

INTRODUCING LUNCH WITH THE COUNSELORS

By **Olympia Wolff '25**
Staff Reporter

A new initiative, Lunch with the Counselors, launched its first session on Tuesday, January 10. The program will hold weekly sessions from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout January and February in the Student Activities Center (SAC).

Open to all, these sessions seek to normalize and strengthen the counseling team's presence on campus. It is a safe space for students to bring up topics about health and well-being, propose ideas and suggestions to the counseling team, or just get to know the counselors better.

"The goal is for the student body that has not walked through counseling doors to

come to get to know us," explained Director of Counseling Services Ms. Raynetta Gibbs, the new Director of Counseling. "If you don't want to come alone, come with a friend, two, or a group!"

Choate counselors help students navigate a wide range of social, emotional, and academic pressures on a daily basis, and this initiative aims to increase accessibility, emphasize destigmatization, and extend support in a more informal setting. "This is a way to make it less like a big deal," said Counselor Ms. Judith Bender.

"A primary way of experiencing happiness is making connections," said Ms. Bender; thus, the counseling team's future endeavors will focus on supporting community members by potentially creating support groups or sponsoring fun campus activi-

ties in the coming months.

While the student turnout was lower than expected on the first few days, the counseling team noted that the vast majority of attendees were faculty. "The first day, a lot of adults came in. It got me thinking we maybe need a separate session for adults on campus because winter is a hard time for everyone," said Ms. Gibbs. The counselors hope student attendance will increase in the upcoming weeks.

"We want to hear from you all on how we can support the student body," says Ms. Gibbs. So, please: stop by the SAC, bring friends and your lunch, and help prevent the Choate counselors from having another lonely lunch.

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Photos by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Students enjoy lunch with the Choate counseling team in the SAC.

Spring Break Opportunities: International Trips Return

By **Sophia Liao '25**
Reporter

Every year, Choate students have the unique opportunity to study abroad. This year, new study abroad opportunities have been introduced for the next spring term in order for students to gain a better understanding of thematic, geographic, and linguistic diversity amongst cultures.

With this year's spring term travel abroad destinations set in Greece, Spain, Egypt, and Singapore, Choate students and faculty will have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge, and fully immerse themselves in a whole new culture, packed with hands-on learning experiences to expand their horizons. For students currently on financial aid, these trips are still accessible. Funds are provided through Choate's Beyond the Classroom fund, in order to ensure that all Choate students have equal access to study abroad opportunities.

From March 3–11, Dr. Selena Gell and Dr. Scott Davis will be leading a group of 10–12 students to explore cultural shifts in Greece. The trip will also focus on sustainability and understanding how to address it using the limited resources of ancient knowledge, history, and culture. While Greece's external environment has changed

throughout the years, much of its history and culture have been preserved. During a brief trip to Crete and its farms, students will explore how ancient myths overlap with current food supply and distribution.

On those same dates, Ms. Le'ah Griggs will lead a group of up to 16 people on a trip to Seville, Spain, focusing on art, identity, and memory. Seville has been settled, conquered, and resettled time and time again by many different countries, which has shaped the region's monuments, cathedrals, mosques, and art. Students will learn how different cultures collided to create coherent and renowned pieces of architecture — such as the Mezquita of Cordoba. The trip will culminate with a social-justice-themed graffiti workshop.

From March 3–12, Mr. Yassine Benzanine, Ms. Kolina Ozay, and Mr. Nick Tagge will be taking a group of 15–16 students to Egypt to dive into the country's contribution to mathematics and astronomy, which have evolved into modern theorems and truths. Most notably, there will be a Nile River cruise, and additional opportunities to recreate famous Egyptian experiments in the capital city of Cairo.

The last trip to take place is to Singapore, from June 3–12, led by Dr. Carol Chen-Lin and

Mr. Craig Johnson. This trip aims to unpack entrepreneurship in one of the world's most innovative cities. Students will follow the timeline of the history of Singapore, visiting museums and cultural landmarks in Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India, as well as pay a visit to see incubators along the way. There will also be opportunities to discuss what is next for the prosperous nation in environmental awareness, sustainability, technology, etc. The trip is open for up to 16 participants in third, fourth, or fifth form.

All of these trips allow students to turn what they have already learned into a memorable, interpersonal experience. Especially after being restricted by the pandemic, "We were thrilled to see the response that students had [to this year's trip offerings]," said Director of Global Studies Ms. Ashley Sinclair.

Choate's short-term travel abroad trips have become more purposeful throughout the years, particularly in that they are no longer solely focused on sightseeing, but rather are "acknowledging that our teachers have such a wealth of amazing experiences and interests that they want to be able to share with students," said Ms. Sinclair.

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CHANGES IN DRUG POLICY

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can't be the case because there are very egregious offenses, and we can't have that blanket rule; there is nuance, and I think this new rule actually accounts for that nuance in a really good way."

Mr. Velez hopes that the new drug policy will promote the prioritization of learning. "At the end of the day, we're a school, and our goal is to educate our students. Oftentimes, when mistakes or lapses in judgment take place, that's when we do our best teaching. It's not necessarily always in the traditional classroom setting."

Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life Mr. Pat Dennehy emphasized the educational opportunities that come with the new drug policy. "As part of growing up and maturing, you're gonna stumble, and it at least gives us an opportunity to pick you up and try to move you forward." As such, the Dean's office has implemented restorative work practices; Mr. Dennehy said, "After a mistake is made, it isn't 'You're put on probation and watch yourself.' There's con-

tinued education and discussion with our students to help them understand some of the risks of certain behaviors."

From the preventative side, the new Advising Task Force is looking to include education in the School's advising model in regard to risks, outcomes, and impacts of drug policy violation. Alongside Fourth-form Dean Ms. Aliya Cox and Associate Dean of Students for Health and Wellness Ms. Alexandra Copeland, the Dean's office is revamping the year-long wellness program, which has been on hiatus since the pandemic. The wellness program would cover topics such as substance abuse.

The student body's reaction to the new drug policy was generally positive. "I think that the new changes to the drug policy definitely make it a lot more fair if you're caught with or using substances in any form, since the punishment now is very much based around your situation," said Fifth-form Vice President Cassatt Boatwright '24.

Alex Skrypek '23 reflected on the changes, saying, "I think they're productive. I think that they get rid

of a lot of ambiguity, but I still think that there are a lot of questions remaining from the student body. I don't think that Choate did a great job of explaining them."

Others have pointed out concerns over the new drug policy's implications on Safe Haven, a non-disciplinary response to substance use. "I hope that [the new drug policy] makes people use Safe Haven as it's intended to be used because there are enough restrictions on Safe Haven already to stop loopholes, and I don't think we need more of those." Gigi Chen '24 said.

Fifth-form President Amanda Benneh '24 was satisfied with the new drug policy, stating, "I'm actually really happy that happened because I felt like overall feedback from the student body has been positive. Knowing exactly what the school handbook says, and making it especially clear and consistent throughout all uses of any prohibited substances on campus gives students a more clear picture of what the school expects."

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RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

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and making it a more pleasurable experience to donate helps because every donation saves three lives," Steremberg added.

Since Covid-19, hands-on volunteer opportunities have been sparse, but Steremberg was able to form connections with people and help ensure that things ran smoothly.

Tucker concurred on the importance of blood donations. "I think donating blood is extremely important because there is a severe blood shortage, and given all of the organ transplantations and catastrophes leaving people in need of blood transfusions, it is necessary that people can do

whatever is needed to help others," she said. "There are really no downsides in helping others in such a significant way, except a few possible hours of dizziness. If you're willing to receive, you should be willing to give."

Ms. Koomson also touched on the slight detachment between the town of Wallingford and Choate, noting that she believed this event helped bring the two closer together. "There has been a strange relationship with how the School is perceived from town folks, so I think any opportunity where we can host an event like this or bring community members into the school, they get to interact with the students who are volunteering, I think that's always

a positive to bridge the gap within the community," she said.

Steremberg agreed, noting her conversations with members of the greater Wallingford community who participated at the event. She said, "I was answering a lot of questions about Choate, a lot of people outside asked, 'What's Choate like?'"

This event was a success thanks to these community members from Choate and Wallingford, coming together in this opportunity to help others. Steremberg concluded, "At the end of the day, we are just helping save lives."

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Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

DIVERSITY DAY

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social issues impacting Choate and the global community.

Science Department faculty member Dr. Selena Gell co-facilitated a workshop on "Race and Medicine: Historical and Contemporary Issues," which aimed to teach students how racial differences have impacted accessibility to healthcare. Dr. Gell shared, "I hope students would take away the idea that although race is not a biological concept, it is a concept that has had a huge impact on the health of a lot of people in this country, and the racist history, both in medicine and in government, politics, economics."

Another workshop focused on the model minority myth and Asian representation at Choate. This workshop was led by Aria Ramnath '24 and Zainab Khokha '24 and examined the realities, experiences, and consequences of this stereotype in conjunction with other races. "By debunking stereotypes that were created specifically putting minorities against each other, we can understand our differences and become more unified as a community," said Khokha.

Khokha also led a film-screening that concentrated on the education inequities in desegregating American schools. She shared, "The desegregation of schools is one of the most important ways to educate children about differences. I think if you want to raise a generation of people who are open to diversity, the only way to do that is to be able to show kids people who are different from them."

A workshop on reproductive rights versus reproductive justice continued conversations from the Roe v. Wade panel that took place a few months ago. Students were given a chance to further expand and explore greater nuances in the topic of abortion. Welcome, one of the facilitators, shared, "I felt like I had a lot of lingering questions, thoughts and ideas that we wanted to talk about. It was just a great way to continue thinking about the topic. By the end, people were saying different things they wanted to do to kind of take action within the Choate community."

Diversity Day gave students a chance to think critically about and discuss topics that might

not come up in everyday conversations. Khokha shared, "It's hard because I feel like people are often so wrapped up in their busy lives, that it's kind of hard for them to take a breath and step back. So, I hope that by doing things like Diversity Day and by having these speakers who encourage us to use our voice, like Dr. Shabbazz was saying, be able to talk and spread our ideas, we can try to make the world a better place."

The Choate community was able to learn from both the keynote speakers and each other, gaining a greater insight into systemic inequalities both within the community and globally, and helping students continue conversations and develop a well-informed perspective on cultural and social issues. "I hope that students engaged in Diversity Day with an openness and willingness to listen, learn, and question. I hope folks will question — question yourself; question to further learning and grow empathy," said Dr. Myers.

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SPOTLIGHTING CONNECTICUT'S STATE HERO AND HEROINE



Photo by Derek Strahan

A statue of Nathan Hale is displayed in the atrium of the Connecticut State Capitol.



Photo by Gabriel Koren

Prudence Crandall and her student are honored in the Connecticut State Capitol.

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

Connecticut has bestowed the titles of “State Hero” and “State Heroine” to two people who overcame obstacles and persevered to fight for their justice: Nathan Hale and Prudence Crandall.

Although many may have heard the famous words: “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,” few may recognize the story behind them. These words were spoken by the official Connecticut State Hero, Nathan Hale, who lived from 1755 to 1776.

Hale served in the Continental Army as a spy against the British during the Revolutionary War. When he was captured by the British during a mission to gather intelligence, he was hanged without a trial. For his bravery and sacrifice, he was honored with the title of “State Hero” by the Connecticut government in 1985.

In addition, Hale has had multiple commemorative statues

erected of him, including one in the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford and at Yale University near his old dorm, Connecticut Hall.

Connecticut's State Heroine is a woman named Prudence Crandall, who lived from 1803 to 1890. An activist against racial segregation, Crandall taught the first integrated classroom in America. When her superiors found out, however, she quickly lost her job. Determined to continue fighting for education equality, she worked around the laws banning integrated classrooms and started her own school, one that taught African-American girls.

Throughout her fight to run the school, she battled numerous obstacles. Not only did she encounter physical obstacles like jail time and violence from the public against both her and her students, but she also faced logistical challenges like the implementation of a new law that prohibited out-of-state Black girls from attending in-state schools. Despite this, Crandall continued to operate her school, which

became a boarding school to accommodate out-of-state students. Arrested for violating the law, Crandall won her appeal trial, but after continued violence, she closed her school for her students' safety. Decades after the forced closure of her school, Crandall's actions were recognized and she was awarded the title of “State Heroine” in 1993. Both of these individuals showed enormous courage and fought for what they believed was right. Joan DiMartino, the curator of the Prudence Crandall Museum, said, “Prudence Crandall really inspires us all to, I think, work together for justice in education.”

Their impact can still be seen today, and in recognition of their amazing lives, they were bestowed this award. By giving this award and sharing their stories, Connecticut hopes to inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

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CONNECTICUT LEGALIZES RECREATIONAL USE OF CANNABIS

By **Tyler Kuo '23**
Copy Editor, 116th Masthead

Content disclaimer: This article discusses a change in Connecticut's laws pertaining to the adult recreational use of cannabis. However, Choate's policy still prohibits the use of cannabis — with some minor changes. According to Dean of Students Mr. Mike A. Velez '00, “Since it is a major school rule, the Dean of Students's Office would look into and discuss the situation before adjudicating the matter. Prior to the shift in school policy, cases involving drugs led to immediate dismissal. While dismissal is still an option for a disciplinary response, the definitive language around dismissal no longer exists.”

On January 10, 2023, Connecticut's adult-use cannabis market officially became legal. This means that adults aged 21 and older can now purchase and consume cannabis products from nine licensed hybrid retailers.

Consumers will now be able to buy 0.25 ounce of cannabis flower, while medical marijuana patients may purchase up to five ounces a month. According to the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP), these purchase limitations will continue to be reviewed over time, which will help maintain supply for both adult consumers and medical marijuana patients.

Despite this recent legalization, Wallingford has always pushed back on the use of recreational marijuana. On September 15, 2021, following a unanimous vote, Wallingford's Planning and Zoning Commission banned the retail sale of recreational cannabis.

According to a statement by Dr. Gregory Shangold, Pres-

ident of the Connecticut State Medical Society, “We urge all Connecticut cities and towns to heed the harmful — even devastating effects — marijuana use will have on the state's roads and our patients' mental and physical health and to follow the lead of Wallingford, putting residents' health first and enacting measures that will discourage the use and sale of marijuana there.”

In response to the new change in legislation, DCP Commissioner Michelle H. Seagull issued the following statement: “We know that many people are excited to participate in this marketplace, whether as a business or a consumer, and we encourage adults who choose to purchase and consume these products to do so responsibly once sales begin on January 10.”

This legalization of cannabis purchase, however, will not be Connecticut's first exposure to the substance. Possession of up to 1.5 oz of cannabis became legal in Connecticut on July 21, 2021, but it took 18 months to set up a properly regulated marketplace.

Sales will continue to expand over the coming months. Over 42 provisional licenses have been issued to a variety of marijuana businesses, including manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and delivery services. In total, almost 100 businesses “are somewhere in the licensing pipeline,” Seagull said.

This new industry took months of complex deliberation on part of the Social Equity Council, a group within the state government focused on ensuring that “the adult-use cannabis program is grown equitably” and that “funds from the adult-use cannabis program are brought back to the communities hit hardest by the ‘war on drugs.’”

Some of the topics deliberated included adhering to legislation in order to provide accessibility and equitability for potential entrepreneurs. All the while, some applicants and members of the public have questioned the equity of the entire process, arguing that multi-state cannabis businesses had advantages over local start-ups.

As part of this new cannabis legalization, existing medical-use cultivators and retailers need to pay extensive fees to convert their operations. These fees feed into a roughly \$50 million fund that will be reinvested in communities impacted by historically discriminatory federal drug policies. According to Ms. Andrea Comer, DCP Deputy Commissioner and Chair of the Social Equity Council, the council expects to work with these communities to determine the best possible use for these funds, but a timeline has yet to be established.

Another challenge in opening the cannabis market was meeting the law's requirement of at least 250,000 square feet of licensed growing and manufacturing space, which ensures enough supply for all users. According to Seagull, this threshold has now been met.

As soon as sales begin, the DCP will monitor “how things play out” in the market should any shortages arise. “We're going to be constantly evaluating, talking to the businesses, and monitoring the situation. Eventually, as more growers come on board, more retailers come on board, we expect to hit an equilibrium,” Seagull explained.

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CONNECTICUT SELECTS NEW STATE LEADERS



Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

By **Calvin Moon '24**
Reporter

2022 was an important year for Connecticut state elections, with the governor's race, one of two senator's races, and all five House of Representative races occurring this past November.

The 2022 Election for Connecticut's governor finished with the re-election of Mr. Ned Lamont from the Democratic Party.

Governor Lamont's inauguration included his delivery of the State of the State address, in which he shared his vision for a Connecticut with more affordable access to health insurance, utility costs, and housing.

“Come on insurance companies, don't just pass along those hospital and pharma costs. Let's reward patients and companies who seek treatment where they get the best quality and the best value,” the governor said. Lamont also provided guidelines to decrease utility costs “by expanding our wind power, extending our nuclear power, pushing hard to get access to Canadian hydropower, and making our homes more energy efficient.”

Lamont acknowledged that “the biggest slam to our affordability and economic growth is housing, or the lack thereof,” and believes that local control will be key to effective housing increase in Connecticut.

With his first pledge in November to enact legislative changes such as extending the state's 25-cent-per-gallon gas tax holiday and other provisions, Lamont looks to make Connecticut “a ladder to opportunity for everyone regardless of background.”

On a similar note, Mr. Richard Blumenthal was re-elected this year for his third term in

the Senate. Blumenthal, who has served in elected office since 1984, received a 57.5% majority vote in the recent election, returning to Congress as a senator of the Democratic Party.

During his previous terms, Blumenthal has been active in both domestic and international affairs. On a domestic level, he got the “burn pits” bill passed on the Senate floor, which pressed to expand benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits and toxins while serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. He also pushed for the bipartisan gun safety bill that was led by Senator Chris Murphy, the other Democratic senator from Connecticut.

Internationally, Blumenthal voiced opposition to Saudi Arabia's decision to decrease oil production, and he pushed to secure more aid for Ukraine amid Russia's ongoing invasion. Moreover, as thousands of flights were canceled daily over the holidays, Blumenthal proposed the Airline Passengers' Bill of Rights, which would ensure that airlines give refunds and compensate extra costs caused by delayed or canceled flights and lost luggage.

The members of the 118th Congress were sworn in on Friday with all five representatives of Connecticut representing the Democratic Party. This included John Larson of the First Congressional District, Joe Courtney of the Second Congressional District, Rosa DeLauro of the Third Congressional District, Jim Himes of the Fourth Congressional District, and Jahana Hayes of the Fifth Congressional District.

Representatives Larson and DeLauro recently voted against Republican legislation that re-

duced funding for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), hindering its ability to investigate wealthy tax cheats and fraudsters. “What Republicans are proposing here is shielding the wealthiest people in this nation and corporations,” explained Larson.

DeLauro also voted to create a select committee on competition between the U.S. and China in support of national security, and Himes showed strong support for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed by the House of Representatives. He stated, “I consider funding our national defense programs to keep this country safe to be one of our most important responsibilities as members of Congress.”

Hayes has recently expressed disapproval of the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which bans legal abortion. She criticized the bill, stating, “I support a woman's right to choose. This anti-abortion legislation is deliberately misleading and perpetuates harmful myths about essential health care.” To her constituents of the Fifth, Hayes declared, “I vow to continue to do my part in building a brighter and stronger future for all.”

The newly elected governor, senator, and representatives have already begun to enforce change and implement their ideas at both the state and national levels. Although they are a fully Democratic group, their political beliefs spark a wide range of perspectives on issues such as living costs and abortion rights. Connecticut awaits the changes that they will make in office.

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THIS PRODUCTIVITY HACK MIGHT JUST BE THE KEY TO BATTLING PROCRASTINATION

By **Teniola Obayomi '25**
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It is currently 10:30 p.m. My English essay is due at 11:59 p.m. The problem? A total of five words are written on the page. Weeks of saying, “the essay is a problem for future me” finally catches up to me, and the stress starts to kick in. The deadline does not change, but the clock keeps ticking.

In the past, when I would find myself in this scenario, I would curse my bad time-management skills and desperately scramble to finish the work. I let these “procrastination episodes” become more and more frequent until I started to feel powerless. Constantly putting assignments off until the last minute caused me existential dread, and I feared schoolwork.

Eventually, I discovered the most effective tool for minimizing procrastination: a plan-

ner. The device is simple, just a calendar in book form, but when used properly, it can help with time management and organization skills. How does one properly use a planner? The method I use is “CAST”: Create, Assign, Start, and Tick.

First, I Create a list of tasks that need to be completed. I pull out my planner and jot down assignments I plan to do that day. From “chemistry homework” to “history reading,” I try to keep the list around 10 tasks long on an average school day.

Writing down a manageable number of assignments is crucial: if too many tasks are written, one can get overwhelmed just by glancing at the page.

The next step of the planning process is to Assign. After writing the list, numbers are assigned to each task. The smaller the number, the sooner the assignment needs to be completed.

Then, Start knocking out the items on the list, from number one to the end. I used to take breaks between assignments, but a problem arose. A 10-minute break easily turned into three hours! To combat this, I try to do most of my homework in one sitting.

Doing a boatload of work at once does not seem exciting, but there are several ways to stay motivated. For example, I usually listen to music, switching genres as I switch assignments; ocean wave sounds when reading for English and Tyler the Creator when doing math homework.

The last part of this planning method is Tick. After an assignment is done, tick the checkbox. The flood of relief after ticking a task is totally worth all of the hard work.

By sticking to the “CAST” method, I have been able to procrastinate less. My planner has be-

come my lifeline; I cannot imagine leaving home without it. I know it might seem daunting at first, but taking a moment to organize your life will pay off in the long run. Becoming more organized has wholly changed my life. I find joy in completing assignments now, whereas before, I had always associated schoolwork with stress.

Simply put, meeting deadlines is an essential part of Choate life. The workload of a Choate student increases every day, and there seems to be less time to do it all. Organization and time management are necessary to maximize productivity and help students stay on top of their academic life. A planner is a simple, stress-free tool that will help you realize you have more time in the day than you think.

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PRO

By **Nilan Kathir '26**
Opinions Writer

New Year's resolutions are a constructive tradition, enabling people to reflect and grow. Change can happen at any point during the year, but New Year's marks a clean slate and an opportunity for people to seek self-improvement.

During the new year, many in the Choate community will create New Year's resolutions based on personal reflection, aiming to make a positive change as they see fit. In fact, according to Forbes, 39% of Gen Z feels pressured to take part in the practice. When doing so, they should maintain a focused lens and make specific concrete objectives that can further their growth.

Setting goals for oneself means taking the first step towards better habits in the future. While the main benefit of New Year's resolutions is personal development, there are many other incentives. Making resolutions and following through on them

provide a sense of motivation and purpose. Completing New Year's resolutions also builds self-discipline, making it easier to overcome obstacles in the future.

Some feel that New Year's resolutions are empty promises that will be abandoned in a few weeks. That is why it is crucial to set realistic, attainable goals while still feeling a reasonable amount of challenge. Although setting a doable goal — one that is neither too easy nor too difficult — requires thought and effort, it will ultimately prove to be rewarding.

Following through on proper resolutions is certainly demanding, but it is up to you to hold yourself accountable. A Forbes Health poll found that, overall, 81% of respondents felt confident in their ability to stick to their resolutions and 77% say that they are the ones in charge of holding themselves accountable for achieving their goals.

Interestingly, members of Gen Z are the least likely to hold themselves accountable and instead rely on a friend to keep them on track. If you have a resolution you are really trying to achieve,

finding an accountability buddy could be the key to your success.

A common obstacle I have experienced is lying to myself and justifying that breaking a resolution one time is acceptable. As I have learned, unfortunately, the one time will set a precedent for violating the resolution in the future. Habits can only be built through continual actions, and it is necessary to be consistent in following your resolutions.

New Year's resolutions require hard work, dedication, and stepping out of your comfort zone. Despite being challenging, following resolutions is beneficial. Setting goals offers an opportunity to reflect on the past and make positive changes for the future, helping people become exemplary versions of themselves. Whether it's eating healthier, exercising, getting better grades, or making more time for self-reflection, New Year's resolutions are a valuable tradition that changes people for the better.

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CON

By **Deyi Meng '26**
Opinions Writer

As people celebrate the fresh start of a new year, many reflect upon their blunders in 2022 and aspire to have a more fulfilling 2023. As such, many people have begun to set their New Year's resolutions: goals they hope to accomplish in the following year. However, these resolutions are a faulty concept; oftentimes, they set you up for failure.

According to a 2016 study, “Of the 41% of Americans who make New Year's resolutions, by the end of the year, only 9% feel they are successful in keeping them.” Why is this?

There is absolutely nothing wrong with setting goals to improve oneself; however, one significant factor in achieving any goal is to create a detailed plan to guide you towards success. Since most of the goals set at New Year's are aimed towards self-improvement or eradicating a bad habit, the process of achievement is usually uncomfortable. To ensure that you stick to the goal, it is

important to set many small and manageable, short-term goals instead of a few ambitious long-term ones. New Year's resolutions contradict this strategy and instead evoke the mentality of, “I need to set a big goal and accomplish it overnight.”

For example, you may want to start working out more. You go to the gym on January 1 and do a high-intensity workout that leaves you feeling good. You continue with this endeavor for a few days, chasing the dopamine high of the first couple of workouts; after a few weeks, when the novelty wears off, you abandon the task. In this example, the New Year's resolution provided initial adrenaline, but the goal was ultimately unsuccessful because it was not process-oriented and had a narrow focus.

Another reason New Year's resolutions fail is because they have morphed into a social norm instead of an opportunity for self-reflection. When people look around themselves and see their friends and family setting lofty goals, they want to do the same. The social pressure leads people to set artificial and un-

realistic goals without a proper reason, which, in turn, leads to failure. Furthermore, if you set a big goal and have high hopes, which you do not fulfill, tremendous amounts of guilt may demoralize you from pursuing growth in the future.

This also ties into the problematic idea of telling yourself that you need to wait until New Year's comes around to make changes in your life. Improving yourself and having goals is a daily habit that you should always commit to — not only at the beginning of a year.

I agree with the ideology behind New Year's resolutions which is simply to set goals to improve oneself. However, this tradition has many flaws: it isn't process-oriented, creates unnecessary social pressure and anxiety, and gives people an excuse to procrastinate the self-care and self-improvement they should be working towards every day of the year.

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HOBBIES AND HAPPINESS: A RECIPE FOR WELLNESS

By **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Associate Editor

At a place like Choate, where days are packed with classes, sports, clubs, ensembles, and homework, time for hobbies is few and far between. A true hobby is an activity that one does simply for enjoyment and with no ulterior agenda, unlike nearly everything else we do in today's competitive world.

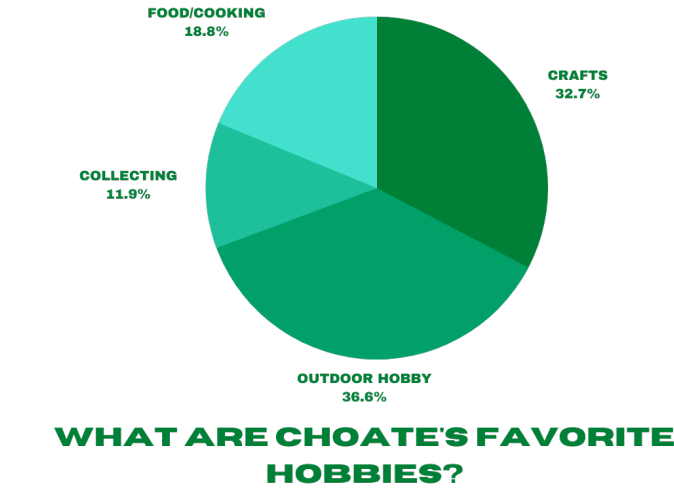
The sad truth is that in our generation, the vast majority of activities we do — both by choice and by force from others — is to benefit our future and not our present.

Have extracurriculars become an embellishment to your resumé rather than something you do for fun? Do most of us have an activity or idea that we are passionate about?

Science suggests that hobbies significantly improve our quality of life. Without them, we are at high risk for several problems in the future. Psychologists have found a positive correlation between

hobbies and happiness; people who make time for their hobbies can live longer, have decreased risk of certain diseases, and achieve happier lives overall. Scientist T. F. Hughes and her colleagues found that engaging in hobbies for one hour a day may reduce the risk of dementia later in life. Another study, conducted between 1986 and 1995 at the Tochigi Cancer Center Hospital, found that women battling cancer had a much higher chance of survival if they had specific hobbies. There are hundreds of other experiments that have proved the benefits of engaging in activities simply for pleasure.

When I was in elementary school, I baked a lot. It was my hobby. I did not desire to become a professional baker, attend culinary school, or compete on any baking shows. I simply baked because I enjoyed playing with all the shiny metal tools, dumping around flours and sugars, and watching my creations magically transform through the oven window. The



WHAT ARE CHOATE'S FAVORITE HOBBIES?

Graphic by Sydney Alleyne '23 / The Choate News

part I enjoyed most was devouring the cakes and cookies with the people I love (even when I was already full after licking the leftover batter from my blue rubber spatula).

Now, I feel guilty whenever I have the urge to bake or do any sort of “unproductive” activity. When my friends ask me to bake brownies with them, I think to myself, “Ugh, this will be a waste of time. I should be practicing the guitar,” instead of, “Wow, this will be fun. I will enjoy this.”

The constant hustle and bustle for efficiency and excellence have led me into thinking that I must always be improving at something; as if unless my actions can be quantified as some kind of success, they are not worth doing. It seems to me that having a hobby has become something to be ashamed of.

Even I — the girl who loves to bake out of pure enjoyment — have reinforced this mindset whenever I mock a friend for crocheting instead of doing their homework.

Many of us are trapped in the mindset that we need to



Graphic by Melody Qian '24 / The Choate News

constantly be grinding in order to feel fulfilled and prepared for our professions. However, without enjoying the present and engaging in hobbies that bring us joy, we are depriving ourselves of the best opportunity for a successful future. Taking time to do a self-fulfilling activity is not a form of laziness or even procrastination: it is necessary.

I encourage you all to start adding one hobby a day to your daily schedule. For example, try to always make time to read

for 30 minutes right before bed. I know we must be realistic: sometimes, I have too much homework and skip my chapter that night, but I have learned to forgive myself when that happens. No one is perfect. Nevertheless, allotting this time for myself each day — time to have a hobby — has made me a happier and more fulfilled human being.

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CRITICISM OF POPE BENEDICT IS MISGUIDED AND OVERBLOWN

By **Stan Cho '25**
Associate Editor

My personal relationship with religion is complex. After being introduced to both Catholicism and Buddhism at a young age, I found myself comparing the two religions, trying to determine which was the “correct” faith. I frequently criticized the scientifically impossible stories told in the Bible and rejected the over-complicated traditional practices of Korean Buddhism.

This internal conflict and mixed messaging drove me away from religion for a while. I began to mend my relationship with Catholicism under the teachings of both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

Their leadership and guidance pushed me to approach religion from the perspective of spiritual and emotional enlightenment offered in scripture and customs, as opposed to the cynical view I had developed earlier. Despite my appreciation for Pope Benedict XVI’s religious leadership, I’ve seen growing criticism of his time in the role.

Pope Benedict XVI, who passed away on New Year’s Eve in 2022, was the first pope in modern times to resign from the role. While only serving for nine years, he had an immense impact on the

structure of the Catholic Church. Still, many religious leaders and followers criticized his leadership for failing to address corruption in the Church, which led to many questioning the legitimacy of the Vatican. Still, it would be ignorant to turn a blind eye to Benedict’s positive contributions.

Pope Benedict inherited an office in crisis, tarnished by the controversy surrounding clerical sex abuse scandals that began under the leadership of Pope John Paul II following his papal appointment in 1978.

Benedict showed valiant efforts to rid the church of abuse, and didn’t hesitate to accuse Bishops of wrongdoing. He revived the Tridentine mass, a tradition that disappeared decades ago, increased the use of art in Christianity, and reintroduced traditional papal garbs that gave him the nickname, “the pope of aesthetics.”

Under immense pressure, Benedict eventually resigned in 2013, becoming the first pope to do so in six centuries.

He explained that he was no longer able to sufficiently exercise leadership over the billions of Roman Catholics around the world and pledged a life of prayer and meditation hidden from the world instead.

Notably, following Benedict’s papal abdication, survivors and victim groups of clerical

sexual abuse recognized his direct and noteworthy confrontation of the clerical sex abuse scandal.

Though Benedict no longer possessed the religious authority granted under the position of pope, he didn’t disappear from the limelight. Still respected as a religious leader, he frequently penned letters to address the increasingly controversial stance taken on Catholicism. For instance, Benedict adamantly professed his certainty that “the rationality of faith has and will emerge again” despite advancements in science, changes in societal views, and increasing criticism of the traditional doctrines of Christianity.

Amid an increasingly diverse religious world, Pope Benedict XVI demonstrated that religious leadership can fulfill the celebration of widespread faith without promoting bigotry and inhumanity. Benedict’s devotion to conserving tradition within Catholicism may have been extreme, but his efforts were critical in affirming an organized and strengthened common faith among Christians. His devout faith assured the legitimacy of religious optimism in a distinctly pessimistic status quo.

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Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

GEORGE SANTOS’S LIES REVEAL A LARGER ISSUE IN POLITICS



Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

By **Anissa Wang '24**
Associate Editor

Republican George Santos of New York’s third congressional district was delivered a resume full of lies.

Seeking his first term in office, he fabricated his background and experience to sell his candidacy to voters, creating a profile that made him the “full embodiment of the American dream.”

A New York Times investigation found many of Santos’s claims to be completely false or highly unlikely to be true. Some notable pretenses and their realities include: being openly gay, although he was married to a woman and had a divorce before his first congressional campaign; having Jewish grandparents who escaped the Holocaust, although they were actually Brazilian; and losing employees in the Pulse nightclub shooting, although none of the victims worked for him. He also claimed to have graduated from Baruch College, a CUNY school located in the center of the city. He similarly lied about running a nonexistent animal charity and working for Goldman Sachs.

The first question we have to ask ourselves is: why did he

lie? It is possible that Santos is a pathological liar. His string of lies began with a few small ones, which pushed his candidacy along and into public view. Seeing how these fabrications benefited his campaign without being discovered or questioned, he continued to lie to gain political favor. Furthermore, this lying is in accordance with his past. He admitted to committing check fraud in Brazil in 2008 by using a stolen checkbook and a fake name in a store. It is easy to see how he went from fraud in his home country to lying to American voters.

The system that resulted in Santos’s lying is one that deserves our attention. In a time where political leaders are more likely to gain support if they are racially diverse and politically correct, a candidate with Santos’s description would check many boxes, especially in New York. Republicans have a small lead in Congress, and the ends of keeping Congressional control seem to justify the many means of getting there. Santos may have believed that he would not be elected as a straight, white male, so his natural solution was to lie.

Similarly, his claims of attending Baruch and working

at Goldman Sachs expose the excessive value society places in certain schools or places of work.

The second question we have to ask ourselves is: how did he get away with lying for so long? His long run is the result of faulty background checks on the part of the media and opposition. When Santos was elected to office, it was more than just a few small lies passing by unnoticed in his resume. The entire resume was made up. In the end, it was the New York Times who actually discovered his lies, not the background check on employees required by the government. Meanwhile, New York citizens, expecting their institutions to account for lying in the political system, believed him wholeheartedly.

Despite investigations by law enforcement bodies, Santos is not likely to be taken out of office. It would take a two-thirds vote, or he would have to choose to resign. However, if there is a House ethics investigation, the onus is on his fellow representatives to push him to resign to set a strong precedent for future candidates.

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BRAZILIAN DISSIDENTS STORM GOVERNMENT BUILDING, MIMICKING THE UNITED STATES’S JANUARY 6 CAPITOL RIOT

By **Arjun Pathy '25**
Opinions Writer

On Sunday, January 8, thousands of far-right Brazilians, enthused by their leader Jair Bolsonaro, raided the Supreme Court and presidential palace in the capital Brasilia.

To many Americans, this is a familiar scene. The frightening parallels with the insurrection that took place on January 6 in the U.S. Capitol were immediately clear.

Despite its disorganized look, the events in Brasilia — much like in Washington D.C. — were the result of weeks of apparent complicity and brazenness from authorities in conjunction with extensive preparation on social media platforms. Such movements are far from isolated and are a testament to the immeasurable harm that President Donald Trump P’00 and America’s conservative movement have had on global politics.

Bolsonaro, the incumbent candidate in Brazil’s 2022 presidential race, was the catalyst for the riot. His opponent, Lula Da Silva, was once described by Obama as “the most popular politician on earth,” garnering approval ratings of 80% during his tenure as president between 2003 and 2011.

The election was an uphill battle for Bolsonaro from the start. His tough race was only hindered by his controversial track record during his time in office. Fresh in the minds of Brazilian voters was his mishandling of the Covid-19

pandemic, during which he struck down common sense quarantine measures proposed by state governments, resulting in 15 million cases and half a million reported deaths. Furthermore, he was known for a lack of restraint in stating controversial opinions, including once saying he would be “incapable of loving a homosexual son.”

With a clear disadvantage going into the election, Bolsonaro preemptively seeded doubt among his supporters in the country’s fully electronic voting system. As if the parallel couldn’t be clearer, Bolsonaro referenced January 6, 2021, saying Brazil would have “worse problems” if the election did not go his way.

Such statements, paired with close connections to Steve Bannon and the Trump White House, eventually gave Bolsonaro the nickname, “Trump of the Tropics.” This comparison would foreshadow much of his presidency and the events on January 8, 2023.

Down to the smallest detail, it seems as though January 6 in the U.S. and January 8 in Brazil were identical. When considering Bolsonaro and Trump’s many shared beliefs, this assumption is logical. The attacks on Brazil’s capital illustrate a detrimental trend in global politics.

Trump’s normalization of blatantly bigoted remarks as president has brought the far-right to the mainstream. Since Trump’s election in 2016, the far-right’s base has been empowered to take



Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

action, often in a violent manner. As a result, from France to Austria to Brazil, movements with a scary resemblance to the fascist parties of the 1940s have gained enough traction to challenge moderate and historically successful candidates.

These movements have made it possible for even the most stable of nations to fall victim to unhinged extremism. This message was especially felt by politicians such as Bolsonaro. These followers were often politically unsatisfied, racial-

ly homogenous, anti-government, working-class citizens that deeply believed in their victimhood.

Arguably giving rise to Trump’s presidency, the empowerment of this demographic led to a historic period of American politics that lacked global cooperation and cultural respect. This encouragement of nationalistic ideals struck with far-right movements across the world, showing that once rejected beliefs have become mainstream in the greatest halls of power.

Despite Trump’s presidency lasting only four years, the results of his actions and their ripple effects throughout the world will be felt for generations. The global far-right movement has empowered a new generation of leaders that will enthusiastically continue what Trump started.

Of course, not all of this is Trump’s fault; rather, it is a broader expression of the evolution of American life that has

merely been brought forward by certain dogmatic figures.

To move forward, we must make an effort to differentiate the fringes of movement from its true base. And when another democracy falls prey to violence, it’s imperative that we take steps to prevent further polarization and radicalism.

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WORLD CUP UNIFIES CHOATE COMMUNITY

By **Anya Shah '25**
Reporter

The 2022 World Cup season was a thrilling time to be at Choate. Clusters of students watched games all over campus, whether on big screens in Lanphier Cafe and the Bay Room, or on laptops and iPads in the dining hall and dorm rooms. People would settle down on the blue and orange couches in the Student Activity Center's Main Activity Space, only to find themselves back on their feet in no time, cheering wildly or shouting in frustration.

Juan Delgado '26, who enjoyed streaming games with the projector in the Bay Room, reflected on watching the games during winterlude on campus. He appreciated seeing his friends' reactions to certain plays. "I really liked watching the games with other people, because that way it is more interesting," he said. "I liked the environment around campus."

Although Charlotte Flynn '25 did not closely track the games, she remembered everyone's attitudes being heavily impacted by their results. "The environment was very rowdy. I don't follow [the World Cup], but I definitely was clued in by all of the cheering," she said.

A faithful supporter of both Ghana and England, Amanda Benneh '24 thought the World Cup brought refreshing energy and positivity to the School.

"The World Cup was a time where many people's backgrounds and cultures came together as they supported their teams," she said.

Benneh also recalled a heartwarming sense of togetherness. "I felt like many friendships formed around discussions about the World Cup and recent games," she shared. The outcomes of each game wove its way into almost every casual conversation, creating a common topic that united the whole Choate community.

Even those who had no original interest in the sport felt encouraged to get involved. "I was never really interested in soccer before the World Cup, but since everyone else was so into it, I figured I would do some research," said Lilli Goldman '25. "Now, I might watch more soccer games in the future."

Passion for the World Cup created a common ground that brought the community closer together. With students and faculty from across the globe, the Choate community collectively rooted for many different countries. Despite supporting different teams and having varying levels of interest in soccer, the community's shared passion for the World Cup brought a new sense of excitement that united the student body.

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Photos by Zora deRham '23/The Choate News

Students gather in the dining hall to watch the games.

MORE THAN A DORM: THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF HOMESTEAD



Homestead has stood as an iconic structure throughout the years.

By **Ada Tieanworn '26**
Reporter

When Choate students walk down Christian Street, they often see a white boarded-up dorm named Homestead. Now serving as a sixth-form girls' dorm, Homestead is viewed as any other ordinary dorm by those who are unaware of its history. From its connections to the founders of The Choate School and Rosemary Hall to the alleged secret passageway behind the chimney, Homestead has many stories hidden within its walls.

Built in 1774 by Caleb Atwater, Homestead was located on Atwater property, later known as Rosemary Farm. In 1890, Mary Choate established the all-girls' boarding school Rosemary Hall on Rosemary

Farm. Soon after, her husband, Judge William Choate, founded a boarding school for boys, called The Choate School.

Throughout this time, Mary Choate hosted dances for both Rosemary Hall and The Choate School at Homestead. The social gathering venue hosted parties for Halloween, Christmas, and other holidays during the earlier years. After the renovation of Homestead during the 20th century and its relocation, The Choate School and Rosemary Hall merged to become Choate Rosemary Hall.

Not only was Homestead a bustling center of student activities, but there are also speculation that the house has a hidden passageway beneath the chimney as a part of the Underground Railroad during



Photos Courtesy of Choate Archives

the early to the mid-19th century. Although there is no certain proof, there are small, scattered pieces of evidence that hint towards it.

In a pamphlet called "Reminiscences of My Mother," which was written by a student at The Choate School, the author described their mother as a "warm adherent of anti-slavery doctrines."

"One evening when my mother was coming home from the stores, a colored man spoke to her in a low tone, asking if she was a friend to a slave. She assured him that she was, and asked if he was a slave. He said he was," the excerpt states.

The presence of an enslaved population near The Choate School during the Civil War could be tied to the efforts

of helping enslaved African Americans escape their bondage and seek freedom.

These small bits of information from the Library Archives suggest that there is potential for Homestead to have had involvement with the Underground Railroad. Nonetheless, the evidence can only show so much.

Even if Homestead does not have a secret passageway used by the Underground Railroad, it is still worthwhile to learn about the history of this unassuming cottage. As current resident Annika Lee '23 said, "It's fascinating how we get to live in a piece of history every day and experience the changes throughout the years."

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New Year's Resolutions

"I find that Choate students are often so busy that they forget basic necessities like nutrition and hydration. My goal for this year is to drink more water and carry my water bottle with me wherever I go."

Cassatt Boatwright '24

"I feel that exercise is a great way to just take a step back and unwind after a long day at school. I hope to incorporate more exercise into my life and try to move a little bit every day, which can help me feel more energetic."

Reagan Colton '24

"I like to have 'goals' but not 'New Year's resolutions' because I think resolutions sound more performative and less genuine. My 2023 goal is to be more independent, laid-back, and self-satisfied."

Semi Obayomi '23

"My goal for 2023 is to be more at peace with myself and exercise more. I also want to work on going with the flow more in my daily life and be more resilient when I am faced with adversities."

Annika Lee '23

"My New Year's resolution is to sleep for eight hours a day. I used to finish homework late, which made me tired during the day when I had to wake up early for classes. This resulted in a vicious cycle, so I want to try to work efficiently and get more rest."

James Chen '24

STUDY STRATEGIES TO ENSURE SUCCESS

By **Lilli Goldman '25**
Reporter

Studying is an inevitable part of the Choate experience, but we can all agree that being productive is sometimes challenging. As if it is not hard enough to manage the homework of five to six classes, most students also balance sports practices or rehearsals and attending several clubs with socializing and having fun. Nonetheless, studying remains a top priority. The following tips and tools make studying more efficient and enjoyable for Choate students.

Change in Venue

The first tip suggests a change in venue. Simeon Levesque '25 expressed the importance of studying in different places. He explained, "If you're just grinding away at one location for any given amount of time, it's going to get monotonous." For this reason, he highly recommends spending time studying outside of the dorm. The Library, Lanphier, Student Activities Center (SAC) study rooms, and outdoors (when the weather is nice enough) are all great places to get work done while enjoying a change in scenery. When asked

how he does this, Levesque said, "I'm an academic weapon. So, I am in the library every night, 7:00-9:30 p.m., and then I move to a different location and just keep studying."

Study Music

A tool that many Choate students use to study is music. Charlotte Flynn '25 shared that using her headphones helps her eliminate distractions. She said, "Music is a really great way for me to escape from what's around me while I am studying." This can be useful to drown out background noise, to find motivation through the upbeat music, or to make completing an assignment more exciting. "I find that because there are so many different genres of music that I can listen to, it helps to set whatever mood I might be looking for," Flynn added.

Time Management

Successful study habits involve managing one's time efficiently. Racquel Welcome '24 said, "It's really easy to get overwhelmed with all your work, but if you schedule it throughout your day, it feels much more manageable."

Using a planner or to-do list is a great way to keep track

of tasks, and scheduling time throughout the week to work on long-term assignments can decrease stress and improve quality of work.

Another element of enhancing time management is to start early. This has a wide range of applications, from reading textbooks to writing essays and studying for tests. Even if one works for only a few minutes in advance, starting early can offer an accurate sense of how much work is left to be done and help make a practical and efficient plan.

Ryan Yang '23 said, "I try to get a first version done quickly, whether it's a first draft or a skim read of a reading, and I find that splitting the task in half helps me process the information better." Especially for long-term projects like essay writing, taking a first step at the beginning is proven to make the consequential steps easier, even when the total hours of work end up summing up to the same number.

Every student practices their own study tools and tips, but it is helpful to learn from peers to lower stress levels and increase productivity.

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STUDENT CHOREOGRAPHERS TAKE THE FLOOR



Photo Courtesy of David Schamis P'26

Zoee Schamis '26 (left) and Lucy LaPlaca '26 (right) perform at SCS.



Photo Courtesy of David Schamis P'26

Ernie Mok '25 dances his solo to BTS's *Black Swan*.



Photo Courtesy of David Schamis P'26

Ernie Mok '25 (left) and Vicky Dzodan '23 (right) duet on stage.

By **Leilani Gao '26**
Reporter

Filling three rows of chairs lined up against the back wall of the Colony Hall dance studio, audience members at the annual Student Choreographers' Showcase (SCS) watched up close as dancers leapt and spun across the floor. SCS, which occurred on December 3–4 under the direction of Dance Program Director Ms. Pamela Newell, grants students the opportunity to participate in the choreographic process by creating solo or group pieces. After a few months of experimentation and preparation, these pieces are performed by students in the dance program.

The choice to host SCS in the dance studio instead of the Paul Mellon Arts Center stage — where the annual spring showcase takes place — was intentional: the studio emphasized the personal and intimate aspect of experimental dance and fostered the idea of dance without perfection.

This year, there were a variety of dance genres, ranging from ballet-based choreography to Latin dance. SCS showcased performances by the Dance Composition class from the fall term as well as dances by students who worked independently.

Zoee Schamis '26 and Lucy LaPlaca '26 danced the opening number entitled "With You All the Time." SCS was both students' de-

but dance performance at Choate. One of LaPlaca's most memorable moments while performing was when the music began to stutter because of a technical difficulty; she and Schamis had to restart the piece from the beginning. These small bumps in the road are inevitable, but the beauty of SCS is the opportunity to learn and grow from experiences like this one.

Alluding to the iconic classical ballet *Swan Lake*, Schamis described their choreography as an "eerie black-swan, white-swan kind of piece." Inspired by the movie *Don't Worry Darling*, the black and white costumes added "more texture to the piece since the music had mostly no words," Schamis said.

While Schamis and LaPlaca had known that they wanted to perform a lyrical-contemporary piece, their final choreography was based on an eerie poem, "Ten Little Soldiers," which Lucy received from a fellow classmate in a Secret Santa gift exchange activity during a Dance Composition class.

Ernie Mok '25, who began his formal dance training after coming to Choate, performed both a solo and a duet. Taking Dance Composition made him consider dance in "a different limelight, for example adding more levels, tempo changes, contrast, and those elements we usually subconsciously see in dance anyways."

His duet with Vicky Dzodan '23 focused on the idea of

contrast between them. He also incorporated a cloth as a prop to "act as a bond between the two dancers." While the piece was initially choreographed for three dancers, Mok had to adapt it for two dancers instead, which was a challenging but rewarding experience.

Mok's solo was a "freeform contemporary-style dance that involved fast and sharp movement" to the track of K-pop band BTS's "Black Swan." Mok took inspiration from BTS's original choreography and chose the orchestral version of the song to match a more contemporary dance style. "I'm a person who is inspired by the music and then I create the dance," Mok said.

Reflecting on the students' journey through her Dance Composition class and to SCS, Ms. Newell said that it is "always exciting to see students discover their own personal voice," as the class focuses on the student and "creating their own movement language."

After attending one of the performances, Tashi Bista '26, said, "All the performances were very creative. They were put together well, and I was impressed with all the pieces ... Overall the experience was unfamiliar to me, but I would like to experience it again."

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Spring Musical Auditions, Here We Go Again!

By **Zoe Dieringer '25** and **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Reporter and Associate Editor

Every ovation-worthy performance and beloved play or musical starts with an audition. Auditions are critical for those involved in the arts because they grant exciting new opportunities and experiences. However, the high stakes of an audition can often make for a stressful experience.

This year, the *Mamma Mia!* spring musical auditions will begin with individual voice auditions, where students will sing 32 bars of a *Mamma Mia!* song of their choice. Then, for the acting and dance components, students will perform scenes of their choice and learn a short dance combination from the show.

In anticipation of the auditions at the end of the month, here are our favorite audition tips from us (in beige) and other arts students who are veterans of the audition process.

1. Choose audition materials you feel the most confident with. Think about what parts you may want: choose pieces that cater to that role and show off certain aspects of your talents.
- Musical theater audition veteran and Juilliard Pre-College Voice student Ava Maha '23

2. Being familiar and at ease with the audition process is important, so practice it from the beginning to the end of the piece to simulate the audition. - Maha

3. Find your character before you go into an audition and sell yourself.
- Arts Concentration Theater student Jordan Dodd '25

4. Take time to center yourself beforehand and realize that at the end of the day, it's not a huge deal. The sun will rise the next day if your voice cracks or you fall out of a turn.
- Sofia Schmidt '25

5. Walk in with a confident mindset and energy; the panel will pick up on that.

6. Before you sing, give the accompanist your sheet music and give them your tempo by tapping your chest instead of clapping or snapping.

7. When singing, look up and focus on a spot slightly above the panel's head.

8. Don't just sing, make sure you're telling a story.

9. When dancing, the face is arguably more important than the steps. Use your face and perform because that's what's fun to watch.

10. Ask questions when learning the choreography, the panel won't get annoyed.

11. Make bold choices and stick with your choices. - Director Ms. Deighna DeRiu.

12. Be flexible, particularly if you're working with someone else on stage or if a director asks you to go in a different direction. - Ms. DeRiu

13. Be sure to thank the panel after your audition.

14. Just go for it, have fun, and take risks. - Ms. DeRiu

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EXPOSING SEAMS

Jeans: A Love Story of People and Fabric

By **Ximena Castillo Núñez '24**
Columnist

170,000 years ago, Neanderthals used clothing as protection from the wilderness. Fast-forward to 21st century Homo sapiens: we now view clothing as far more than just protection, but as an essential part of how we interact with the world and our bodies. Since the 17th century, denim has been a universal element that highlights the relationship humans have with clothing. Our favorite pair of jeans, whether bootcut or straight, light-wash or dark, exemplify the connection between clothing and people.

We do not let go of the clothing we love. Manuela Sepúlveda '23 has had her jeans for "actually too long of a time." Every time she stitches the ever-present holes in them, the jeans rip again because she continues to wear them time and time again. Dean of Students, Mr. Mike Velez '00 owns two pairs of jeans that he wears until they, too, have holes in them. Jeans are meant to last, and Art teacher Ms. Catherine Adams agrees. When asked if she could only choose one piece of clothing to wear forever, she picked jeans. I hold the same sentiment, as I have had the same favorite pair of jeans since freshman year. They are growing old, but no matter how many years go by, they will never lose their place in my closet.

We are intentional about what we put on our bodies. Sepúlveda loves how her favorite medium-wash jeans hug her body. She notices how the cool undertones of the denim are complementary to the rest of her closet. Mr. Velez, on the other hand, is practical: In the winter, he chooses the fleece-lined version of his favorite pair of jeans, as they're better suited for football games on the chilly outdoor fields. To Ms. Adams, the value of clothing is in the way it helps her interact with the world. "It's all about how we stand, how we move in space," she said. Personally, I wear my favorite jeans because I can carry a digital camera, earphones, wallet, disinfectant, Aquaphor, gum, my phone, and ID in my pockets. My jeans are both a representation of my style and a useful tool for everyday life.

We wear what makes us feel capable, comfortable, and confident. Ms. Adams, for example, loves the way the jeans look, but more importantly, she loves the way they make her "feel held in them." Just the simple act of wearing her favorite pair of jeans incites a chain reaction of events that make her day better. "When I wear something that allows me to have accuracy I feel in power — more capable," she said. Mr. Velez, similarly, recognized the importance of feeling comfortable in your jeans. He spaces out washes to his jeans so that they do not become stiff and tight; if he is comfortable, he is "more productive and in a better mood." Sepúlveda knows that she can rely on her jeans to face whatever those cold mid-winter days have in store for her. Jeans are essential during these times "when you wake up with so much on your mind," she said. "These jeans got me through last year."

Denim is a two-dimensional object crafted to conform to a three-dimensional subject. As denim's subjects, humans create a unique relationship with it: as we grow, our jeans grow with us and become more worn-in from the experiences they gain each time they are taken out of their drawer. The relationship to a favorite pair of jeans can even grow stronger than a romantic one. From what I know, relationships are tough, but I will never break up with my favorite pair of big blue jeans. Even if my mom hates them.

Peace Out.

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Photo Courtesy of Manuela Sepúlveda '23



FIELD REPORT

Choate Winter Record

43 - 31 - 3

Varsity Games

Boys' Basketball (10-2)
vs. Exeter, 61-58

Girls' Basketball (8-2)
vs. Ethel Walker 62-16

Girls' Ice Hockey (3-1-6)
vs. Taft, 3-5

Boys' Ice Hockey (0-3-9)
vs. Salisbury, 3-3

Boys' Squash (5-5)
vs. Salisbury, 7-1

Girls' Squash (6-1)
vs. Deerfield, 5-2

Wrestling (0-4)
vs. Wilbraham & Monson, 72-6

Upcoming Game Themes

Boys' Ice Hockey (1-3-2)
vs. Taft, 3-3

Girls' Basketball (3-2)
vs. Rumsey Hall 19-22

Boys' Basketball (5-1)
vs. Exeter, 45-47

Girls' Squash (2-2)
vs. Hopkins, 7-0

Boys' Squash (6-0)
vs. Hopkins, 8-1

Girls' Ice Hockey (2-0-2)
vs. Hopkins, 8-4

Jan 27th - Jersey Night

Feb 1st - White out

Feb 10th - Disco Night

BEHIND THE SCREENS OF TEAM INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS



Graphic by Maddy Childs '26/The Choate News

By **Reinah Lee '26**
Reporter

In the increasingly digitized world, Choate winter sports teams are making a splash on social media. From practice videos to game announcements and player profiles, these accounts showcase the hard work and success of Choate athletes.

Girls' Varsity Basketball, composed of 10 skilled and dedicated athletes, not only dominates on the court but also on their Instagram account, managed by four-year varsity player and Co-Captain Norah Saluja '23.

Since taking over the account in her junior year, Saluja has been passionate about highlighting the hard work and dedication of the Girls' Basketball Team.

"Especially for girls' sports, there's not a lot of attention or publicity. I think [social media] just brings attention and makes [the team] feel like it's an important thing on campus," she said.

Through her advocacy for girls' basketball, Saluja hopes to create a more supportive, empowering atmosphere for her team and all of women's sports.

Varsity Swimming and Diving has also been active on Instagram. First-year student managers Sophia Kim '24, Paula Garcia-Moreno '25, and Camila Granda '25 have taken the reins of the team's Instagram account to showcase the team's energetic and fun-loving nature.

Kim explained that the team's social media helps to build excitement and anticipation for upcoming meets while also providing a glimpse into the team's dynamic and supportive community. Granda continued, noting that the Instagram account allows "prospective students to see how our team works, what type of practices we have, and the team environment."

Boys' and Girls' Varsity Squash also foster close-knit communities both on and off the court. Led by Zach Starr '24, John Henderson '23, Rachel Miller '23, and Elena Zhang '24, the account features alluring game day edits and special events, such as accomplishments and tournaments.

Starr explained that the account serves not only as a reminder to support the team but also as a way for the student athletes to look back on their experiences with pride. "We're friends first, then teammates," Starr added, underscoring the importance of building lasting relationships within the team.

Girls' Varsity Hockey, known affectionately as the "Lady Boars," entered the season as a strong and cohesive team, having already secured wins against Greenwich, Lawrence, and Pomfret. In her second season with the team, Coach Laura DiCarlo manages the team's Instagram account with Tariq El Mammann '24.

This year's team welcomed nine new players and focused on building a strong camaraderie through bonding events such as dinner at Assistant Coach James Stanley's home. By fostering a genuine connection both on and off the ice, the team hopes to translate chemistry into athletic success as well as a platform for college recruiters to discover the talents of the Choate student-athletes.

Finally, Choate's co-ed Wrestling Instagram account, managed by experienced three-year managers Raye Osayimwese-Sisson '23 and Harper Knight '23, is a window

into the team's dedication, passion, and school spirit.

Knight noted, "Our team was really able to expand this year, and we have a lot more girls this year as well too." The team is determined to become one of the best girls' wrestling programs in New England, and the team's diversity and dedication are evident in each and every match.

The team's bond is strong and unbreakable: Osayimwese-Sisson referred to the players and coaches as a "family." "They're all really passionate about wrestling, so it's just really wonderful to see how much spirit there is," she said.

The team also engages in bonding activities, such as eating out at restaurants after long tournament days, where each player is given the opportunity to share reflections on their performance.

Choate Wrestling is a dedicated program that encourages personal growth through diverse experiences. The team's Instagram helps showcase their hard work and helps to build a strong bond among the players and coaches.

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KEEPING UP WITH WINTER RUNNING

By **Analy Vega '25**
Staff Reporter

As the winter season is in full force, a dedicated group of runners rise to the challenges that come with the shortened days and harsher weather conditions.

Despite the unique obstacles that nature presents, many student-athletes at Choate are taking on winter running to meet both their athletic requirements and achieve their personal running goals.

Six years ago, Physics and Chemistry teacher Ms. Fran O'Donoghue started winter running as an intramural sport with the goal of encouraging running for fun.

"I was in teams and sports throughout high school and college," she said. "As I got older, I realized I needed to stay in shape and signed up for half marathons with several Choate faculty members, and I haven't stopped running since." Now, she hopes to inspire more people to develop a healthy relationship with exercise through the sport.

Joining Ms. O'Donoghue in leading the winter running program is Science teacher Dr. Selena Gell. "I love running because it's so accessible and you can do it anywhere in the world with just a pair of shoes," she said. Dr. Gell is also using the program as an opportunity to meet new students and get back into exercising herself.

The winter running program at Choate is diverse, with students from various backgrounds and experience levels. Some students participate in winter running for leisure, while others, such as Akari Kamigaki '25, who runs cross country in the fall, joined for training purposes. "I really like that I'm close with my friends and it's a great time to run and talk sometimes," Kamigaki said of the camaraderie among runners.

As the sun sets earlier, students often have to run in low temperatures and in the dark. However, with the use of reflective safety vests, they feel safe and comfortable in this environment. "I've never felt insecure about running at night. When I'm doing winter running, I don't feel like the town is dangerous," Kamigaki said.

For Ms. O'Donoghue, seeing students improve over the course of the term is one of the most rewarding experiences. "The best moment of winter running was when a couple of kids ran farther than they've ever run before. They were so excited and proud of themselves, and they didn't think they could do it," she said. With a diverse group of students and dedicated coaches, winter running is a great activity that students should continue to participate in each year.

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Photo courtesy of Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Matthew Choi '26 runs during practice.

AN ODE TO ASSISTANT ATHLETIC TRAINER MS. CLARK



Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Ms. Clark assists students with their rehabilitation needs.

By **Emily Scandrett '26**
Reporter

Assistant Athletic Trainer Ms. Tanisha Clark is a shining light in the midst of the chaotic athletic training room at Choate.

Known throughout campus for her infectious positivity and kind nature, Ms. Clark brings happiness to all who have the pleasure of crossing her path. However, her role on campus extends far beyond her position as an athletic trainer. Although her Choate career started in the athletic training room, her impact on the community encompasses much more.

Ms. Clark's interest in physical rehabilitation for athletes began during her time as an accomplished high school athlete. Inevitably, injury is a part of the game, and Ms. Clark's experience was no different. "In high school, I dislocated my shoulder a multitude of times, and my athletic trainer in high school was really helpful with rehab and getting me back into sports," she said.

Ms. Clark's relationships through these challenging times intrigued her and opened her eyes to a new world of physical rehabilitation for athletes. This discovery eventually led her to join the Choate community as a part of the trainers team.

Over her four years at Choate, Ms. Clark has pursued that passion and much more. Each day, she is involved in many duties beyond her role in the Athletic Department. Ms. Clark explained how her days have become exponentially more packed over the past few years: "Now that I started doing the Prefect Program, Wellness Committee, and being a dorm advisor, my days are pretty filled."

Although she now holds new responsibilities, her afternoons still consist of time in the training room with the many athletes who rely on her care. "When everyone gets out of classes, it gets a little busy, and as crazy as it sounds, I love that hustle and bustle and chaos," she said.

Ms. Clark's role in the athletic training room is not only about gaining experience, but also about watching other people's stories unfold. She has had a front-row seat to watching the current sixth-formers grow into who they are today and has a unique perspective on their development. "I love seeing you all happy with each other. Even through the darkest days, you guys just love each other," she said.

Ms. Clark notices more than just the faces and injuries flowing through the athletic training room. She enjoys learning about her advisees' lives and knowing what they are like outside of the classroom. She connects with everyone at Choate, including the faculty as well.

Ms. Clark has a bright future ahead of her and has many things she wants to accomplish in the following years, not only for herself, but also for the Choate community. She strives to make a positive difference in the lives of everyone she meets.

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