the external panel in the spring. The department will read the panel's report and process its input.

According to Ms. Yannatos, the Arts Department has experienced something of a period of transition in recent years. The review, she said, "came in a moment when we were already challenged by some faculty absences. We have recently hired three people, which is challenging for a department that's the smallest full-time workforce. We welcome three brand new teachers and we say, 'We're midstream in this process of reflection.' But they can't really reflect when they haven't been able to experience much yet."

Ms. Yannatos compared the present with her memories of joining Choate nine years ago. "When I first came to Choate, most of the faculty in the Arts department had been here for thirty to forty years. Now we have a department that's really new. It's a really interesting chapter in the history of the Arts: a time in which we want to honor the legacy of the people who built the foundations for what the department is now but also make space for new growth." While departmental reviews are not mandated Ms. Yannatos believes it's their responsibility as educators and administrators to ensure that they have not fallen asleep at the wheel.

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Zhao's Passion for Pipa Mesmerizes Choate Community



The pipa, one of the oldest Chinese instruments, was first used some 2,000 years ago.

By **Begum Gokmen '23**
Reporter

Just a couple weeks ago, May Zhao '21 gave an enthralling performance on the pipa at the Winter Holiday Program. The pear-shaped lute is known to be one of the oldest Chinese musical instruments. "People even call it the 'Queen of All Chinese Instruments,'" said Zhao.

Zhao is the only pipa player on campus, and the audience was once again astonished by the beautiful music coming from the instrument. First used some 2,000 years ago, the word "pipa" refers to two Chinese characters: pi, "to play forward," and pa, "to play backward. The instrument can be played by struming the pipa strings.

Zhao started playing the

pipa ten years ago. "When I was young, my mom told me I could choose whichever instrument I would like to play. Initially, I chose the piano but three days later, I gave up," she said. "One day, we went to a pipa concert and it was super fancy and I said, 'Wow, this is such a cool instrument!'" Just like that, May dove into playing the Pipa and mastered the instrument over the years.

Similar to the guitar, the pipa requires its player to master a unique playing technique. "It's very interesting because if you used your actual fingernails, they wouldn't be strong enough to create the vibration. So you need plastic or another material to make fake nails' that will assist the player. You tape them on your fingertips and then you play it with very sophisticated

cooperation between your two hands," Zhao said.

The Holiday Concert was the first time Zhao used background music in a performance. She was worried that the audience would not hear her playing the Pipa if the background music was too loud. Despite her worries, Zhao evaluated her performance with a feeling of success. "Afterwards, I watched the video my friends took for me and thought it was actually a pretty good balance between my music and the background music." Zhao hopes to continue experimenting and rehearsing the pipa to bring more exciting performances to the Choate community.

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The Gelb and PMAC Come Alive This Winter With Fringe, SDS, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

By **Bianca Rosen '21**
Associate Editor

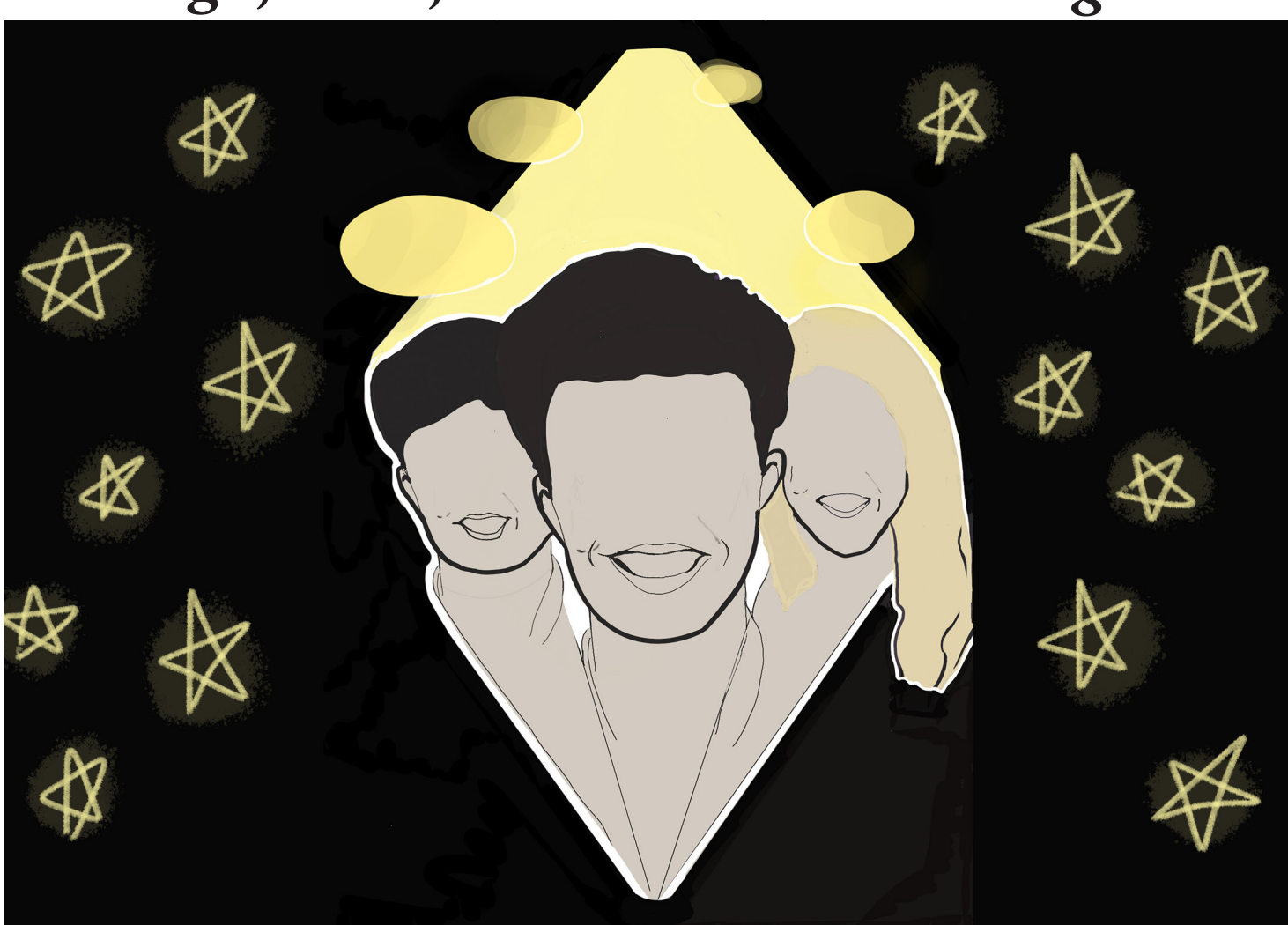
As students settle back into campus, Choate's arts community is tirelessly preparing for Fringe Festival, Student-Directed Scenes (SDS), and its winter production, this year of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Fringe

Fringe, premiering in the Gelb Theater on February 6 and 7, will feature four plays — *Buzz Off*, directed by Kathryn Phillips '20 and written by Mia Millares '22; *Girl Scouts*, directed by Will Flamm '21 and written by Page Wildridge '21; *Holier than Thou*, directed by Iris Parsons '21 and written by Caleb Maddox '20; and *The Diner*, directed by Phillips and written by Ethan Luk '20 — and special acts that are written, directed, and performed by students. The plays combine elements of comedy, drama, and the otherworldly, and represent a range of artistic talent and creativity.

The plays were selected by the Fringe Board, the masterminds behind the production. The Board, consisting of students and Ms. Kate Doak, organizes the event, publicizes it to the Choate community, and helps the writers revise and stage their plays. "Fringe encourages people who wouldn't normally do theater to experience what a theater community is like in a very low-pressure setting. It's a wonderful way to collaborate, create, and step outside of your comfort zone," said Phillips.

Rehearsals are held three times a week and typically involve improvisation games, a read-through of the play, and a discussion surrounding the motivations and personalities of the characters.



Graphic by Rose Chen/The Choate News

The annual Fringe Festival encourages students who do not typically participate in theater to step out of their comfort zone.

Because Fringe is entirely student-run, there is room for a lot of experimentation and creativity. Flamm said, "Main stage productions are more cut and clear, while Fringe has a lot of room for collaboration and the students have a lot more say in the process." Students have the opportunity to create their own vision for the play and develop their own styles as directors, writers, and actors.

Will Greve '20, an actor in *Girl Scouts*, *The Diner*, and *Buzz Off*, said, "I've really appreciated this opportunity to meet new people and do some-

thing that I wouldn't normally do. I didn't know too much about theater going into it, but I'm happy to be along for the ride and learning new things."

Student-Directed Scenes

SDS is the culmination of Choate's Directing class, and will be hosted in the Gelb Theater on January 24 and 25. Participating students Phillips, Medina Purefoy-Craig '20, Brennan Connell '20, and Stanley Liu '20 are in the process of directing and producing a scene of their choice. In researching the scene they wanted to direct, students studied

different plays and their styles. After narrowing it down to a play they liked, students began brainstorming their vision for the scene; this involved making decisions about the scene's setting, how to portray the characters and convey the work's larger themes. For instance, Connell, who chose to direct a scene from *The Game*, by Louis Bryant, set the work in the late 1960s in order to provide more context to the play's dialogue.

After making these initial decisions, the students opened auditions for anyone interested in participating in SDS. The directors are now in the pro-

cess of preparing for their performances. During rehearsals, they run through the production and work on scenes that needed to be blocked or adapted. "As a director, I try to take a step back during rehearsals and let my actors work out a scene themselves. If I see something that works really well, I talk to them about it. I learn a lot from their feedback. I definitely have a vision in my mind that they can help me put onto the stage," said Connell. Like Fringe, SDS is interactive and student-driven. The director has a lot of flexibility. They are able to sample new styles

and make their own artistic choices, fostering an open, creative environment.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

A Midsummer Night's Dream, this winter's main stage production, will be performed on February 13, 14, and 15. "It's a wonderful, fun, touching, beautiful piece, and so I thought it would be a great way of dealing with the darkness of winter," said the play's director, Ms. Tracy Ginder-Delventhal.

Ms. Ginder-Delventhal has approached the play with an emphasis on fluidity and gender inclusivity, and sees the main theme of the play as "the power struggle between the genders." This has opened conversations about what it means for a character to be male or female. There's a lot of cross-casting; for instance, Helena, who is traditionally played by a female, will be played by a male. "I like that our interpretation is taking a very old play and playing with something that is very prominent now with this idea of being open and questioning people's everyday interpretations of what gender means," said Marovitz, who plays Peter Quince.

The cast worked to create an inclusive dynamic and a cohesive vision for the production. "Tracy had [the cast] sit down in a huge circle, and we started telling stories about our lives. It made us more accepting and understanding of each other, which is really important since we are discussing gender conformity," said stage manager Yasemin Cobanoglu '21.

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SPORTS

FIELD REPORT

Choate Winter Record
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Varsity Saturday Games

Boys' Basketball (5-4)
falls to Andover, 57-69

Girls' Basketball (5-3)
falls to Andover, 46-56

Boys' Hockey (1-7-1)
falls to Andover, 1-4

Girls' Hockey (5-3)
falls to Andover, 0-7

Boys' Squash (2-4)
falls to Andover, 0-7

Girls' Squash (2-1)
beats Andover, 4-3

Boys' Swimming (1-1)
falls to Andover, 44-142

Girls' Swimming (0-2)
falls to Andover, 74-112

Wrestling (1-4)
falls to Andover, 6-67

J.V. Saturday Games

Boys' Basketball (0-5)
falls to Andover, 32-52

Girls' Basketball (4-0)
beats Andover, 19-18

Boys' Hockey (3-1)
beats Andover, 3-2

Girls' Hockey (0-2)
falls to Andover, 1-9

Boys' Squash (2-2)
falls to Andover, 2-8

Girls' Squash (0-2)
falls to Andover, 0-7

Thirds Saturday Games

Boys' Squash (1-0)
beats Taft, 7-0

VARSITY TEAMS BOND AT HOLIDAY TOURNAMENTS



Photo by Jessie Goodwin/The Choate News

Charles Greszes '21 passes the puck against Westminster on 12/11.

By **Greer Goergen '21**
Associate Editor

Boys' Varsity Hockey

Boys' Varsity Hockey had a great weekend right from the start of their drive down to Lawrenceville. Charlie Aronov '21 talked about how much the team bonded over the course of the tournament. "We all slept together in the Lawrenceville gyms, which was really fun. We definitely bonded as a team throughout." The team did not do as well as it would've liked and ended up going 1-3 in the tournament, but the boys learned a lot about themselves as a team. Their win was an exciting one, with Ben Smith-Foley scoring a dazzling goal in a shootout to secure a victory. "Overall, we all had a blast, and we are looking to take the lessons we learned from Lawrenceville and translate them into our games later in the season," said Aronov.

Girls' Varsity Hockey

Girls Varsity Hockey went 1-2 in their holiday tournament at Taft this year. "We played really well against Taft. We took advantage of the large sheet of ice, and we were able to capitalize on their mistakes with our new forechecking system and new formation on the ice," Claire Gavin '21 said of their impressive win. The last two games were more challenging for the girls. "Our opponents came out with speed, which we were able to react to, but, ultimately, we were unsuccessful," Gavin said. Lexington Secreto '21, one of the teams' goalies, had a standout weekend and kept them in every game. The tournament proved the team's strength and capacity for potential. The girls are excited for the rest of the season.

Boys' Varsity Basketball

Boys' Varsity Basketball finished its tournament with two wins over the quality Class A teams at the Sea Coast Classic in Boston. The boys played St. Paul's and Milton, beating Milton with a three-point shot with just seconds left in the game. The tournament marked the team's last time playing with teammate Brody Grebe '20. Grebe decided to start college early by enrolling for the spring semester at Montana State University. Glenn Halliday '21 said, "We started to play better as a team since we improved with our personnel and we bonded pretty well that weekend." The team looks forward to a strong season. Halliday said, "The rest of the season, we're trying to keep getting better everyday and potentially put another banner up."

Girls' Varsity Basketball

Girls' Varsity Basketball had a successful tournament, with substantial wins against St. Paul's and Pomfret. The team fell short when matched up against Deerfield, and a slow start lost them the close game. Reina Taveras '21 said, "It wasn't a bad loss at all, and we have a strong chance to beat them next time we play them." The team executed several new plays and focused on patience when setting up an offense. Captains Jordan Obi '20 and Indi DelRocco '21 effectively motivated the team by stepping up their play and putting points on the board. "We have very good team chemistry, and it was really nice to see everyone bond," Taveras said.

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Fall All-New England Athletes

Football

Brody Grebe '20

Kaleb Moody '20

Honorable Mention

Beau Luther '20

Cameron Polemeni-Hegarty '20

Boys' Water Polo

Jack Sun '21

Girls' Cross Country

Betsy Overstrum '20

Girls' Soccer

Abbi Addler '20

Cici Curran '20

Volleyball

Honorable Mention

Maddy Estenson '21

Field Hockey

Honorable Mention

Claire Gavin '21

Meagan Best '20 Takes Second at Squash U.S. Open



Photo by Amitra Haq/The Choate News

Meagan Best upset the top-seeded player in the tournament.

By **Naomi Fleisch '22**
Reporter

On December 18, Meagan Best '20 and Nicolina Tessitore '21 competed in the under-19 U.S. Squash Open at Drexel University. Best upset the #2 seed in the semifinal match and won a silver medal for her performance in the tournament.

Best went into the tournament hoping to finish in the top ten, and she more than accomplished her goal. Although Best lost her final match, she was very happy that she advanced that far into the tournament and had a chance at winning.

Being invited to compete at the U.S. open takes a lot of training and dedication and is an accomplishment in itself. For each age group, only the top 75 players in the world are invited to play at the tournament.

Unsurprisingly, qualifying for the tournament took a lot of training and dedication. Best has been preparing and training for the tournament since the start of the school year. Whether it be training on the courts or in the gym, Best has put in the time to

improve her game. It takes a lot to prepare mentally and physically for the U.S. Open. Best said, "My biggest weakness has always been my movement. Since I was a little kid I have been working on that aspect of my game and trying to improve it."

Though the physical preparation for the tournament can be draining, this was not Best's first time at a high-level squash tournament. She started playing at the international level when she was 11, and, as it happens, her first international tournament was held at Choate. Best also took first place at the U.S. Squash Open in 2017 and, the following year, she received third place. At the Choate tournament, Best had a chance to meet the Head Girls' Varsity Squash Coach, Ms. Jenn Pelletier.

Pelletier said, "I think Meagan not only sets an example for her teammates, but also for all athletes. Most people assume that you cannot go to a boarding school and play a sport at a high level, but Meagan shows that, with dedication, it is possible."

Best manages to stay grounded and keep her composure de-

spite the pressure that comes with being a competitive athlete. Best was never nervous at the U.S. Open. She said, "This was the first tournament that I was not nervous at all, for some reason. I think it was because I was confident with the work I had put in. I knew that I was ready for whatever opponent I had to play."

In order to mentally prepare for the competition, Best listened to music for about two hours before each of her matches. This helped her get in the zone and forget about everything else going on in her life.

When asked if she had any takeaways from the tournament, Best said, "The biggest thing I learned was the importance of recovery. We played about two matches every day, six matches in all, and that can really wear down your body."

Best returns to Choate with experience from a high-level squash tournament and hopes that she can lead this year's Girls' Varsity Squash team to success at Nationals and New Englands.

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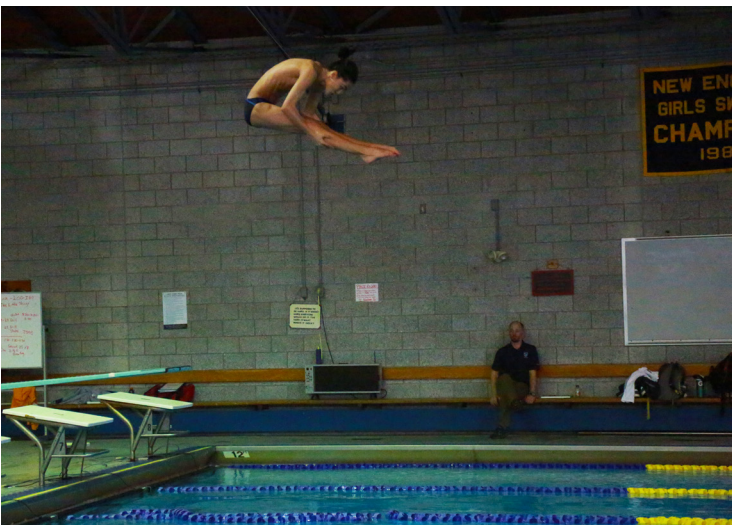
NEW LIGHTS BRIGHTEN LARRY HART POOL

By **Sam Anastasio '23** and **Alex Skrypek '23**
Reporters

At the Larry Hart Pool, swimmers, divers, water polo players, and coaches will not have to worry about sub-par lighting anymore. New pool lights were installed in the ceiling, vastly improving visibility for the athletes and coaches who use the space.

Since the pool opened in 1979, the lights have operated poorly. People have found it difficult to watch aquatic events, in person and over live stream, because of the limited visibility. Likewise, the lights make it difficult to record footage. For instance, the Boys' and Girls' Varsity Water Polo teams rely on being able to take videos during practices and games, but, until now, they haven't been able to do so because of poor lighting.

The new lighting fixtures drastically change the pool's atmosphere, making it a warmer



The new lights (right) replaced those installed during the Larry Hart Pool's construction in 1979.

and more welcoming facility. At the time of the old pool light's installation, "they were not the proper lighting that was needed," said Head Swim Coach and Aquatic Director Ms. Sara Massa. "The old pool lights had to be repaired constantly."

The installation occurred during winter break, so the swim and dive team wouldn't

have to miss practices due to repairs. The crew completing the installation drained the entire pool and removed part of the building to allow building equipment onto the deck.

Members of the Choate swim team greatly appreciated the update. "The new lights allow me and the other coaches to see and correct stroke tech-

niques so much better," said Ms. Massa. Similarly, Martha Chessen '22, a backstroker, said that the bright lights help her "focus more on swimming" rather than being "tired from the school day." Chessen said that the old pool lights created a "dungeon-like" atmosphere.

The lighting can be adjusted depending on the event, water



Photos courtesy of Ross Mortensen and Jessie Goodwin/The Choate News

polo, swimming, or diving. In addition, one can regulate how much of the pool area needs to be illuminated, which makes it easier for spectators to see the scoring board.

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