



THE UNITING POWER OF MUSIC: DEERFIELD JOINS CHOATE IN COLONY HALL

By **Lauren Hsu '24 and Erin Li '24**
Associate Editors

On Sunday, January 29, students from both Choate and Deerfield collaborated on a day of musical workshops and concerts in Colony Hall and the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC). Students played alongside one another with notable guest conductors, putting together a concert in the evening to showcase their work with the Choate community.

Musicians from all ensembles spent two hours in the morning being coached for success by their guest conductors. Then, they were able to share their unique experiences over lunch in the dining hall. The lunch atmosphere was boisterous — students temporarily forgot about the rivalry and actually became friends. In the afternoon, students rehearsed for another two hours, which culminated in a concert featuring all the groups.

The concert opened with a chorus performance conducted by Dr. Jeff Douma, Professor of Choral Conducting at Yale School of Music. The choral groups performed four pieces: “Now We Can Begin” by Ari- anne Abela, “Lux Aurumque” by Whitacre, “Ngothando” by

Ndulovu, and “I See the Heav- en’s Glories Shine” by Andrea Ramsey. All of the pieces were chosen by Dr. Douma, who is an advocate for contemporary composers. “It was a really in- teresting experience because the Deerfield students had a lot of amazement around our music program and our campus. It was refreshing to see Choate from a different perspective and not take things for granted,” said Johan Shattuck ’23.

Choate and Deerfield pi- anists were coached by New England Conservatory of Mu- sic Faculty Ms. Pei-Shan Lee. Deerfield student Evan Xie ’25, who performed with four other students on one piano bench during “Galop Marche” by Al- bert Lavignac, said, “We got a lot of new ideas about phras- ing, dynamics, and different ways to interpret the music.” The pianists also played “Dolly Suite: I. Berceuse,” by Gabri- el Faure; “Turkish March,” by Ludwig van Beethoven; and “Petite Suite: I. En Bateau,” by Claude Debussy.

The Hartt School faculty Dr. Edward Cumming led the string orchestra, which performed his arrangement of the Ukrainian National Anthem as well as “Hol- land” by Vivaldi.

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Dr. Jeff Douma conducts Choate and Deerfield singers.



Deerfield student (left) and Ramsey Scott ’23 (right) share a piano.

MEET CHOATE’S 2023 REGENERON STS SCHOLARS

By **Anissa Wang ’24**
Associate Editor

Ryan Kim ’23 and Ryan Yang ’23 were named 2023 Scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search (Regeneron STS). Although the STS com- petition was first established in 1942 by the U.S. govern- ment to increase science talent to combat the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it has since evolved into the nation’s oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors.

The biotechnology company Regeneron, which sponsors the competition, recognizes 300 Science Talent Search Scholars and their schools yearly for de- veloping potential solutions to society’s most pressing issues. To apply, applicants must sub- mit a research report within a 20-page limit. Their research must be on a topic in math, sci- ence, or engineering, and the report must adhere to specific STS guidelines.

Kim is a sixth-former from Seoul, South Korea. His project is titled “A Novel Affordable Artificial Intelligence of Things System for Real-Time Traffic Optimization and Emissions

Reduction.” Its main goal is leveraging the use of time in the context of traffic. His idea involves two elements: an AI detection algorithm (detect- ing cars and their lanes in real-time) and a physical intelli- gence of things (IoT) system.

The use of IoT at traffic inter- sections to monitor the number of cars passing through allows for the maximization of inter- section throughput, which min- imizes vehicle waiting times and greenhouse gas emissions. The IoT can also distinguish between normal and emergency vehicles, such as ambulances, to ensure that the intersection is passable in the event of an emergency. Saving commute time helps the economy as it reduces wasted productivity time, benefits so- ciety since it allows people to focus on more productive tasks than waiting at intersections and, most importantly, allows ambulances to save lives more quickly. Kim’s idea seeks to ad- dress the age-old problem of traffic congestion in a novel and affordable way, approaching the issue from economic, social, en- vironmental, and health-related standpoints.

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S.C. INITIATIVES TO COME



Graphic by Carolyn Chen ’25/The Choate News

By **Leilani Gao ’26**
Reporter

As of July 2022, all Connecti- cut public schools serving students in grades 4-12 must provide ac- cessibility to free period products in restrooms. Not having menstrual products readily available inter- rupts students’ ability to learn, and when girls and women have access to safe and affordable sanitary ma- terials to manage their menstrua- tion, they decrease their risk of in- fections. At Choate, there have yet to be free feminine hygiene prod- ucts available in dorms.

Recently, student council rep- resentatives Robert Haik ’25, Ivie Ojor ’25, and Ava Maha ’23 have collaborated on a proposal calling for accessible period products in dorms. Haik describes the policy as “improving/changing the brand of menstruation products and install- ing dispensers within dorms.”

As Student Council President, Maha shared her perspective on the administrative side on this new policy. She prefaced that the policy was “still in the process, and the en- acting will probably take place next year.” Her role has been focused on guiding Haik and Ojor, who have- en taken the lead in the proposal, while Maha pushes along for the administrative side.

Maha recognized that “there is a lack of quality period products both in campus bathrooms and in dorm rooms, and nobody has done anything about it.” She also shared, “Students are ordering online or going to Walmart, which is quite inconvenient especially if there’s any financial issues meaning a student can’t afford that, or going to the School Store ... I really just think this will help students feel se- cure in all areas of campus.”

Ultimately, most people in the Health Center and the admin- istration “are on board with the project,” she noted, understand- ing the importance of it. However, the proposal has encountered a few issues. For example, one of the sustainable companies they were hoping to work with, August, didn’t fit the dimensions of the current dispensers that Choate has in dorms. These complications are currently getting sorted out.

Haik notes that his idea for this policy started when “initially, a peer of mine came up to me. She was concerned about the quality of the free menstruation products and the tampon prices at the Choate store.”

After seeking out faculty and Maha, the proposal evolved into addressing the main issue: the

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CAPITOL HILL TRIP RETURNS POST-PANDEMIC

By **Aubrie Williams ’24**
Staff Reporter

After a two-year hiatus, members of Choate’s John F. Kennedy (JFK) Program in Government and Public Service joined with the Honors U.S. Government and Politics II class for a trip to Washing- ton, D.C. From January 29 to 31, students toured buildings in the capital and met Senators Kirsten Gillibrand, Chris Mur- phy, and Richard Blumenthal, House Representative Stacey Plaskett, and various other ac- complished members of gov- ernment and politics. While the trip is traditionally exclusive to students in the U.S. Gov- ernment and Politics II course, members of the Class of the 2023 JFK cohort were also in- vited to attend this year.

Initially, there were many concerns regarding former Covid-19 restrictions and their impacts on the students’ experi- ences. However, as U.S. Govern- ment teacher and trip organizer, Mr. Jonas Akins described, “The

trip was very smooth and a great success.” Over the course of two days, students were able to visit both the Supreme Court and the United States Capitol building. They were also allowed entrance into the court and were able to tour the buildings. Director of the JFK Program Mr. Ned Gal- lagher has arranged the trip for several years. He shared, “Our timing is great because only in the last few weeks have things re- ally opened up, and the buildings have been opened to the public. So, in some ways, it went much more smoothly than I expected.”

Beyond meeting Congress members, students attended a Choate alumni event at the Army and Navy Club, where they heard from journalist He- drick Smith and Securities and Exchange Commision (SEC) Counsel Dan Chang. In addition to asking Smith and Chang questions, students engaged with alumni from various fields and expertise. Mr. Gallagher shared that the importance of the trip was clear “when we lis- tened to so many people at the

alumni dinner, or that we spoke with, say when they were at Choate, they came to D.C., and that opened their eyes to differ- ent possibilities.”

Throughout the meetings on Monday and Tuesday, stu- dents were given the opportu- nity to ask experts questions and learn about their jobs in the fields of government and politics. This experience in- spired many students to envi- sion themselves in those roles and consider what careers they want to pursue in the future.

Leila Sherriff ’24, a U.S. Government and Politics II class member, explained, “The highlight of this trip was meet- ing people who had real-life experience in D.C. and seeing the path they made from being Choate students to being real influential people on the Hill.” Among her favorite speakers of the trip, she mentioned Sena- tor Chris Murphy as “excep- tional and a real amazing ex- ample of a good politician.”

Sherriff shared that this trip has inspired her to think more

about her future in government classes and extracurricular activi- ties. “Seeing all the theories that we analyze in class being used in real life is incredibly helpful to me understanding them,” she said, “I’m definitely going to use the connections I made on the D.C. trip to potentially get an in- ternship for the JFK program.”

Sofia Muñoz ’23, a mem- ber of the Class of 2023 JFK cohort, shared, “I think that really helped balance out opin- ions with the diversity of grades and also the strengths of having people in the program and not in the program.” She added, “It was just awesome that they were able to put this together even af- ter Covid because I know my co- hort was really sad that we were not able to go last year.”

Most attendees would agree that the trip was smooth and successful. Mr. Akins shared, “This was the best trip to D.C. in my time at Choate. The op- portunity to fully engage with three senators, a member of the House of Representatives, and Choate alumni involved as lob- byists, Foreign Service Officers, and all of the other vocations represented at the alumni din- ner at the Army and Navy Club was just extraordinary.” Be- yond hearing from exceptional people, Mr. Akins and Mr. Gal- lagher were most proud of the students’ curiosity and intel- ligence when conversing with speakers Mr. Akins concluded, “I thought the students did a masterful job of drawing them out on particular topics and re- ally engaging with them on a particularly high level.”

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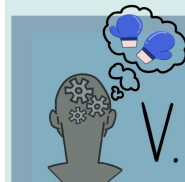
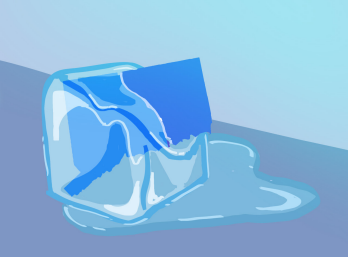
Photo courtesy of Ned Gallagher

Choate students pose in front of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Where’s the Snow?

Connecticut faced with lowest snowfall levels in years

Local News • P3



B. Beng ’26 vs. ChatGPT

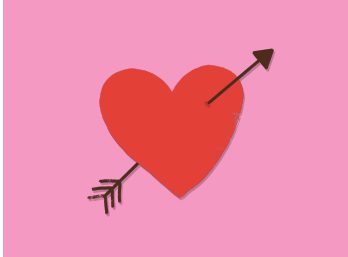
Can AI authentically replicate a high school freshman’s writing?

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Watch out! Our favorite Newsies are looking for love

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All About that Bass

Professional Double Bass Player Yung Chiao Wei visits Choate

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Melody Qian ’24, Maddy Childs ’26, Yujin Kim ’23, and Choate Flickr.



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KEC STUDENTS VISIT YALE PEABODY MUSEUM

By **Brendan Beng '26**
Reporter

On January 24, the students and faculty members of the Environmental Immersion Program (EIP) went on an exclusive tour of the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, which has been closed to the public since March 2020 due to renovation.

During their visit, they were given a private tour by the museum's director, Mr. Dave Skelly, and had the opportunity to explore the research wing of the museum, where they examined collections of rare or extinct specimens.

When asked about the trip, Kohler Environmental Director Mr. Joe Scanio said, "What I think was most amazing was just the incredible biodiversity and the wealth of knowledge that's sitting in those collections." Jasmine Khuu '24, a student in the EIP, also appreciated the biodiversity on display, listing a few examples. She said, "I thought the Himalayan monal and the albino bluejay were very interesting. The experience was really eye-opening."

The Yale Peabody Museum is closed to the public until January of 2024 due to ongoing renovations, making the trip all the more special. When asked about how Choate became involved with the museum, Mr. Scanio said, "A lot of people are just very willing to engage with students who are interested in their work, and the EIP has such an obvious focus as a multidisciplinary environmental program." Most of the EIP faculty are working or have worked in various environmental topics, making them not only experts in their chosen fields but also giving them access to a vast web of connections. Mr. Scanio stated that the EIP "resonates with the type of people [they] interact with because they all see the value of looking at environmental issues through a multidisciplinary lens."



Photo courtesy of Jasmine Khuu '24

A stuffed mountain lion is displayed at the Yale Peabody Museum.

Along with the trip to the Yale Peabody Museum, the EIP traditionally hosts several other major events for its students. Mr. Scanio shared, "We normally have an annual visit to the Harvard Forest for long-term ecological research, but that was put on hold because of Covid-19." To provide students with alternative learning opportunities during the pandemic, the EIP attended many online seminars and law conferences. One such conference was The New Directions and Environmental Law Conference hosted by Yukon, whose focus on state and federal environmental regulations was particularly interesting to Mr. Scanio. The EIP also hopes to arrange a trip to research the evolution of the media's representation of the environment at the Yale Beinecke Library, which holds many preserved historical documents and artifacts.

When asked about the objectives of the EIP, Mr. Scanio said, "There's a lot of goals for the EIP. One is that it is multidisciplinary to expose students to experts from a variety of fields. The other thing is that we really want the material that we're covering to tie into the real world." By attending all these environmental conferences with experts like Mr. Skelly, the EIP hopes to educate students on the real-world applications of their environmental studies. Mr. Scanio added, "If you're trying to

communicate ideas about the environment, how are you doing that as a photographer, as a director, or through your business? That's why it is so important to try and incorporate some of our ideas we're talking about in our courses. It allows the students to see their real-world applications."

Students were particularly curious about the museum itself and how its reconstruction alters the visiting experience. Khuu added, "I was very interested in the reconstruction of the museum, especially how it is catered more towards education and incorporated technology to help people see the museum in a different way."

The EIP hopes to continue collaborating with experts, universities, and other resources in the environmental field to provide their students with the skills and knowledge applicable to their future careers and studies. In doing so, the program aims to create a legacy of EIP students. Mr. Scanio said, "The direction we're continuing to head is to provide multidisciplinary and skill-building research. The direction I hope it goes in is that past students circle back and engage with the current students so we can get that kind of reinforcement across the generations of EIP students."

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PERIOD PRODUCTS PROPOSAL INTRODUCED

Continued from Page 1

quality of the free tampons/pads. While the policy has not been fully passed, Haik recognized that "everyone agrees change is needed and have been very supportive so far." Haik's intention for making this policy was to ultimately "provide high-quality menstruation products across campus. Students who are unable to afford their own products can now rely on comfortable and sustainable products from the comfort of their dorms."

Mr. Michael Velez '00, as part of the administration, recites more about the new policy. His

role, he noted humbly, "was pretty limited. Both the Health Services team and Student Council brought this initiative forward and are in collaboration on making it possible."

In addition, he expressed that the new policy would "allow the school to offer greater education on healthcare topics while also offering greater accessibility to these products." He added, "Dr. [Miriam] Cohen brought the idea forward to some senior administrators at the school," and how the Student Council went through their typical proposal process and shared it with him after it was passed.

From there, the conversation went to the Senior Officers of the school for further discussion about approvals, collecting more information, and possible implementation steps.

While the policy has not been enacted yet, there are bright hopes ahead for its potential to be very helpful for girls at Choate. The root of this change has led to new ideas and success in finding ways to solve the predicament. By next year, the new menstruation product policy will reach new heights.

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RYAN KIM '23 & RYAN YANG '23 WIN STS AWARD

Continued from Page 1

Yang is a sixth-former from New Haven, Connecticut. His project is titled "Aggregation in the Mirror Space (AIMS)" and focuses on distributed machine learning (DML), a training paradigm where data and devices are distributed. "The central problem in DML is the 'aggregation' of the insights from all data/devices, consisting of a series of 'A must send X to B' commands, allowing you to, for example, send information to a person. But, this offers an inevitable point of failure in any of the links," Yang explained.

His project aims to create an alternative solution to this issue. "The only current alternative is gossip, where devices communicate peer-to-peer with whoever they can reach. However, gossip has some negative synchronization properties, as expected with inter-peer communication. So, AIMS defined a new method on top of gossip, which changed the way models from neighboring devices are averaged, improving the synchronization properties," he continued.

When asked how he feels about being selected, Yang said, "It feels like a recognition of all the work I've put into my research. I'm excited by Regeneron's ability to give high school research a platform and am looking forward to the opportunities and experiences that lay ahead." Kim noted what an honor it is to be selected. He has known about the competition since he was in middle school and never imagined himself as an STS Scholar.

With regards to his future plans, Yang said, "I'm looking forward to talking about and bringing my project closer to the public in the coming months. I plan on building on the work in the future in terms of both technical depth and real-world impact." Kim said he plans to allow the IoT to communicate across multiple intersections, leverage graph neural networks, and optimize communication in the future.

Both students devoted a lot of time to their projects. Kim began during the summer before his junior year and has since made systematic upgrades with traffic simulation and optimization algorithms, as well as improvements in vehicle and lane recognition. Yang also started during the summer before his junior year, working on the project for 30 hours each week. He continued to contribute five to ten hours a week during the school year.

Although the students conducted the majority of research

independently when completing their projects, they worked closely with advisers and mentors including Dr. Chris Hogue, a science teacher at Choate. Kim also worked with a professor from Korea, and Yang worked with two professors who work at Yale University and the Shanghai University of Electric Power.

This year, the winners were selected from a pool of 1,949 applicants from 627 high schools across 48 states and five countries. There is a history of Choate students being selected as STS Scholars. In the past 15 years, Choate has had 12 other students selected.

Being named a "Scholar" implies that a student was selected as a top 300 applicant.

These top 300 students and their schools' science departments each receive a \$2,000 cash prize. From these 300 scholars, STS also selects 40 students who are invited to Washington, D.C. in March to present their research to members of Congress.

Kim and Yang have both worked diligently and innovatively to complete their commendable research projects, recognized by STS. Both of their projects address modern society's most pressing issues, and Kim and Yang plan to bring their findings closer to the public so that they can be put into action.

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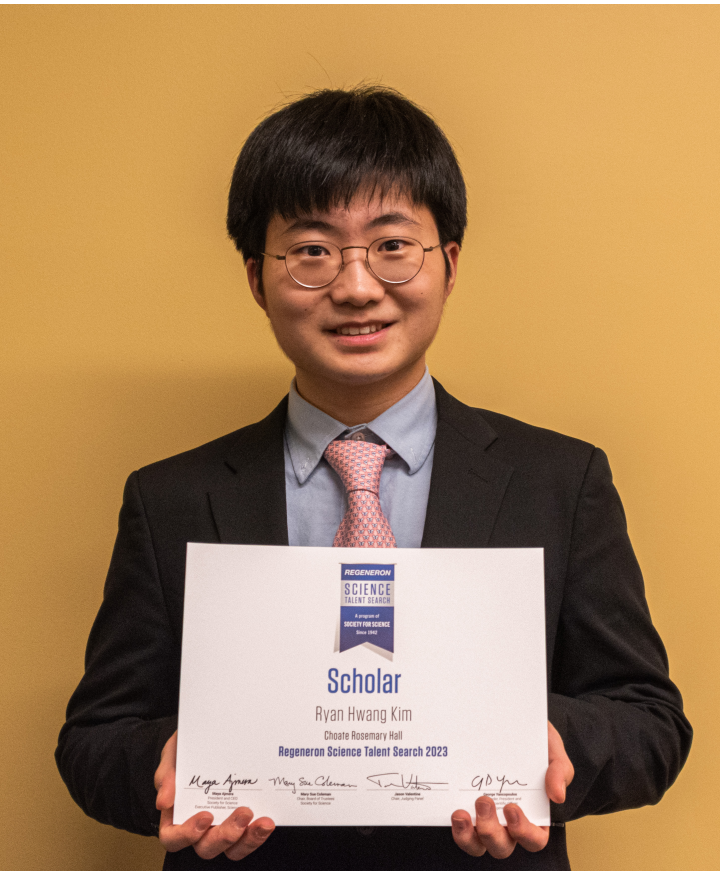


Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Ryan Kim '23 poses with certification of his award.



Photo courtesy of Ryan Yang '23

Ryan Yang '23 presents at the SIGCOMM 2022 in Amsterdam.

CHOATE HOSTS INAUGURAL ARTS COLLABORATION WITH DEERFIELD



Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Dr. Edward Cumming leads the orchestra.

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berg Suite," by Edvard Grieg. Mr. Thomas Bergeron, Deerfield's Director of Music, said that Choate and Deerfield's orchestra directors decided on the "Holberg Suite" because it was "something that we could prepare separately, in a relatively short period of time, and then something that we could collaboratively prepare in one day." The piece is also short in length while still feeling complete and fitting to the instrumentation of the orchestra.

Dr. Cumming shared with the orchestra techniques he uses in professional settings. Deerfield cellist Henry Zhang '24 said, "It was a really great experience working with the guest conductor. He was very insightful because he has so much experience to share with us." Choate and Deerfield students sat side-by-side and collaborated throughout rehearsals, learning from both

Dr. Cumming and each other. Hiasa Yu '23 said, "We worked together for four hours straight. That's supposed to be tiring and exhausting, but it was an amazing feeling because everyone was so engaged in the activities, and I felt no exhaustion."

Wind Ensemble, led by Dr. David W. Vandewalker performed "First Suite in E-flat," by Holst. According to Mr. Matt McLean, Music Program Head and Director of Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble, one crucial reason for choosing this challenging piece was that "the Wind Ensemble piece had to have enough substance that a guest clinician could dig into the music for that long rehearsal period." Bill Ke '24 said, "It was a really cool experience to work alongside Deerfield students because I had previously viewed them as just our rival school, but we had the opportunity to learn from each other."

Grammy award-winning saxophonist Dr. Lauren Seivan served as guest conductor of Jazz Ensemble, which performed "Vine St. Rumble," by Count Basie and "Oelupaca," by Duke Ellington. Nick Aldrich '24 shared, "I've played and listened to some of those pieces more times than I can count, and I didn't think my perspective could be changed very much in terms of how to play them — but, the first time the guest clinician listened to us play, she immediately had suggestions. A new, professional ear is always valuable, and our guest conductor in particular did a fantastic job uniting a group that had never played as a unit before."

The inspiration for a Deerfield and Choate Arts Collaboration Program came from Mr. Bergeron, who attended Yale, and Deerfield Choral Director Mr. Michael Pfitzer, who taught at Harvard. Drawing from the tradition of how the

Ivy League choirs always sing together before the annual Harvard-Yale rivalry football game, Mr. Bergeron suggested a collaborative music event between Choate and Deerfield to the Choate Arts Department.

While Choate and Deerfield might be rivals on the football field, this collaborative music event demonstrated the talent and dedication of students from both schools. Reflecting on the day of rehearsals, Dr. Cumming said, "What gives me such great joy is seeing a group of musicians come together in such a short period of time. And particularly, since there were two different ensembles, how we are able to, through music and through a common love of what we do, come together so quickly and wonderfully."

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EQUALITY CT TAKES STRIDES FOR LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS

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



Graphic courtesy of Equality Connecticut

Equality CT already had its first community event within the first few months of its opening, hosting a post-Pride Parade brunch in July 2022. According to the organization, they “gathered and fed over 50 members of the community, providing a dedicated space for LGBTQIA+ people to meet each other and connect.”

According to Stefan Keller, a member of Equality CT’s advisory board, “There was no specific organization that was regularly advocating around specifically queer people. So, we saw a space to work together with different groups that exist to hear issues from the community, and then bring those to the legislature and say these are the changes that need to happen, and we can be an organization that is championing some of those causes.”

Connecticut is one of a shrinking number of states without a statewide organization advocating for LGBTQIA+ residents. Equality CT hopes that by encouraging LGBTQIA+ residents to be active members of the state government, lasting change will come as a result. Equality CT’s specific goals extend over a diverse range of issues, ranging from healthcare-specific goals like creating universal access to gender-affirming healthcare and ensuring coverage of LGBTQIA+

fertility care, to education-specific goals like educating a young generation of LGBTQIA+ activ-

Right now, there is no specific organization that was regularly advocating around specifically queer people.

Stefan Keller
Member of Equality CT
Advisory Board

ists and leaders. Additionally, they hope to work with Connecticut’s suicide prevention programs to form LGBTQIA+-inclusive programs. Choate students can contribute to Equality CT’s mission. “If students have ideas around things that we should be working on, they can definitely reach out to us ... having as many voices as possible is really how we do this work the best way,” said Mr. Keller.

The efforts of organizations like Equality CT are especially pertinent as numerous pieces of legislation have been passed

in recent years to support the LGBTQIA+ community. In 2019, the Gay and Transgender “panic” defense was banned. In prior years, lawyers across the nation could defend a perpetrator’s actions by referencing their sexual orientation or gender identity, leading to commuted punishments. The efforts of Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont have been particularly pertinent on the matter, as he signed several new pieces of legislation repealing historic laws that discriminate against LGBTQIA+ youth.

For instance, his recent signature of the Connecticut Parentage Act mandates that all children, regardless of the circumstances of their birth or the marital status, gender, or sexual orientation of their parents, have equal access to parentage. He also signed legislation allowing sexually-active minors the right to HIV-preventative medicine without a parent’s consent, allowing them to prioritize their health without coming out to their parents, potentially saving them from unsafe situations.

In addition to these two legislative actions, in 2019, the Connecticut government allocated a quarter million dollars for the following two years to fund the LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network.

While strides towards equity have been made in recent years under Governor Lamont, the formation and actions of Equality CT will better reflect the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community and lead to even greater advancements.

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Graphic courtesy of Equality Connecticut

CHOATE CLUBS ENGAGE WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



Photos courtesy of Choate Robotics

Members of Choate Robotics at the Wallingford Public Library and Celebrate Wallingford event.

By **Francesca Howard '26**
Reporter

Many of Choate’s student clubs venture beyond the gates of the School to engage in service work with the local community. Through these opportunities, students can explore their passions, create meaningful impact, and give back to the community.

The Environmental Action Coalition (EAC) provides students with the tools they need to push for real legislative change regarding environmental concerns. This year, EAC hosted two community service opportunities to clean up Doolittle Park and the Quinnipiac River Trail.

Club President Ryan Froeb ’23 said, “We provide students agency, skills, and experience to bring about change in the Wallingford community and beyond.” In 2023, the EAC will continue to host additional community service opportunities and fun events to help bridge the gap between Choate and the Wallingford community

Another club that supports the local community is the Mentorship Program, which works to increase education access and networking opportunities for local students through their weekly tutoring sessions. The club works with students from James H. Moran and Dag Hammarskjöld middle schools

in Wallingford. Club Co-founder Ava McClatchie ’24 reflected on the impact that the club has made: “We’ve noticed real growth in many of our returning students; they use the mentorship sessions as not only opportunities for academic growth, but also for social enrichment.” In the months ahead, McClatchie, along with Club Co-founder Zainab Khokha ’24, aims to collect books and other school supplies to donate to the local community as well as to expand the number of participants in their club.

In the Teach Music club, members work with tutees at the Spanish Community of Wallingford (SCOW) to advance their instrumental proficiency. Every week, SCOW students come to Colony Hall and meet with Choate musicians in both one-on-one and group settings.

Club leader Joyce Liu ’25 is excited about the opportunities the club plans to offer. She shared, “We hope to hold some events, including musical workshops, ensembles, and even concerts, that can demonstrate every student’s improvement and effort. Our goal is to bring out the musical potential in every student and help each student to the best of our ability.”

The club allows Choate students to not only practice their own skills, but also to encourage other budding musicians.

GirlTech, which strives to close the gender gap in STEM fields, works with the Wallingford Public Library to introduce girls to STEM subjects. Choate students teach local children 3D printing, coding, and virtual reality applications. The club empowers girls to pursue their passions for science and technology and become more confident in their skills.

As Club President Shauna Schiffman ’23 explained, club meetings “provide a safe and supportive space for girls to share their passion for science and technology and discuss the adversities they’ve faced in STEM classes.”

The club gives historically underrepresented groups a way to pursue STEM, even if those opportunities are not provided at their own schools. Hoping to continue inspiring potential future scientists and tech wizards, GirlTech is looking forward to hosting more events at the public library in the coming months.

If you are looking to get involved in the local Wallingford community, these and many more clubs that offer service work are the perfect opportunity to do so. In helping others, you will give yourself a larger purpose and learn valuable and applicable life skills.

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THE EFFECTS OF RISING TEMPERATURES IN CONNECTICUT

By **Eva Li '24**
Associate Editor

Are you still waiting for this winter’s big snowstorm? If so, the chances aren’t looking so good. This winter has been especially dreary for the East Coast, with cities along Interstate 95 experiencing some of the lowest amounts of snowfall in the last 50 years.

The unusually little snow experienced is an indication of the growing trend in climate fluctuations and global warming. According to “Connecticut, Our Changing Climate,” a report by the state legislature, the average temperature in Connecticut has risen by about 1.2°C since the beginning of the 20th century.

Marketing and Communications Director Mr. Alex Armstrong at the Connecticut branch of the non-profit environmental

agency, The Nature Conservancy, explained, “This local warming has led to hotter air that generates stronger, deadlier storms, and increasingly frequent and severe summer droughts stressing the health of Connecticut forests and increasing the risk of fires.”

The escalating temperatures and extreme weather phenomena have become severe issues within the local community, impacting businesses like Starlight Gardens, a small-scale organic farm based in Durham, Connecticut.

Fortunately, Ms. Jenny Hill, who co-owns the farm with her husband, Mr. Joel Smith, explained how their farming techniques, such as not over-tilling the soil and growing cover crops that help absorb water, offer them the advantage of being more resilient to climate change.

However, Ms. Hill still harbors worries about the unre-

dictable weather patterns’ impact on the farm’s production: “Getting a really cold spell late in the spring will kill our crops or heavy wind events, really heavy rain events, heavy snow ... We haven’t had any issues yet, but it does to an extent feel like a matter of time.”

Reflecting on such concerns, Ms. Hill predicts a trend of increased use of greenhouse farming in Connecticut, in which owners can control the climate and amount of irrigation water, as well as the conservation practice of hoop houses that is available with financial assistance through the U.S. Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

At the same time, the owners of Starlight Gardens said, “We feel strongly that by farming small and farming regeneratively, with a lower impact on the soil, we can mitigate those climate challenges.”

Besides directly impacting the local community, climate change is a harmful threat to Connecticut’s wildlife, as it alters their habitats, disrupts natural patterns, and more.

As Mr. Tom Anderson, Director of Communications at the Connecticut Audubon Society, which protects birds and wildlife, said, “Over the last 50 years, North America has lost 30% of its bird population or three billion birds. Climate change was one of many reasons.”

To combat the impact of climate change on birds, the Connecticut Audubon Society joined a coalition called the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds to protect and monitor several species of birds, including the already threatened piping plovers, that nest only on beaches and are vulnerable to threats like rising sea levels and storm tides.

Similarly, to target the species that are seeking to move north and to high elevations in response to the warming climate, the Connecticut Nature Conservancy and its partners are focusing on what they call the “Resilient and Connected Network,” a network of lands across North America with limited human disturbance and robust microclimates that can withstand climate change.

“Mapping out these habitats and the natural pathways among them show where plants and animals have the best chances to find new places to call home,” explained Mr. Armstrong. He further emphasized, “Northwest Connecticut, where the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage serves as a crucial con-

nect for the Appalachians to the north and south, is part of this network.”

On a larger scale, Connecticut’s government has also taken initiative in passing legislation targeting climate change.

Regarding the state’s targets, Ms. Alanis Allen, a research analyst in the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), said, “The goals are to meet our greenhouse gas emission reduction goals outlined in the Global Warming Solutions Act.” She additionally mentioned that the electricity sector has a zero emissions target by 2040 and that the department seeks to “equip communities around the state to build resiliency against the impacts of climate change.”

The Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GC3), rejuvenated by Governor Ned Lamont in 2019, has been critical in developing some of the ideas seen in passed legislation. For example, the idea of a climate education policy that was recommended by the GC3’s Science and Technology Working Group was implemented in last year’s budget, which included language that requires school districts to provide climate change instruction as part of the science curriculum.

Another achievement in the last legislative season targeting climate change was the enactment of the Connecticut Clean Air Act. Many of the elements of the GC3’s recommendations include allowing the DEEP commissioner to adopt California’s emission standards for medium and heavy-duty vehicles; establish-

ing “right to charge” provisions for renters and unit owners in condominiums and common interest communities; and prohibiting planned community associations from adopting or enforcing rules that effectively prevent unit owners from installing solar panels on their own units’ roofs.

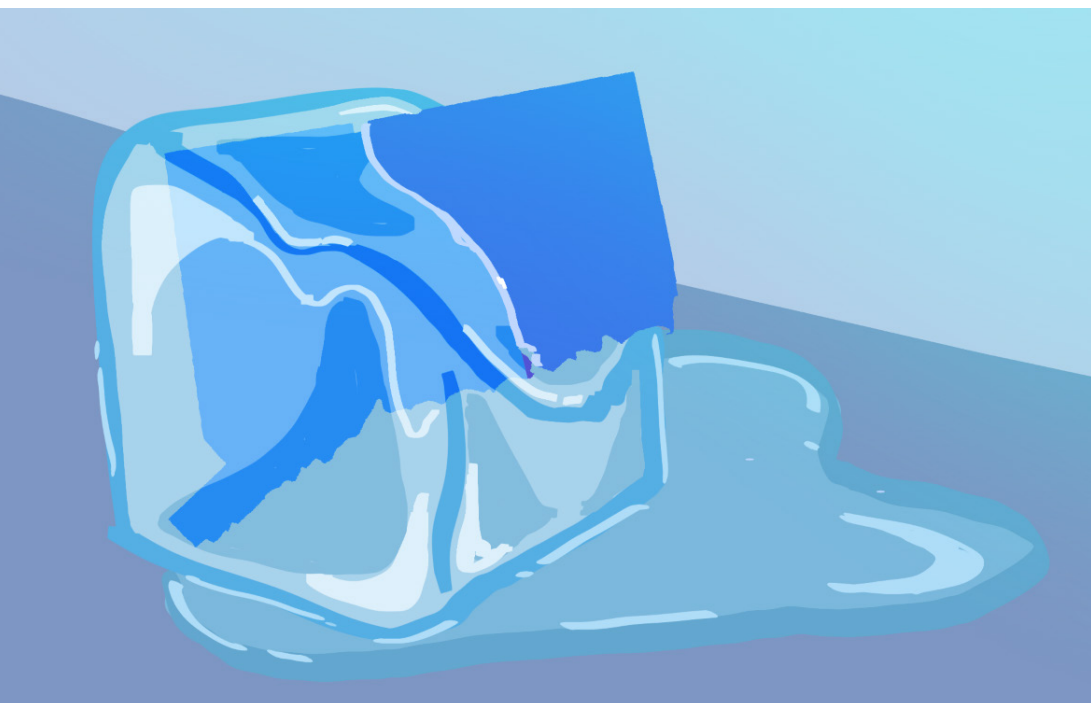
Various local environmental groups have supported such environmental laws. Sierra Club Connecticut, a conservation nonprofit, has been partnering with environmental allies and legislators to pass increasingly stronger climate change mitigation legislation and policy for many years.

The Greater Hartford Chair, Mr. Stephen Lewis, said, “We are strong supporters of bills last year to clean our air by cleaning our transportation pollution in Connecticut with clean truck standards, promotion of electric school buses, and promotion of clean electric vehicles.”

Although current legislation is yet to be publicly released, Ms. Allen said, “Scoring for our DEEP Climate Resilience Fund is underway, which will give funds to communities around Connecticut to plan and develop projects to address climate adaptation and resiliency.” Moreover, she emphasized, “At least 40% of all funds given will be marked for marginalized communities.”

If you are interested in following up with the policies currently on the agenda of the Environmental Committee, visit <https://www.cga.ct.gov/env/>.

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Prompt: In the style of an opinions news article, write a 600-word article answering the question of whether or not Artificial Intelligence software can flawlessly and accurately replicate the writing of the average high-school-educated American. Will it ever be able to? Answer this question from the perspective of a high school freshman.



A Choate Freshman

By **Brendan Beng '26**
Opinions Writer

From the Google Search engine to self-driving Tesla cars, the once novel idea of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now embedded into modern technology. Search engines like Google allow anyone to find billions of answers to a single question at the click of a button. AI softwares such as those in Google and YouTube algorithms are mostly a force of good, allowing humanity to circulate information on an unprecedented scale; however, the newly created ChatGPT app pushes the boundaries of what AI is capable of and what ethical use of AI looks like.

ChatGPT functions are similar to those of a search engine, but instead of producing hundreds of thousands of answers to a question, it compiles all the information it can find into a succinct and personalized explanation. ChatGPT's human-like comprehension and composition abilities allow it to respond to even the most obscure of requests in an informed and accurate manner.

ChatGPT can also write entire essays at the request of a user. Out of curiosity, I tried the software myself and gave it a few prompts. To keep the answers as uniform as possible, I wrote them using the following format: write a 500 word {type of essay} on {topic}. The first prompt I used was for an analytical essay on the Odyssey. I was amazed when it gave me a thorough analysis of the prompt that sounded similar to the rough draft of an essay I might write for my English class.

I then decided to test the software with other types of prompts: prompts which involved opinion, emotion, and empathy, such as personal essays and reflections. To test this, I told the AI to write a personal essay about its favorite song. The song it analyzed was "Yesterday" by the Beatles. While it generated countless facts that a fan of the song might know, there was little to no conviction in the writing. The difference in the quality of the writing differed significantly when the AI attempted to answer such an emotionally charged prompt; the tone was void of any signs of vulnerability. It attempted to and prompted me to question whether or not AI software will ever be able to replicate human thinking and writing.

Every writer has a personal voice, regardless of their experience or expertise, and I believe that voice is what differentiates the writing of a human from the writing of AI. Although ChatGPT is excellent at generating useful answers to specific, information-based questions,

writing is not an exact science. Writing an essay, for example, is much more than stitching points and facts together; it is meant to highlight an individual's opinions and feelings on a subject as well as accurately convey their unique voice. Some writers have flowery and poetic voices while others have blunt and unforgiving ones. ChatGPT's voice is akin to someone who spends their entire life on the internet — lacking even an inkling of human connection.

Even when answering a primarily factual prompt like an analytical essay, the software still isn't quite able to generate a perfect replica of a high-school-caliber essay. Although it produces an essay with a strong argument, cogent evidence, and a logical flow, it is unable to deviate from basic



By **ChatGPT**
AI Chatbot Launched in 2022

As a high school student who has been fascinated by technology and its impact on society, I have been closely following the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its capabilities in recent years. One topic that has particularly caught my attention is whether or not AI can flawlessly replicate the writing of an average high-school-educated American. This is a question that has been debated by experts and laypeople alike, and I believe it's time to take a closer look at the current state of AI technology and whether it will ever be able to perfectly replicate human writing.

First and foremost, it's important to understand what AI can

their audience and understand their emotions and perspectives in order to write effectively.

It's also worth considering the limitations of AI in terms of language and grammar. While AI can generate text that is grammatically correct, it often lacks the creativity and unpredictability that makes human writing so unique. AI-generated text can also be formulaic and repetitive, lacking the variety and nuance that make human writing so interesting and engaging. Additionally, AI technology is still prone to errors and biases, which can affect the quality of the texts it generates.

But despite all these limitations, some experts believe that AI technology will continue to advance and eventually reach a level where it can perfectly replicate human writing. They argue that AI has the potential to learn from vast amounts of data and improve its writing skills over time. However, I remain skeptical about this notion for several reasons.

First, human writing is not just about following certain patterns and rules. It's a reflection of a person's experiences, emotions, and perspectives. Writing is a unique expression of the human experience, and I find it hard to believe that AI will ever be able to fully replicate this.

Second, the evolution of language is an ongoing process, and it's constantly changing. AI may be able to generate text based on current language patterns, but it will likely struggle to keep up with the evolution of language over time. In addition, AI may struggle to incorporate new slang, colloquialisms, and other linguistic innovations that are unique to a particular time and place.

Finally, human writing is not just about the words on the page. It's also about the way the words are put together, the tone and style of the writing, and the emotional connection the writer has with their audience. These elements are difficult to replicate with AI, and they are what make human writing so special and unique.

In conclusion, while AI may be able to replicate some aspects of writing, it is unlikely to ever perfectly imitate the writing style of an average high-school-educated American. AI technology still has a long way to go before it can truly understand and replicate human writing.

To all Choate Rosemary Hall faculty and staff members:

What is your opinion on the ethics of AI software? Letters to the Editor (salleyne23@choate.edu) are always welcome.

Wellness Blocks are Only a Band-Aid Solution

By **Cassatt Boatwright '24**
Opinions Staff Writer

After three years without wellness blocks at Choate, the program finally returned on Friday, January 20. Due to Diversity Day on Monday, January 16, and the special schedule for the week, students had a half-day that Friday, and what would usually be F and G-block was instead spent as a wellness block: a time for the student body to take a much needed break and do something fun.

For my wellness activity, I signed up for an hour-and-a-half of Minute-to-Win-it games, a pleasant collection of activities such as "Guess that Song" and "Balloon Elbow Bouncing." I had a great time, and, afterwards, my friends and I were buzzing with excitement over the reintroduction of wellness programming at Choate. However, our excitement lasted all of a few hours before Choate returned to its normal routine. Despite my enjoyable experience, I have strong doubts that Choate's wellness blocks will truly affect our community's well being in the long run.

Wellness has become a frequent topic of conversation on campus in light of the recent events in the world and in our community, which have hit the student body hard. While Choate had underclassmen wellness programming for many years, the 2019-2020 school year was the last time Choate students received a comprehensive, bi-weekly wellness education. This means the class of 2023 was the last Choate class to have experienced a standard wellness curriculum.

The absence of such an education has left my form with minimal understanding of important topics ranging from mental health to sex education. While the wellness block was a nice first attempt toward bringing back wellness at Choate, it is unlikely to be effective in educating students on how to take care of themselves and learn skills to improve their wellbeing. It felt like a band-aid solution to the much deeper, largely unaddressed issue of Choate students not having the appropriate tools or knowledge to take care of their mental and physical wellness.

Without frequent wellness blocks, the wellness of the student body will not improve. In addition, the wellness block activity options were limited and had a finite number of spots that operated on a first come, first served basis; therefore, if you were busy with after-school commitments when the sign-up sheet was sent out, it was unlikely that you could join an activity that you would actually enjoy. Similarly, by limiting students to the choices provided by the administration, other forms of wellness like socializing with friends and sleep were disregarded.

Wellness blocks are pockets of fun and relaxation, but they are unable to truly affect the student body's well-being in the long term. Nevertheless, I appreciate the School's commitment to reforming the wellness program at Choate and look forward to seeing how the administration continues to incorporate wellness in the future.

Cassatt Boatwright is a fifth-former from San Francisco, CA. She may be reached at cboatwright24@choate.edu



Photo Courtesy of Choate Flickr/The Choate News

Boarding School TikTok: "Everyone is Always Connected"

By **Virginia Nelson '25**
Opinions Writer

Boarding school TikToks always find a way to infiltrate my "For You" page. These aesthetic videos usually include fast-paced montages of picturesque hallways, gourmet meals, decorated dorm rooms, and often end with clips of students doing homework in the library to prove to the audience that they really are at school.

The comment sections on these videos are filled with questions, people expressing jealousy or hatred, and, more than anything else, *Gilmore Girls* comparisons. While I sometimes create my own aesthetic TikToks glamorizing Choate, I am not Rory Gilmore

and neither are the rest of the students here.

These TikToks portray life at boarding school as some sort of movie, and — don't get me wrong — I know that sometimes it is. Every time you step in the dining hall, you are awed by the mahogany walls and sky-high ceilings, and, at Convocation, our teachers dress up in robes, like... what?

But these small clips are far from fully encompassing of the life I am living: the late nights studying — and crying — over math quizzes, buying myself a coffee after every chemistry class thinking it will help me get over not knowing what the heck an isotope is, and the early mornings when I roll out of bed and wish that I hadn't. So, when I see a TikTok try-

ing to "relate" to my boarding school experience, I am tempted to click the "not interested" button. Sometimes, I feel like I will never live up to the unrealistic ideals of these videos showing the problem-free, perfectly-balanced days.

The thing is, the picture-perfect 15 seconds of footage conceals much of the truth. Even my own TikTok videos conveniently show only my bed and not my destroyed carpet, littered with clothes because my dresser drawers seem to only fit two shirts. The fact that my feet knock over the items on my desk every night and my organized study space falls apart into a pile of junk is always just outside of the camera frame.

Do you know what else the 15 seconds don't show? They

don't show the most incredible moments: laughing in the rain as you run to Wallingford Pizza House 30 minutes before curfew, staying up too late talking to friends with giggles filling the conversational gaps, making culinary creations in the dining hall trying to see what you can come up with because you have had a gyro one too many times.

These moments are way more fulfilling than any TikTok video could ever possibly capture. So, I urge you to stop comparing yourself to others and to focus on the life you have created — not the one that TikTok has made you think is expected of you.

Virginia Nelson is a fourth-former from Baton Rouge, LA. She may be reached at vnelson25@choate.edu

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE ELECTIONS REVEAL DEEPER ISSUES

By **Olympia Wolff '25**
Staff Opinions Writer

With every change in the control of the House of Representatives, an election is held to determine majority party leadership. This vote, to determine who will be the Speaker of the House, usually happens quickly.

In a break from normal operation, 20 Republican representatives held out voting for Kevin McCarthy, the most popular candidate for House Speaker, in the first two weeks of 2023. Many Republicans and Democrats criticized these outliers for their extreme positions. This group, led by Matt Gaetz (R-FL), Lauren Boebert (R-CO), and Scott Perry (R-PA), had a list of never-ending demands for the potential new speaker.

First, these representatives demanded more rules that would allow party members to challenge the decisions of Speakers, showing a clear mistrust of Kevin McCarthy's decision making. Another demand was strengthened control at the southern border of the United States. The three representatives also wanted policies that worked toward a balanced budget as the country approached the debt limit once again.

Both Democratic and Republican lawmakers expressed frustra-

tion over the pile of demands. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tweeted, "Republicans' cavalier attitude in electing a Speaker is frivolous, disrespectful, and unworthy of this institution."

President Joe Biden called out the Republicans' failure to elect a speaker, saying, "I just think that it's embarrassing that it's taking so long."

Lastly, Representative Austin Scott of Georgia noted, "McCarthy earned the right to be the speaker ... Any vote against him damages the conference and our ability to govern." Scott plainly stated, "Those opposing McCarthy are putting their selfish motivations over what's best for our nation."

Though these representatives may be on the fringes of the party and the House, some of their concerns have grounding. Among them is a concern about the practicality of House procedures. At the moment, there is no time requirement for when a bill can be submitted before voting on it. This allows members to submit bills just hours before a session, without giving others proper time to read.

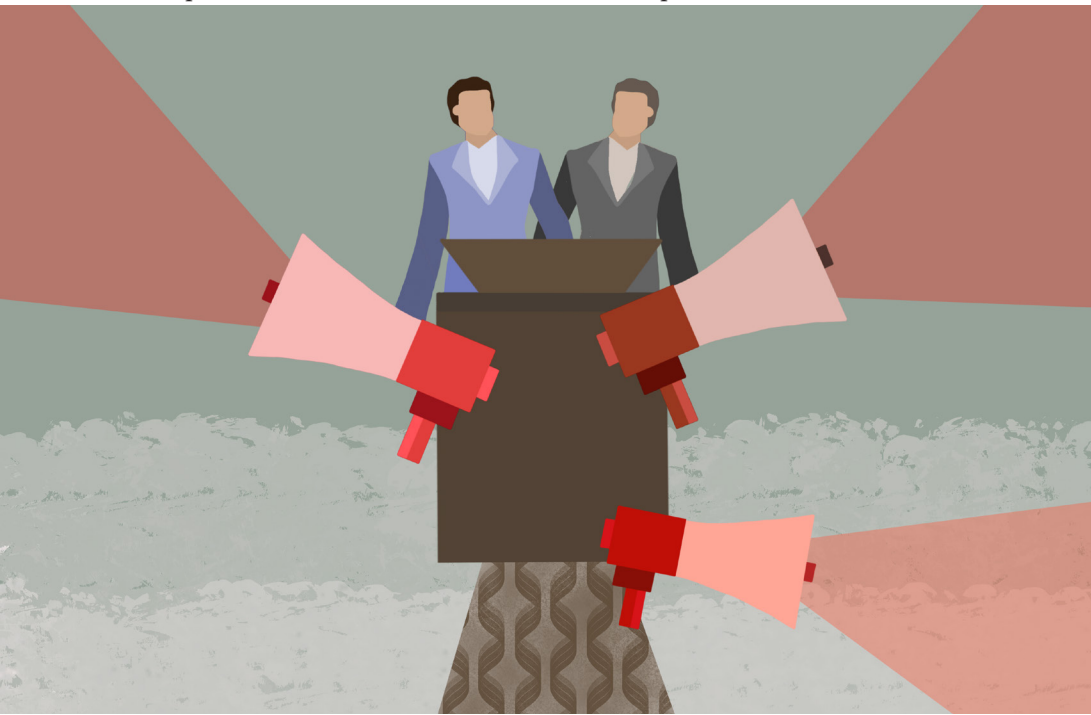
For example, according to the New York Times, the most recent 4,000-page federal OmniBus spending bill passed the House on December 22, 2022, shortly after its introduction. The plotlines of the OmniBus bill included spend-

ing for the military, education, healthcare, veteran programs, and the like, but it would be unreasonable for lawmakers to read and understand the bill in a day or two.

Moreover, the Republican concerns about a growing national debt are not unfounded. According to the Bipartisan Policy Center, the federal government added \$1.4 trillion to the national debt deficit in fiscal 2022 on receipts of \$4.9 trillion. The United States is spending 28% more than it takes in every year, piling onto the \$31 trillion national debt. To an ordinary citizen, good luck getting a loan at your local bank for your new business venture with a 532% debt-to-income ratio. The banker would kindly offer a "bless your little heart" referral to a credit counseling service.

So, while it's true that the representatives were operating outside of formalities, their concerns are not unfounded. Reading a consequential bill before voting is not an absurd idea. Wanting to control the national debt is a reasonable action. While we may not agree with every proposal emerging from these so-called radicals, we could all learn a lesson from their proposals.

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Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

GLOBAL VEGETARIANISM COULD HAVE UNFORSEEN CONSEQUENCES

By **Stan Cho '25**
Associate Editor

Though the earliest records of vegetarianism were centered in religion, in the modern day, there are even more reasons people are opting into the diet today. The rising concern of climate change, which could be mitigated by a decrease in the global consumption of meat, is one.

If the entire world turned vegetarian tomorrow, emissions would decline by around 70% by 2050 according to the Oxford Martin School. Furthermore, the livestock industry would significantly decrease in size, leaving 68% of the world's agricultural land for free use according to Science Focus. Vegetarianism would allow the dedication of the world's existing pastureland to the restoration of grasslands and forests, further alleviating climate change.

What's more is that the change to vegetarianism comes with little global consequence — very different from other potential solution. For example, in 2015, ratification of the controversial Paris Climate Agreement encouraged all major carbon-emitting countries to control their climate pollution and assist in climate migration and adaptation in developing nations. The parties involved also created a fundamental framework for the transparent monitoring of climate goals worldwide. The issue here is that enforcement is largely unreliable.

The primary concern that comes along with global vegetarianism is the disappearance of meat. However, modern technology has led to the creation of imitation meats to help fill the demand for beef, fish, and poultry in a plant-based diet. These meat alternatives produce only 11% of the greenhouse gas emissions that would have been made from the same quantity of "real

meat" according to a University of Michigan Study. Similarly, milk substitutes would require just a fraction of the necessary water and land to be produced, with the release of a fractional amount of greenhouse gasses compared to their animal counterparts.

The benefits of a vegetarian diet are not limited to the environment alone. According to the Oxford Martin School, research shows that global mortality will reduce by up to 10% by 2050 from the decreased risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, strokes, and certain cancers.

With such clear benefits and minimal consequences, the path seems clear. But the path to vegetarianism is not all sunshine and rainbows. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization denotes soil loss as one of the greatest catastrophes of the modern world, induced by plowing and intensive cropping. Another negative environmental effect would be the large-scale pollution and soil deterioration from increased use of fertilizer, fungicides, and pesticides should the meat and dairy industry disappear.

If not planned carefully enough, a plant-based diet could also lead to nutritional deficiencies, which undermines the inherent health benefits of vegetarianism. Essential substances such as protein, vitamin B12, iron, zinc, and omega-3 fatty acids are hard to find in sufficient quantities within the realms of such dietary restrictions.

The detrimental impact of global vegetarianism is most notable in developing countries; around a third of the world's land is composed of arid or semi-arid rangeland that cannot substantiate crop growth according to the BBC. This is just part of the equity issue that arises from switching to vegetarianism.

Specific populations will be restricted in their capability to nourish themselves when con-

sidering their financial burden that comes with purchasing large quantities of food. Furthermore, the collapse of millions of jobs and the loss of culture that hail traditional meat-based recipes further contribute to the impractical and destructive aspects of global vegetarianism.

The issue of cultural loss is exacerbated by the fact that the meat that least contributes to climate change tends to be outlawed in some religions. Grazing animals, such as cattle, sheep, and goats, have a far more significant greenhouse carbon footprint than their nongrazing counterparts, such as pigs or chickens. Non-grazing livestock is much more efficient at converting feed into edible flesh than grazing animals. So a shift toward a more sustainable practice inevitably results in alienating some religious groups which can't cut out the less environmentally-concious meats.

Still, the climate crisis remains an issue. It is undeniable that the calls for vegetarianism to prevent aggressive pollution and the unethical livestock industry are commendable, so it should be encouraged among the communities that can afford it. Furthermore, as climate change becomes a more prevalent issue, cultural loss may be an unfortunate consequence of the shift that is necessary to protect our planet.

The experts at the Rowett Institute of Aberdeen have shown that the promotion of gut microbes can help reduce livestock's methane emissions by up to 70%. Through such methods, we can collectively contribute to de-escalating the current climate crisis without inhibiting the growth and health of less developed countries.

Stan Cho is a fourth-former from Busan, South Korea. He may be reached at scho25@choate.edu

POLITICAL PARTIES MUST STOP WEAPONIZING THE DEBT CEILING TO PUSH THEIR LEGISLATIVE GOALS

By **Arjun Pathy '25**
Opinions Writer

With the national debt rising by trillions in past years, it is easy for us to forget that there is a ceiling to the height of that number. But as the debt approaches the limit once again, it has come to the front of many citizens' and politicians' minds.

The debt ceiling, established in 1917, has served as a technicality with the effect of delegating more power to the federal reserve, leaving Congress with the authority to set only the level of debt the U.S. could take on. Now, more than 100 years later, the debt ceiling has been weaponized by politicians — mostly conservative — putting the global economy at risk of a catastrophic collapse.

The issue of debt has long been a talking point for Republicans, founded on the idea of careless spending by Democratic politicians. On the other side, Democrats insist that national debt is a necessary consequence that comes with improving the social programs. But Democrats aren't the only ones at fault. The debt is similarly pushed by Republicans in the form of foreign wars and massive tax cuts to the ultra-wealthy, leading to a lower tax revenue.

When we look at the numbers, Republicans and Democrats add similar amounts to the national debt. George W. Bush and Trump added \$12.7 trillion to the debt

while Obama and Biden added \$13 trillion. Further complicating the issue, the main source of Republican spending — the so-called "wars on terror" in the Middle East — served as an ambiguous name created as a facade to justify unnecessary intervention and execute partisan foreign policy.

This moral aspect further contributes to the argument that Republicans hold equal if not more responsibility for the debt issue, shedding light on the misrepresentation of intent coming from the right. Despite evident culpability, the Republican Party continues to make itself out as the hero in the situation, fighting against an institutional problem that will destroy the following generation.

Now, in January 2023, we have hit the debt ceiling, but instead of the routine raising of the level, an increasingly polarized Congress has stopped making progress due to an inability to cooperate. After last November's midterm elections, the Republican Party holds a slim 10-seat majority in the House of Representatives, a crucial position for passing legislation like the debt ceiling.

Given these numbers, conservatives cannot make progress without the concurrence of almost all Republican representatives, which leads to countless party concessions to the far-right in order to move forward on legislation. In the context of



Graphic by Andra Ionescu '24/The Choate News

the debt ceiling, this has meant coming dangerously close to the U.S. defaulting on its liabilities. Much of the U.S. debt is held up in bonds, securities that promise to pay back loaned funds supplied by corporations, governments, and individual investors at a later date.

Due to the historic stability of the U.S. Treasury, these bonds are considered to be a backbone for the global economy. Needless

to say, defaulting on these loans would have catastrophic consequences for the entire world. Even with the stakes this high, Republicans continue to hold the global economy hostage for their legislative demands.

Furthermore, last August, the U.S. had its long-term debt rating downgraded, sending a clear message: division in the American government is creating immense damage to the

country's global reputation and future prosperity. This situation represents the extent to which polarization has taken hold in Congress and the lengths to which political parties will go to execute their legislative will.

U.S. politicians are becoming more and more distant from their constituency. While Democrats are lacking in cooperation, more often than not,

the Republicans are stopping logical and necessary legislation from moving forward. Where we go from here is unclear, but one thing is certain: to prioritize the whole country's future, we need concessions from more than one side of the aisle.

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

Choate in Pop Culture

By **Jacqueline Yan '24**
Associate Editor

Choate has built an impressive reputation with its notable alumni and student achievements. More impressive, however, is the number of cameos Choate has made in pop culture. Here are just a few examples of how Choate has made its way into America’s audiences.

Gilmore Girls

For many prospective students, perhaps the knowledge that Choate Rosemary Hall was the inspiration behind Rory Gilmore’s fictional Chilton Preparatory Academy in *Gilmore Girls* is the deciding factor during application season. Author Amy Sherman-Palladino was inspired by Choate’s sprawling green fields and historic architecture while envisioning a boarding school worthy of Rory.

Responsible for some of the most important events within the Gilmore timeline, Chilton (Choate) lays the groundwork for much of the show: the budding friendship between Rory and Paris Geller, Friday night dinners with Emily and Richard, Rory’s acceptance to Yale, as well as her eventual meeting with Logan Huntzberger, one of her three love interests in the show.

Like Choate, Chilton boasts an impressive array of graduates, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Robert Frost, and even Thomas Edison. In fact, *The Choate News* inspired the fictional newspaper, *The Franklin*, with which Rory was heavily preoccupied during her four years of school. For our *Gilmore Girls* fans out there, where’s a better place than Choate to channel your secret inner Puff and start your very own secret society on campus or embark on a search for a certain Tristan DuGray brooding in the hallways?

Family Guy

One of America’s longest-running sitcoms, the tales of *Family Guy*’s dysfunctional family has been airing for 18 seasons and 20 years now. From accidentally becoming a local hero to competing for the inheritance of a wealthy old heiress, the show has brought many laughs to audiences over the years. In “Road to Rupert,” episode nine of season five, Choate makes its an appearance in the show’s infamous sequence of references.

When Brian accidentally sells Stewie’s beloved teddy bear, Rupert, during the Griffins’ yard sale,

the pair is forced to chase down Rupert’s new owner. This includes hitching a ride from a mysterious man and old-school dancing to convince a helicopter rental worker to give them a helicopter. When they finally track down the new owner, however, they discover that they must challenge him to a skiing contest to win Rupert back. To convince Rupert’s new owner, Stanford Cordray, to compete against him, Stewie tells him that Brian will lick peanut butter off any part of his body. To this, Stanford replies, “Well, I did go to Choate.” Now, before any Choaties get mad, the mastermind behind this dig, Seth MacFarlane, is a Kent graduate, so it was only natural that he felt obliged to make fun of the obviously superior school. In a later season, the line, “You think you’re so good ‘cause you went to Choate,” also makes an appearance. Seth, I’m sensing some bitterness here.

The Catcher in the Rye

Since its publication in 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* has become one of the most influential and controversial novels of the 20th century. A classic coming-of-age story, the novel follows the events of a chaotic weekend in main character Holden Caulfield’s life as he battles issues surrounding belonging, identity, innocence and loss. Of course, Choate couldn’t be left out of such a high-profile piece. In the novel, Holden’s main love interest, Jane Gallagher, dated a former Choate student, who, according to Holden, was “all muscle and no brains.” He had a fondness for white Latex swimming trunks and was always going off the high dive. Perhaps a little jealous and intimidated, Holden makes fun of Pike for thinking of himself as “very hot stuff” and calls him a “showoff bastard.” Jane, however, calls it an inferiority complex. Indisputably, this was not Choate’s brightest moment in the literary realm.

Perhaps it’s time we as a school start reflecting on how we present ourselves to the rest of the world because we most certainly want to be the Rory Gilmores of Choate and not the Al Pikes or Stephen Cordrays. Regardless of Choate’s diverse representations in media, it is always exciting to hear Choate’s name while watching T.V. or reading a book.

Jacqueline Yan may be reached at jjyan24@choate.edu

The Lonely Hearts Club



Alexis Lien, Editor-in-Chief

Don’t be discouraged when this classily-dressed, self-proclaimed Londoner has no British accent because she might just be your “perf” cup of tea! Searching for a partner who will willingly share midnight meals of oyster crackers and craisins and take her on romantic museum strolls or bible study dates. Beware: if too distracted by her dainty, beaded shoelaces, this ex-royal-academy-of-dance-er will chassé her way straight into your heart.

Sabrina Wang, School News

Resident tall girl and aspiring Brandy Melville model, Sabrina, needs someone who appreciates dark academia playlists or will lend an ear as she introduces the indie jewelry brand of her emotional-support silver key necklace for the umpteenth time. Interested in galavanting in the fields while she pretends she’s Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*’s opening scene (Keira Knightley version)? Prove your worth by customizing a new Patagonia for this formidable field hockey star.

Ryan Kim, Local News

As the tenure of the 116th Masthead’s most efficient editor comes to a close, this SRPxJFK student is looking for love. While he could easily code a lover of his own, he seeks a sincere partner who’ll complement his quirks and extensive knowledge of current events. Don’t be intimidated by his intellectual and organizational prowess though — once you see him let loose as SYNK’s newest member, you’ll quickly see his bubbly personality.

Michael Korvyakov, Opinions Nation/World

Looking for the biggest business guy on campus? Look no further than our very own Head Prefect, BBG. From his imposing Dad stance to his upcoming, much-anticipated Christmas album and penchant for soft drinks after a long crew workout, who wouldn’t love our Ops N/W Editor? For years, he’s been seeking the perfect Russian girl to fill his Russian heart. Sadly for the rest of us, rumor has it he’s already found her!

Lauren Kee, Arts & Leisure

Catch this multi-talented Arts queen in the dance studio or her cozy Soho lodge scouting out a ballet boy who appreciates both Ricky Montgomery and Chinese pop songs. Challenge her in a game of mahjong for the first date — that is, if you can match her superior skills. This cute bunny will mesmerize you with marimba-playing; the countless percussion instruments she has mastered is outnumbered by only one thing — reasons to love her.

Austin Zhao, Layout

You’ll want to swipe right after viewing the fun, chaotic Snapchat stories that document this proud-Texan’s every waking moment. Though he rarely sleeps, he’ll still manage to be asleep at all the wrong times. To the disappointment of everyone in the state of California, this cowboy hails from Houston (not Austin, get it?). If you’d like a chance with this tri-varsity athlete, you can chat him up while he’s taking stats for Girls’ Volleyball, shooting arrows, or yelling in a very skinny boat.

Toffy Prakittiphoom, Photography

Don’t be surprised if you find this Thai legend playing League on your bed. Go to him for advice, and he’ll pull out his analogy bank and compare your life to a chipotle bowl. He’s always looking for his lost wallet and backpack — but do not fret! They always find their way back to him like your heart will. Bring him a pizza with a fork after a JC hearing, and you’ve scored yourself a date.

Tiffany Xiao, Managing Editor

If you don’t already know this Vanderbilt Melodores fan and weird-food-combinations connoisseur, you’ve probably witnessed her performing Just Dance’s Rasputin in the dining hall or belting in the PMAC echo chamber. However, she has recently been sighted singing with a certain water polo virtuoso, who has been attempting to orchestrate her breakup with her toxic ex: swimming. She might bark at you if she’s interested... if you get a meow, stay away.

Begum Gokmen, School News

Although she often vanishes from the Dining Hall, classrooms, or any sign of civilization, simply brew a cup of espresso, and she’ll magically appear with a mason jar in hand. If you aren’t an alum and Senator working in D.C., you’ll be turned away. Be prepared to rummage through the racks of Goodwill while jamming to Turkish music. She’s ready to find true love — just give her 2-3 business days.

Sydney Alleyne, Campus Opinions

RBF: regular Chipotle-customer, ballerina, fashionista. She’s not as scary as she seems — just meet her happy (air)pods! If you manage to fish this catch from her neon, groovy abode, you’ll have to accompany her to get a bowl of granola; she may be crocheting fingerless gloves as she walks ... make sure she doesn’t crash. Oh, and keep a lollipop in-pocket — a quick pick-me-up for when she’s sad (if unwilling to invest in a trip to NYC).

Yoyo Zhang, Features

Being Satoh Takeru is the way to this Features Editor’s heart, but she can settle for someone who watches Japanese dramas with her too. This SRP icon is looking for someone who will buy her *New Yorker* subscription, Harry Styles tickets, and Thai tea with boba. Keeping her company on late-night girlboss email-sending sessions and waking her up after 10 unanswered alarms are musts. Extra points awarded for distributing GirlTech Magazine and TEDxChoate posters.

Meredith Syms, Sports

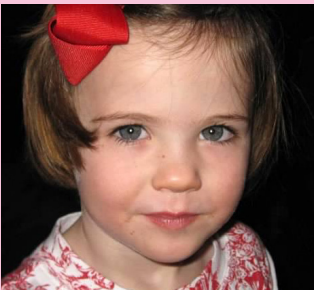
If you want to shoot your shot with this sports enthusiast, you better be able to keep up with Choate sports, the Philadelphia Eagles, and her *New York Times* award-winning SportsUp podcast. Don’t forget trips back to her desert home base of Arizona. However, word on the block is that this athleisure queen has already scored her athleisure king — better luck next time!

Ramsey Scott, Photography

You could plan a date with the price tag of his prized Canon, but this Cheshire photography icon is looking for real romance — not a picture-perfect facade. Although he commutes with questionable driving ability, this endearing camera boy is also a legend on the keys who will serenade you with his classical tunes. Thought it couldn’t get any better? His handstands will leave you head over heels for a love story worth capturing!

Yujin Kim, Graphics

This big-hearted master of Procreate and Canva is ready to paint her perfect love story. Must have some rhythm to keep up with her unmatched TikTok dances and an aptitude for music to accompany her when she strums her oversized ruby bass. Pulling all-nighters to build Legos is also the way to win her over. However, she seems to have already met her match ... Grujin, is it?



BLACK HISTORY SERIES—EPISODE I!

CHOATE’S EARLY STEPS TOWARDS RACIAL JUSTICE

By **Semi Obayomi '23**
Reporter

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

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was fueled by a craving for justice and equality in the Black community. The movement was rooted in youth action, where young adults throughout the nation participated in various forms of protests, sit-ins, and marches. Multiple events in that time period have shaped Choate’s progress in the context of the nationwide movement.

1966

Slowly over time, Rosemary Hall and The Choate School began implementing changes to embody the values of the Civil Rights Movement and diversify the campus. Rosemary Hall hired its first Black teacher, Ms. Dorothy Betts, in 1966. It was

not an easy decision: the headmistress, Alice McBee, refused to admit any Black students, but several administrators and faculty members resigned as an act of protest for the inclusion of Black community members.

Ms. Betts was a biology teacher and taught at Rosemary Hall for two years until 1968. Unlike its counterpart, Rosemary Hall failed to keep detailed records of historical events; therefore, not much is known about Ms. Betts and her time at the school. However, her brief two-year tenure alludes to the difficulty Rosemary Hall had in creating a welcoming environment for Black teachers and students.

1968

Another prominent moment was the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. As a key civil rights activist, Dr. King passionately advocated for the equal treatment of all people, a legacy well deserving of the nation’s respect.

His death had a large impact on the Black community at Choate, as many fought to show their peers the importance of Dr. King’s work. The institution paid tribute to Dr. King in various ways, including

dedicating the Tuesday after his death to educating the community on his impact and ideals.

Today, Choate Rosemary Hall continues the celebration of his legacy by hosting Diversity Day on MLK Day every year since 1991, a time devoted not only to studying Dr. King’s values but also to promoting diversity in daily life.

Before the 1968 Olympic Games, there was speculation that Black American athletes would boycott the event in solidarity with the Civil Rights Movement. While the boycott never occurred, there were still moments of protest throughout the summer games. Meanwhile, at The Choate School, students held numerous vigils and used publications to make their voices heard in response to the movement.

While Choate worked to promote equity, it wasn’t always an easy task. A column in *The Choate News* from April 1968, written by Harry Hurt III ’69, a white student, asserted that the “insignificant” number of Black athletes and their medal contribution at the ’68 Olympics would render a student protest

to be an inconsequential mistake. In response, David Ratner ’69, a Black student, wrote an article to defend his community. Ratner disproved, fact-checked, and offered alternative perspectives to Hurt’s statements.

This interaction reiterated the need for a diversified curriculum on racial issues at predominantly White institutions like The Choate School and Rosemary Hall.

Later that month, in union with thousands of other students across the nation on National Student Protest Day, 113 Choate students maintained a silent vigil outside of Seymour St. John Chapel. For five hours, the group expressed their concerns about the nation’s current problems, from racial inequities to the prevalence of war, and their desire for Choate to take action, specifically by hiring Black faculty.

During the summer of 1968, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) announced that they would uphold the rights of students and faculty of color to attend independent schools and work to ameliorate racial discrimination. The organization also announced its plan to assist schools that would uphold

these values and dissociate from those that would not.

These announcements were clearly impacted by the Civil Rights Movement and influenced the hiring of the first Black teachers at The Choate School, Mr. Wendell Jeanpierre and Mr. Charles Todman in 1969. They taught French and history, respectively.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Todman had a large impact on the Choate community, especially Black students. He served as a faculty advisor to the Black Student Union (BSU) and directed the Afro-American Studies Center, a resource to help educators incorporate Black history into their curriculums. As a BSU advisor, he was a trusted adult for Black students and a person to confide in. Mr. Todman’s efforts helped educate and enlighten students to new perspectives, a valued practice of Choate culture.

Mr. Todman’s work at Choate set a standard for many Black faculty to come, including Ms. Constance Matthews.

1989

Ms. Matthews began her time at Choate in 1989 as an English teacher. She quickly became in-

involved in the community, from advising Step Club and Choate Afro-Latino Student Alliance (CAL-SA) to being an adviser to students of color. In the English department, she helped expand the curriculum to include a variety of more diverse texts by multicultural writers.

Additionally, Ms. Matthews served as the Coordinator of the Icahn Scholars Program, which focuses on helping middle school students with financial need to apply and attend our School.

Perhaps most impactfully, Ms. Matthews helped to spearhead Choate’s Multicultural Affairs Department, dedicated to promoting racial and cultural diversity in education in alliance with other schools across the nation. This program, reminiscent of Mr. Todman’s Afro-American Studies Center, served as an influential precursor to today’s Equity and Inclusion Department, led by Dr. Rachel Myers.

All of these initiatives, and the individuals that have led them, are part of Choate’s efforts to make students of color feel recognized individually.

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DOUBLE BASSIST YUNG CHIAO WEI VISITS CHOATE

By **Grace LaPlaca '25**
Reporter

The double bass is the largest and lowest-pitched instrument of the orchestra string section and takes on a crucial supporting role in the ensemble. Classical bass soloist Ms. Yung Chiao Wei showcased the instrument's virtuosic qualities on January 20 when Choate welcomed her to Colony Hall to perform and lead a private masterclass for students in the Arts Concentration signature program.

Ms. Wei began playing the piano at six years old in Taiwan. At 12, she discovered her passion for bass and moved to the United States at 16 to further her studies. In 2003, she debuted at Carnegie Hall, becoming the first female solo bassist to perform there. Currently a member of the music faculty at Louisiana State University, Ms. Wei shares her love for music and skill with her students.

Ms. Wei's journey with the bass has not been easy. She was born with an abnormally short thumb and pinky finger, but Ms. Wei has nevertheless overcome her physical abnormalities through diligent practicing and experimentation with her technique. Standing at 5'3" next to her six foot tall



Ms. Yung Chiao Wei watches and plays the double bass with masterclass student Nathan Nicholas '23 in Colony Hall.

bass, Ms. Wei has amassed an impressive repertoire.

Since not a lot of music is composed solely for the bass, Ms. Wei transcribes many of the pieces she performs. Her performance at Choate included both classical and Chinese orchestral pieces. The first piece, "The Butterfly Lovers' Violin Concerto" by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang, was one of the first songs she recorded on CD, which focused on themes on finding her identity as a musician, as suggested by her former teacher. Throughout the process of recording, Ms. Wei explored techniques to imitate a traditional Chinese sound and depict the story of two young lovers.

"It was a way to search for where my roots were," she said.

Ms. Wei also performed "Reflection of the Moon on Lake Erquan" by Yen Jung Hua and "Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85" by Edward Elgar, which were especially important to her in mourning her mother's death. She developed a deep connection to these pieces that she played while grieving. "Many people say music has healing power for audiences, but I think it has even more healing power for performers," she said.

During her masterclass, Ms. Wei coached bassist Nathan Nicholas '23 in technique, musicianship, and artistry. "I was showing



Photos Courtesy of Choate Flickr

him how to incorporate the whole stance and how to use the body differently so that he can create a sound with more depth," she said. "And then we were talking about vibrato: how he can have more variety of vibrato to bring out a more singing quality of the sound."

Ms. Wei also shared injury-prevention strategies with other members of the class, pulling from her experience of an overuse injury that forced her to scale back her playing. "I created this effortless way of playing the bass," she said. "It's coming from the idea of developing Chinese Kung Fu technique, with incorporating the breathing technique, to develop

internal strengths." She hopes to show how musicians, particularly bassists and cellists, can use their bodies to reduce tension.

Carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and other overuse injuries are very common among musicians. "There's careers that have been cut short because of it," said Shawn Yang '24, an Arts Concentration violinist who attended Ms. Wei's masterclass. "If you're injured, you're not able to perform your best, and, therefore, people don't really want to hear you play." By focusing on specific techniques to minimize tension, musicians can avoid facing the harsh reality of injury.

Yang, who has been dealing with overuse injuries over the past few years, said, "It's something that's never really addressed; I think it's swept under the rug. And I think it was really wonderful to hear her address these issues and propose some really great methods for technique and playing in general that can alleviate these injuries."

When playing, Ms. Wei emphasizes breathing through the diaphragm and utilizing the entire body — not just the wrist. Audience member and Latin teacher Ms. Diana Beste noticed how Ms. Wei's movement was integral to her performance: "She's a very physical performer, so to me, it was really interesting the way that she was not only playing music but also performing with her instrument."

"Ms. Wei taught me how much power and emotion a bassist can express. Her level of familiarity with the instrument is something I hope to achieve one day," said Nicholas. Ms. Wei's advice for aspiring musicians, regarding both injury and passion, is clear and sincere. "If you really want to be a musician, you will be a musician."

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ARTS MEETS FESTIVITY AT THE LUNAR BANQUET



Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Kara Wang '24 dances a traditional Chinese dance.



Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

SYNK performs K-pop dance covers.

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

As SYNK, Choate's K-pop dance group, struck their final pose as the last performance act at the Lunar Banquet, the room erupted in thunderous applause from over 200 Choate students and faculty as they celebrated Lunar New Year on January 20.

The holiday, observed by several countries in Asia, was commemorated in Ruutz-Rees and co-hosted by the Chinese Club and the Choate Korean Friendship Association (CKFA). Besides Chinese and Korean food, bubble tea, and traditional games, attendees also enjoyed an array of five cultural music and dance performances by students and faculty.

Joy An '23 and Instrumental Ensembles Director Mr. Gene Wie kicked off the performances with their duet, "Xi Yang Yang" (喜洋洋: full of happiness). Mr. Wie played the erhu (二胡), a Chinese string instrument that resembles a violin, while An played the dizi (笛子), a traditional Chinese flute. Emma Wang '26 enjoyed the exposure to "two instruments that normally people do not learn." She said, "Here, it is more Western music, with instrumentals like violin and flute." An also played a dizi solo entitled "Xiao Tui Che" (小推车: little cart).

Then, Kara Wang '24 performed a traditional Chinese peacock folklore dance from the Dai (傣) people, a Chinese ethnic minority group. Wang has been doing Chinese folk-

lore dance since second grade. "It is a way of expressing myself, but also it is very enjoyable because the moves in Chinese folkloric dance are different from ballet, jazz, or lyrical," she said. "I feel like it fits me better. I have more feeling, almost, and more fluidity when I do folklore dance than when I do other types of dance forms."

For Wang, Lunar New Year is a time for "friends and family to celebrate togetherness and the coming of a new year." She added, "I feel like it is a perfect time to think about what you are grateful for previously this year and what you hope for in the coming year."

Next, Grant Koh '23 and Danny Yoon '24 from the CKFA Band sang "Soneo" (소녀: A Little Girl). As a group of predominantly Korean students, Yoon said, "The goal of the performance was to let people know about Korean culture." James Stuber '24, who is part of the band, said, "Practicing making our songs better and then just sharing with the community makes us proud as a group ... I think our Korean heritage has really brought us together, and there is a really good connection between us."

Finally, Elizabeth Zhao '24, Ernie Mok '25, Cathy Liu '24, Lindsay Hong '25, and Joyce Liu '25 performed two dances to celebrate East Asian culture as part of SYNK. They chose one of the songs they danced to — "Luna," by K-pop group OneUs — because it "involved classical Chinese and Korean instruments," said Mok, Pres-

ident of SYNK. He continued, "The song itself translates to 'you had slight beauty under the moon,' and the moon is a big symbol for Chinese people."

After their performances, SYNK members formed an impromptu dance party. "Our dance session started when K-pop songs that we knew came up on the speakers," J. Liu said. "We decided to put [on] more songs in that we knew, and it gradually became a dance session that was really fun and amazing."

Although many international students are thousands of miles away from home, the Lunar Banquet allowed students to recreate the energy of family gatherings on campus. Hong, who is from South Korea, said, "Living in the States, Western culture does not use the lunar calendar. So, it reminds me of where I am from, my culture, and it is also a good time to eat good food."

Dylan Clack '23, who attended the Lunar Banquet, said, "It was really fun, and it is nice to get a taste of or a little experience of Asian culture ... I really appreciated people putting in the work to perform for us, so I would be excited to see more of that kind of stuff."

Art has the power to bring people together, and the Lunar Banquet was no exception. Students from different cultures came together as a family and celebrated the Year of the Rabbit over food, dance, music, and fun.

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Combat Training and D&D: Preparing for She Kills Monsters

By **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Associate Editor

Choate! Prepare yourselves for an epic fantasy Dungeons and Dragon (D&D) adventure unlike anything you have experienced before. To tackle the monster of a play, the cast of *She Kills Monsters* by Mr. Qui Nguyen has been rehearsing and training in the art of stage combat. Packed with bugbear fights, demon battles, and lots and lots of swords, the show comes to the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) stage on February 15, 16, and 17.

The play's director, Mr. Bari Robinson, handed Connor Zeitlin '25, who plays Dungeon Master Chuck Biggs, the script after he made an announcement during School Meeting about the Dungeons and Dragons Club. "I read that script in a geometry class; I did not pay attention in that geometry class."

She Kills Monsters follows Agnes Evans, a deemed "ordinary" soul who never quite understood her atypical little sister Tilly Evans. Oona Yaffe '23, who plays in the title role, explains that, "If everyone's looking at you, you know, an explosion that's going on over here, [Agnes is] looking at the weird-looking rock."

While Agnes lives an average life filled with shopping, dating, and watching the latest TV shows, Tilly devotes her life to studying the dark arts — reanimating dead lizards and

vanquishing pure evil. Candace Beverly '25, who plays Tilly, explained, "She's both this really, really, really strong person who's just so confident and really knows how to carry herself and then this girl who's really scared and not happy with where she is." Tilly tragically dies in a car crash before Agnes got to know her, but when Agnes discovers a D&D module written by Tilly herself, her life is turned around by an unforgettable adventure filled with bloody battles, five-headed dragons, supermodel demon queens, and more.

Due to the heavy load of combat in this production, Mr. Robinson invited Ms. Rebecca Hirota, a professional fight choreographer, to coordinate action sequences in the play.

Ms. Hirota explained, "Knowing that most of the cast was new to fight choreography, we started on day one with technique so the cast could build their vocabulary." Her overarching goal throughout the process was "to tell the story safely and in a way that looks great and makes the cast feel like the badasses that they are," Ms. Hirota explained.

While the stage fighting adds an extra layer of intensity and animation to the story, it also poses its challenges. "It's a lot of fighting. And then for every fight scene, there's a more emotionally grounded scene sandwiched in there. So, it's hard to keep up your emotional energy when

you're just expending all of your physical energy," said Yaffe.

Zeitlin added that, unlike dance, the consequences of a mistake could be catastrophic in stage fighting. "Fighting is very different from dancing," he said. "There's a big chance we mess something up; it's very hard to correct back into rhythm ... you could get hurt. That's a little scary."

As the cast's designated D&D encyclopedia, Zeitlin has been a devoted D&D player since he was little and even started a D&D program at his summer camp. "It helps tremendously for kids with social anxiety ... and at the end of the summer, everyone's like, holy crap, we just told an amazing story."

Zeitlin is ecstatic to be showing the Choate community in *She Kills Monsters* how impactful playing Dungeons and Dragons can be to one's life. "The show really explains just how powerful a D&D adventure can be," he said. "Fantasy has such a huge potential to show us and teach us so much about our society and our world that nonfiction could never, ever be able to do."

The cast of *She Kills Monsters* is armed and ready to take the Choate community on an unforgettable adventure of love, loss, and redemption. Zeitlin proudly said, "The audience is in for a treat. I don't know a better way to say this: they're going to be blown away."

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Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Ms. Rebecca Hirota demonstrates a combat scene to the *She Kills Monsters* cast.

FIELD
REPORT

Choate Winter Record

79 - 54 - 6

Varsity Games

Boys' Basketball (12-4)
vs. Suffield, 67-76

Girls' Basketball (9-5)
vs. Suffield 39-33

Girls' Ice Hockey (6-1-7)
vs. Kent, 1-5

Boys' Ice Hockey (2-3-11)
vs. Avon, 1-4

Boys' Squash (6-6)
vs. St. Pauls, 0-8

Girls' Squash (8-4)
vs. Sacred Heart, 1-6

Wrestling (11-3)
vs. Deerfield, 69-12

J.V. Games

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

Girls' Basketball (3-1)
vs. Pomfret 28-14

Boys' Basketball (7-3)
vs. Hotchkiss 28-36

Girls' Squash (6-1)
vs. Kingswood Oxford, 5-0

Boys' Squash (5-5)
vs. Avon, 8-0

Girls' Ice Hockey (3-2)
vs. Pomfret, 4-1

Upcoming Game
Themes

Feb 1st - White out

Feb 10th - Disco Night

Varsity Athletes' Battle with Injuries



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

By **Anissa Wang '24**
Associate Editor

Amidst intense varsity training and the college recruiting process, injuries are an athlete's worst enemy. Unable to play their sports, athletes lose months of progress, hinder outlooks for recruitment, and miss out on playing time with their teammates.

Tri-varsity athlete Em DeGrand '24 is a new fifth-former from Hamden, Connecticut who plays volleyball, hockey, and lacrosse. DeGrand tore her right ACL and meniscus in June 2021 and then tragically tore her left ACL and meniscus in May 2022.

DeGrand was significantly concerned about the time away from her sports, mainly due to her goal of playing lacrosse in college. "The whole reason I reclassified my junior year at Choate was to get another year out of my recruiting process, and the extra year helped me get the exposure I needed," DeGrand said.

Pursuing recruitment while being injured was extremely difficult, and DeGrand relied primarily on film to showcase her skills to college coaches. "My film was outdated, and coaches didn't get to see me play in person, which hindered my recruiting process and made it a lot slower than for other athletes," she explained.

Despite her repeated injuries, DeGrand's hard work paid off, as she was recruited to play lacrosse at West Point as a member of the class of 2028.

Jock Maggard '23 is a post-graduate student from Larchmont, New York, who plays hockey and lacrosse. While playing hockey, he tore his ACL, MCL, and meniscus in January 2022. He has since returned to playing, but the recovery process has been complicated and tedious. He said, "It was six to seven months before I could get back, and I spent four to five weeks in bed after surgery, and it was even tough learning how to walk again."

Maggard elaborated on both the physical and mental toll his injury took on him: "It was the hardest thing I've been through. I missed playoffs on my old hockey team and missed the entire lacrosse season. I was captain for

both sports, and I felt like I was letting the team down." When asked about how it impacted his goals regarding recruitment, he explained, "I was going to before my injury, but after, I decided to not try to be recruited."

Sean Cytrynbaum '23 also faced an injury in mid-December that temporarily impeded his ability to play when he broke his ring finger in a game of football. Cytrynbaum said, "I was originally misdiagnosed and told it would heal within a few weeks. After the season finished, a surgeon told me it didn't heal properly, and I needed surgery to replace the cartilage."

He continued, "I finished my football season, but I got no wrestling season and couldn't train off-season for football. I basically lost the whole winter season, but I'm supposed to be good by the week before spring break." Fortunately, the broken finger did not do too much damage; Cytrynbaum was injured after his football season ended and he was already successfully recruited.

Injury and recovery do not only involve physical pain. Athletes remarked on the mental challenges that came with being

injured. DeGrand said, "The mental aspect was more challenging than the physical aspect." However, she has worked hard to revive her mental health. "Now, I feel great. I'm still adjusting and recovering and trying to get back to my 100% self, but I feel mentally and physically stronger than before my injuries. I've now learned ways to make myself stronger and protect myself from these injuries from occurring," she said.

Maggard's injury, although healed, still affects his game from time to time. He said, "If I bump my knee, it's a lot worse than if it were my good knee. I'm not where I'd be if I didn't get injured. I'm at 90-95%, and if I didn't get hurt, there'd be a lot more improvement. But every day, I feel stronger."

The injury and recovery process is a tremendously tricky experience for varsity athletes. Despite the challenges, DeGrand, Maggard, and Cytrynbaum are already on the path to making powerful comebacks to their sports.

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Meet Mr. Andrew Speyer:
Seasoned Sports Officiator

By **Reinah Lee '26**
Reporter

Athletics play a significant role in Choate student life, but credit is not always given where it is due. Often overlooked, officials are essential to conducting a fair match, enforcing the tradition and game rules that student-athletes and coaches commit to within competition of a given sport. Director of Information Technology Services and longtime official Mr. Andrew Speyer said, "If there are no officials, there is no game. If there is no game, there is no sport."

While assisting students and staff with technological needs, Mr. Speyer also takes pride in officiating off-campus lacrosse, football, and field hockey games. He carries 21 years of experience with lacrosse, 10 years in football, and 10 years in field hockey. Mr. Speyer's favorite sport to officiate is boys' lacrosse, where he has presided over the highest level of play, including two state championship games.

While coaching lacrosse and football at Suffield Academy, a co-worker introduced Mr. Speyer to the world of officiating. It quickly became a hobby for him and a way to stay connected to the sports he once played in high school.

Mr. Speyer noted the significance of making consistent calls and articulated, "My favorite part of officiating would be allowing players to have a fair and honest contest." He feels this is the only way to build trust and dependability with the players, coaches, and programs.

On the other hand, Mr. Speyer believes that officials should also be held accountable, admit when they make mistakes, and be given sympathy for simple human error. He shared, "If officials are not egotistical, but honest and human and explain what they do right and what they do wrong, it makes the sport better and more reasonable."

At the peak of his officiating career, Mr. Speyer was on the executive board of the Officials Association, working five days a week at schools such as Salisbury, Westminster, Taft, Loomis, Hotchkiss, and some public high schools. Additionally, he officiated youth games at night and weekend tournaments in the summer, where ages ranged from elementary school kids to adults. Regarding this workload, he explained, "Once you're past a certain level of experience and grade, you can work as little or as much as you want to."

At this point in his officiating career, Mr. Speyer has dedicated his time to training new referees. He wants to ensure that the next generation can continue his legacy across multiple sports. "Right now, in my career, it's mostly giving back to the sport," he expressed.

Amidst an official national shortage, Mr. Speyer's goal is to preserve the art of officiating and spread the craft as much as possible.

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Fan Buses are Back
on the Road



Graphic by Maddy Childs '26/The Choate News

By **Carolyn Chen '25**
Reporter

Have you ever wanted to watch and support a Choate athletic team at their away game but had no means of traveling there? Well, here is some good news: Fan buses, which were discontinued during the Covid-19 pandemic, are now making a comeback!

Last weekend, David Hallal '23 arranged for a fan bus to a basketball game against Loomis Chaffee. He explained that since he had already planned on going to the game with some friends, a fan bus was only logical. "Why don't we do a bus to the game?" he said. "It's a Friday night game, and I'm going to go anyway. What if I set up a bus that would ideally do that?"

Hallal's fan bus was a huge success, garnering high spirits, which further proved his point that fan buses are an easy, excellent way to show support for Choate teams and cheer them on. Hallal said, "I think it's a good bonding experience and also just going to another school and supporting your team on the road. It brings a whole new level of school spirit with it."

Director of Student Activities Ms. Alexandra Long agreed with his sentiment. She said, "As a student body, we can bring the energy to a different school and support our athletes at away games, so they feel supported and excited about playing."

Traditionally, fan buses are only arranged for Deerfield Day, but why should games on Deerfield Day be the only ones that get hoards of fans? It's not fair; winter and spring sports need enthusiastic crowds and school spirit too.

To organize a fan bus, interested student or group of students needs to contact the Dean of Students Office, the Athletics Office, or the Student Activities Office. The three offices collaborate to book a bus and find adults who are willing to chaperone at the event.

Future fan buses are in the works as the number of away-game Choate crowds are on the rise, and, remember: any student can propose a fan bus for any game. If you and some friends want to cheer on a team, reach out to Ms. Long and book a ride!

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Mr. Speyer poses prior to officiating a game.

Photo courtesy of Mr. Andrew Speyer