



## SCHOOL MANDATES USE OF CONTACT TRACING APP

By **Jessica Wu '22**  
Associate Editor

As students returned to campus for hybrid learning two weeks ago, the Choate administration announced that all students living on campus are now required to download and run a contact tracing app on their smartphones.

The app, from a company called Trace Innovations, can identify high-risk interactions using Bluetooth proximity technology and provides immediate reports to the Health Center to contact trace potential spread of Covid-19 on campus.

Adults involved in the planning process include Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00, who focused on implementation; Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen and her team, who focused on the app's medical components; and Information Technology Services (ITS) Director Mr. Andrew Speyer and his staff, who came to understand how the app operates.

While social distancing and mask-wearing were able to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the fall term, Dr. Cohen believes that a contact tracing app can provide additional protection. "Six feet is very hard to judge," she said. "If we were to have a positive case on campus, the app is a way to add that extra security, to know that we have something else measuring that distance and the time you've spent at that distance."

When the School began its search for a contact tracing app



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

last summer, there were some issues with the Trace Innovations app that have now been addressed. Previously, "they were using much more GPS and picking up many people who really weren't close contacts," said Dr. Cohen. "There was more information stored on their server, but they've taken all that away. We felt much more comfortable about adding it just as an extra tool, particularly in light of how much we need to be indoors in the winter."

Trace Innovations was founded by Mr. Graham Grieve, who began work on the app nearly a year ago at the beginning of the pandemic. At the time, he was teaching English in Italy on a Fulbright scholarship.

"When Covid hit, my classes went online, and I started teaching virtually," said Mr. Grieve. He began to examine the protocols required to reopen schools safely. "The area that really seemed to have the most flaws was contact tracing."

Many students have voiced their discomfort with the data the app collects. Members of the Choate Programming Union (CPU) say that they reverse-engineered the app, in an effort to discover how it works. On January 27, the club held a meeting to voice its concerns.

"We analyzed the network traffic and saw what was being sent through the phone during normal usage," said Max Fan '21, president of CPU. "They essen-

tially try to log everything they can on your phone."

According to a summary of CPU's findings, "significant code" in the app "collects and sends precise GPS coordinates every two minutes to their server."

CPU believes that the Choate administration has better, more secure options for contact tracing apps.

Mr. Grieve, however, is adamant that his app does not collect or store GPS data. He said that he designed his app "to protect individual privacy and also help the school — giving the school precisely the information they needed and nothing else."

He went on, "What the dashboard shows is who an interaction was with, when that inter-

action was, and the risk level based on distance and duration of that interaction — that's going off Bluetooth proximity." GPS data, he said, "is purely used to improve functionality and gauge activity and inactivity. Ideally, we wouldn't have to use it, but it improves functionality overall."

The ultimate goal, Mr. Grieve said, is for school administrators "to know exactly who's been exposed, who's tested positive, who's been notified, so they can stop a spread and keep everyone safe." Other contact tracing apps rely on individuals to report whether or not they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, and do not have the ability to report to a central authority.

According to Mr. Grieve, the app dashboard shows only whether an interaction was high-risk or not. It does not differentiate "between an interaction that was five-and-a-half feet away from each other or two feet away from each other," he said. "That's still going to show up as a high-risk interaction, in order to further protect individual privacy."

Other students worried that the contact tracing app would be used to enforce disciplinary measures. According to Mr. Velez, the app is "for medical purposes only. It's treated as all medical issues are — with confidentiality and sensitivity. Certainly, I can appreciate those concerns and hope that students are trusting our messaging that this is not what the app will be used for."

Dr. Cohen added, "I tell everybody when we do contact tracing that obviously I need them to be honest, but this information that we have is not information that will be used for disciplinary reasons. Everyone needs to know that doing proper contact tracing is more important than disciplinary actions. Like many things in the Health Center, it's confidential. The Dean of Students office and form deans have no access to this information."

According to Dr. Cohen, information about a student can not be viewed unless their status on the app has been changed to positive for Covid-19.

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## Latest Community Conversation Explores Pan-Asian Identity

By **Renee Jiang '22**  
Associate Editor

On Wednesday, February 3, the School hosted its fourth Community Conversation, this time on Pan-Asian identity. The discussion offered Pan-Asian-identifying students an opportunity to share their experiences in response to randomly selected questions submitted anonymously by community members, such as "What do you treasure most about your particular Asian culture/tradition?" It also gave the community the chance to hear Ms. Canwen Xu, whose TED Talk, "I Am Not Your Asian Stereotype," went viral in 2016.

The event was optional for students and faculty. According to an email sent by Director of Equity & Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers, scheduling the conver-

sation so that it did not overlap with other events at Choate was "immensely challenging."

By listening to accounts of racism and oppression shared by Pan-Asian-identifying students, other students and teachers in the community felt they were able to reflect on their own actions. Raye Osayimwese-Sisson '23 said, "Being able to sit down and listen to the experiences of my peers in the Pan-Asian community was a great opportunity for me to learn how to be there for them and help them in the future, and also recognize the intersections between Black and Asian communities at Choate."

Mr. Filipe Camarotti, Associate Director of Equity & Inclusion, found great value in the conversation. He said, "I was disheartened to hear the pain that

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## SAC Celebrates Super Bowl LV the Covid Way

By **Pranav Pendri '22**  
Reporter

With the overarching goal of helping students both on and off-campus destress and regain some sense of normalcy, Director of Student Activities Ms. Alexa Long saw an opportunity in Super Bowl LV, which was played between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sunday, February 7.

In past years, students congregated in the Student Activities Center (SAC) to watch the Super Bowl, which usually takes place during a long weekend. Amid the pandemic and on-campus quarantine, Ms. Long and the Student Activities Office made preparations for every virtual and in-person student to enjoy the Super Bowl just as much this year.

Games such as football-themed emoji Pictionary, bingo, and trivia quizzes were made available on the student

portal. Students could submit evidence of the completed activities by 6:00 p.m. on Sunday for a chance to join a raffle and win prizes from the Choate Store. For students on campus, SAGE Dining Services collaborated with the SAC to provide wings and vegetarian game-day-themed food to every dorm.

Some students thought that the football-themed activities were a great opportunity to bring dorms closer together. Nick Maddon '21, a prefect in Tenney House, said, "I loved seeing the cohesion between different forms, and everybody really got along. I thought the activities were a great opportunity for everybody to reintroduce themselves, and it really built a sense of dorm community and camaraderie that I have yet to see in Tenney."

Some students watched the event more for the halftime show than the game itself. Oth-



Photo by Gonzalo Castillo/The Choate News

Boarders gathered in their common rooms to watch the Super Bowl.

ers, still, looked forward to the commercials. This year, many also eagerly anticipated a poem recitation by Amanda Gorman, the 22-year-old poet who performed at President Joseph Biden's inauguration ceremony last month.

In the end, Ms. Long's biggest hope for the SAC's Su-

per Bowl events was that they would strengthen the bonds between students even in these challenging times. For many students, "there's more to the Super Bowl than just the game," said Ms. Long.

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## GROUPS PARTNER TO IMPROVE ASIAN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

By **Richard Chen '22**  
Associate Editor

On February 10, the Asian Student Association (ASA) hosted an event in partnership with Compassionate Home Action Together (CHATogether), an Asian mental wellness initiative founded by Dr. Eunice Yuen, a Yale researcher and child psychiatrist specializing in Asian and Asian-American mental health.

The event consisted of a scene played out by Choate students Naina Sharma '21 and Allen Zheng '21 acting as a child and a parent, respectively. The scene depicted an 18-year-old Asian-American child coming home to their parents after their first semester at Stanford. The child was described to have been academically talented and passionate, but also to have been living in the shadow of their older sister, a successful

computer scientist at Google. The child wanted to make the parents proud but also hoped to follow their own passions. The parent role was a 43-year-old Asian immigrant engineer who was supportive of their child but also felt that their child needed to pursue a field with more security and a better salary.

What ensued was a tense interaction between the child and the parent, of which two endings

were portrayed: one in which the child and parent ended up fighting, and another in which the parent and child reconciled their different perspectives and learned from each other. After the scene was acted out, students split into breakout rooms to discuss how they felt after watching the scene unfold and how they related to the events portrayed.

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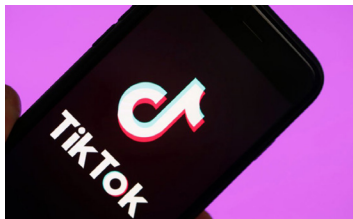
Photo by Maddie Dubrinsky/The Choate News

Students gathered in their dorm, Archbold, for the event.

### Black History in CT

Local organizations prepare to celebrate Black History Month.  
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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**



### Goodbye, TikTok!

Medha Illindala '21 breaks up with the time-consuming app.  
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The 114th masthead is looking for love.  
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### Snow Place Like Choate!

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## Choate Community Gathers to Discuss Pan-Asian Identity

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students and adults shared, and I was grateful to hear the ways in which Pan-Asian identity was important to individuals' lives."

He added, "I am even more committed to doing my part as an individual and faculty member to make sure my students and colleagues are able to live their lives without being discriminated against because of their Pan-Asian identity."

Around 430 people attended the conversation — some half of the student body. Many community members expressed excitement over that level of student engagement. Julia Xu '23 said, "I thought the Community Conversation was immensely successful — both the number of people who participated and the number who showed up made me feel touched, and I felt seen as an Asian person for the first time."

The primary organizer of the event, Dr. Myers, said, "It never ceases to amaze me how thoughtful, honest, and open community members can be if simply given an opportunity to share their perspectives in a respectful environment."

That attendance at the event was optional after students and faculty were required to attend previous Community Conversations, including events that examined Black and queer identity, frustrated many Pan-Asian-identifying members of the community. Xu described the decision as "yet another microaggression from the administration."

"I felt hurt and confused that this meeting on Asian identities was optional, especially since the School did not address the racially-rooted violence faced by Asian people during the Covid-19 pandemic," said Abby Lu '22. As a Community Conversation facilitator, Lu helped the School connect with Ms. Xu.

According to Mr. Camarotti, it was not up to the Office of Equity and Inclusion to require attendance at the event. "Aside from Diversity Day, there is no other E&I programming that is part of our existing calendar where the requirement is for everyone in the community to attend," he said. "Therein lies an institutional problem, one that I hope others of power and influence will take action towards fixing."

According to Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00, every piece of programming during an academic year is plotted on the calendar the previous spring. He added, "To give credit where credit is due, Dr. Myers and her team have brought our E&I programming to the highest level I have seen in my 20 plus years affiliated with Choate. It is clear that the new E&I team is ready to expand Choate's diversity conversations so that they are not rare occurrences and with the plan to schedule programs for the 2021-22 academic year this spring, programs will be scheduled in a thoughtful manner to ensure full community participation."

Dr. Myers, along with the rest of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) task force, have already announced, on February



Photo by Renee Jiang / The Choate News

About 430 members of the Choate community joined the conversation.

19, a second conversation about Pan-Asian identity and discrimination. That event will be required of all students and faculty.

Last week's conversation was interrupted about midway by an uninvited guest. The "Zoom bomber," whose display name identified him as Akeeb Salim, made insensitive comments about the Pan-Asian community. The user was removed from the Zoom meeting by the event's hosts, and the conversation continued.

According to Dr. Myers, ITS is investigating the person's identity, and how they gained access to the event's Zoom link. "I am disheartened that someone in our community shared that Zoom information with someone that doesn't belong in our community," Dr. Myers said. "The comments were a dis-

play of idiocy and clearly meant to disrupt."

To end the event, Ms. Xu shared her personal experiences of handling trauma and microaggressions as an Asian-American growing up in Idaho, as well as her perspectives on the many other issues faced by the Pan-Asian community.

Lu, who has looked up to Ms. Xu since watching her TED Ed Talk, was grateful for her contributions to the conversation. "She offered an outside perspective as well as her own experiences as a youth working in the field of diversity and inclusion, which are valuable as some may have never been exposed to these issues before coming to Choate," Lu said.

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## ASIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION TEAMS UP WITH CHATOGETHER

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Dr. Yuen's events are different from the traditional psychiatric approach. "We are using [interactive theater] as a way to help the community create a safe space to talk about really stigmatized topics such as mental health," Dr. Yuen said. This interactive theater seeks a direct response from its audience. The argument between the child and parent was meant to simulate a reality that may be present in Asian-American households. Dr. Yuen attributes this Asian care for children not only to culture but also to potentially harmful western stereotypes like the common tropes of the "Asian Tiger Mom" controlling her children and the Asian model minority myth.

With interactive theater, Dr. Yuen wishes to break these stigmas. "CHATogether is really using a lighthearted way — interactive theater — to address cross cultural issues, especially in Asian and Asian-American families," said Dr. Yuen. It is her hope that interactive theater will make these issues more accessible to all students.

While the organization typically hosts meetings with Yale undergraduate students, the initiative has recently collaborated with Harvard University to host events in the greater Boston area as well.

Dr. Yuen believes that, despite the setbacks of Covid-19, the widespread usage of Zoom has assisted in making CHATOgether events more accessible,

as it has eliminated the need for students to be physically present at events. This new adaptation has enabled CHATOgether and the ASA to bring workshops to Choate. The event this week was CHATOgether's second collaboration with the School; CHATOgether hosted their first meeting with ASA in October.

"We were able to get a lot of students to come to our meeting," said Max Su '21, president of the ASA. "The conversations we had in smaller breakout rooms directly with students were pretty meaningful as well." Students saw pieces of their own experiences mirrored in the interactive theater.

Dr. Yuen emphasized, however, that the importance of this work lies not in the designed programs themselves, but in the community engagement they inspire. "I want to encourage anyone to give us skit ideas and any feedback with the hopes that we can become a long-standing program at Choate and in boarding schools overall," Dr. Yuen said. Although ASA continues to function as an independent club at Choate, Dr. Yuen is planning on future collaborations with the student group.

After this second collaboration with ASA, Dr. Yuen has expressed hope that the interactive theater system will help facilitate greater and more frequent conversations about parent-child relations, academics, and race at Choate and beyond.

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## DAY STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR NEW BOARDING LIFE



Photo by Jessica Wu / The Choate News

Day student Chiara Vessicchio '22 has started boarding in Hall for the hybrid portion of winter term.

By Prim Tangkaravakoon '24  
Reporter

On the weekend of January 29, Choate welcomed students back to campus for the hybrid portion of winter term. However, due to rising public health concerns, the Choate administration implemented a boarding-only model. Since many boarding students decided not to return to campus this term, dorms were able to accommodate day students as interim boarders.

More than 130 day students decided to become boarders this term and to attend in-person classes. Kaya Tray '24, who is enjoying her experience as a boarding student so far, said, "I am currently living in Squire, rooming with one of my closest friends." She added, "Everything has gone smoothly." Portia Chung '24, another day student-cum-boarder, added, "Mostly, it's been nice to spend more time with my friends."

For other day students, the transition into boarding life has been, at least in part, challenging. Benjamin Wable '23, a day student now boarding in Logan Monroe, felt that the first week was "a roller coaster, to say the least. From adjusting to the dorm

lifestyle to eating new foods, my experience has been different than my life at home." He added, "This is the first time I am away from my family for an extended period, and I already miss them!"

Sarina Kapoor '21 reflected, "This first week has been a huge adjustment for me, but it has also been really rewarding so far. It's been a lot of fun." Kapoor also shifted from being a day student prefect to a boarding prefect in Bernhard House for the remainder of this term, taking on the greater number of commitments that come with the role.

Another adjustment some day students are facing in their boarding experience is new limits to their freedom. Sophia Zhang '23, a day student boarding in Bernhard House, recalls the freedom she enjoyed at home. "I don't like how we have rules like 'lights out' and 'be in the dorm by 7:30 p.m.," she said.

Chiara Vessicchio '22, who is now boarding in Hall, said, "It took a few days to adjust to this new lifestyle, but the dorm has provided a great atmosphere to do so." She added, "Quarantine has made things a bit challenging, especially with food, and I've had some trouble learning all the rules and regulations

that I wouldn't normally have thought about as a day student."

The arrival of day students has increased the membership of some dorms and also brought some changes for boarding students. Lauren Hsu '24, a boarder in Nichols, said, "I'd say the dorm dynamic has gotten better. It's been good to meet new people. It's actually refreshing in a way."

Laura Jiang '21, a prefect in Nichols who now has 20 girls on her floor, said it "is crazy at times but definitely high-energy and a lot of fun."

After welcoming four new day students into the dorm, Squire is now at capacity with 11 girls. The dorm's Head of House, Ms. Jenn Pelletier, said, "I enjoy seeing new faces and seeing the girls make new friends."

Many day students have expressed gratitude for the chance to experience life as a boarding student for at least a part of their high-school experience. Interim boarding prefect in Bernhard House Page Wildridge '21 said, "I'm honestly just happy we got this opportunity, especially as seniors."

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## Choate Hosts Dorm Olympics During Quarantine

By Ryan Kim '23  
Reporter

After returning to campus on the weekend of January 29, students entered a mandatory quarantine in their dorms. To liven up the period, the Student Council implemented the first-ever Choate Dorm Olympics, an opportunity for students to grow closer within their dorms, especially with the arrival of new boarding students, while also remaining socially distanced. The competition wrapped up on February 8, with the Spencer Stallions taking home the grand prize and the Nichols Nickels and the Combo Cholulas placing second and third, respectively.

Created by Sixth-Form Representative Matthew Syms '21, the Dorm Olympics are a series of competitions and activities designed to promote dorm spirit and entertainment. The first place prize is a movie night for the Spencer Stallions in Colony Hall, while the Nichols Nickels, coming in second place, will receive a campfire and mug night on Memorial Field. Third place, the Combo Choloulas, will have the opportunity

to order food free of charge. Additionally, the most spirited and creative dorms — the Woodhouse B. Wangs and the Homestead Honeybees, respectively — will each receive doughnuts for the dorm. The event also incorporated remote students, where the best remote competitor will receive a package of Choate merchandise.

Every night at 9:45 p.m. ET, Syms announced the cumulative dorm rankings for the day and introduced the next event. On the first day, sign-ups opened for dorms and remote students alike, with the task being to devise a team name, mascot, banner, and cheer. Among the 30 dorms on campus, 25 signed up, with four remote students competing individually.

On the second day, participants competed in a live trivia competition hosted by Patrick Finnerty '21.

For day three, dorms dressed up a dorm member as their team's mascot using at most one piece of apparel.

On day four, in collaboration with Choate Interact Club, participants had the opportunity to fulfill community service hours by recording short videos reading children's books for

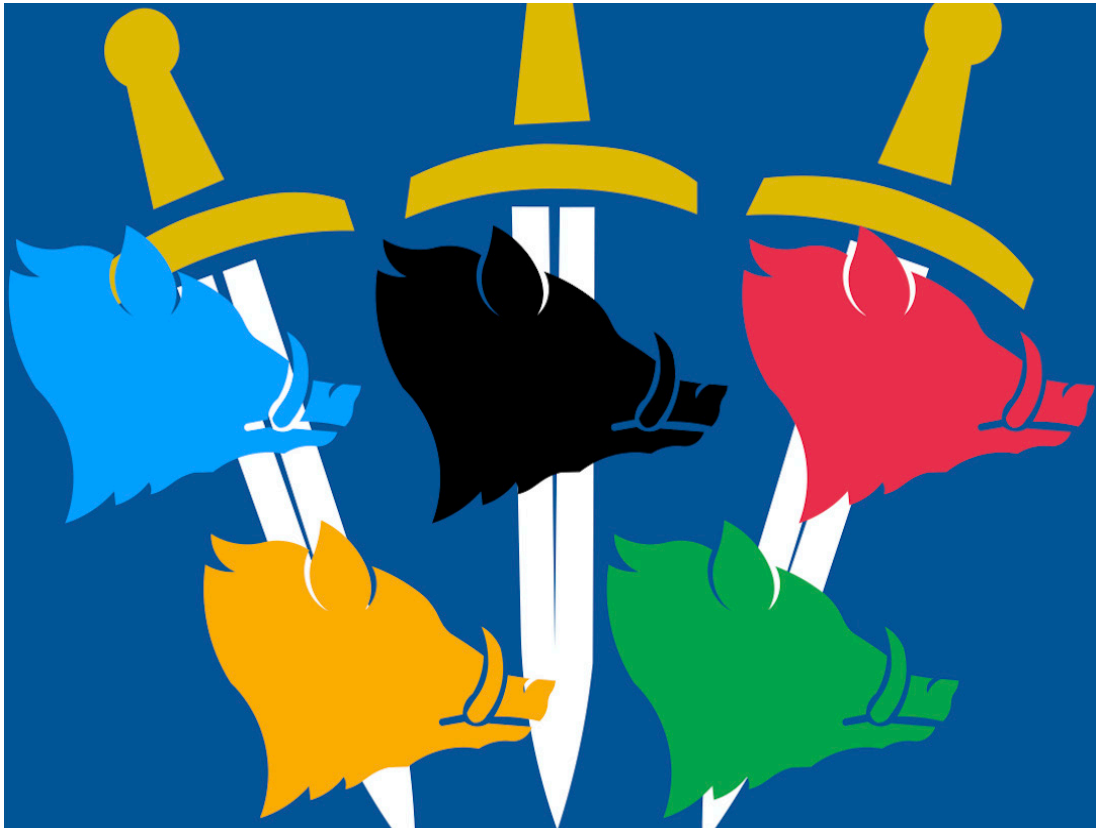
the nearby Moses Y. Beach Elementary School.

To finish the competition, students played Pictionary with Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis and Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00, who drew pictures of words prompted by Syms.

Reflecting on the events, members of the community have agreed that the Dorm Olympics were a great opportunity for dorm bonding and enjoyment. Michael Korvyakov '23 of the Spencer Stallions said, "I definitely enjoyed the Olympics. My favorite event was the trivia night because it involved our entire dorm and was very dynamic."

Kenadi Waymire '21 of the McCook Musketeers agreed. She said, "The Dorm Olympics have been a lot of fun. As a dorm, we've spent a decent amount of time doing trivia, working on the idea for our team, and dressing up a prefect to show off our mascot. I think the Dorm Olympics should definitely happen all-year round, sort of like a house points system. It'd create so much more loyalty towards one's dormitory."

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Graphic courtesy of the Choate Student Council



## CONNECTICUT CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By **Linda Phan '22**  
Associate Editor  
**Eva Li '24**  
Reporter

In honor of this year's Black History Month, organizations across Connecticut are hosting events to celebrate, reflect on, and teach about the Black Identity. This year's Black History Month theme, as announced by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, is "Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity."

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, most events are being held virtually through online platforms like Zoom and Facebook Live. This year includes a wide range of events, from art performances to writing workshops to lecture series.

Black History Month has been observed nationwide since 1976. As more Americans become aware of the systemic challenges facing Black Americans, many people are looking to use this year's Black History Month as an opportunity to educate their communities. According to Ms. Maura Beaudreault, the West Hartford Library Publicity Specialist, Black History Month is an opportunity "to spread the word of the history of oppression within the Black race so that we can create more unity for the present and the future."

On February 18, the West Hartford Library will feature author Ms. Manju Soni in a free virtual talk titled, "Lessons From Apartheid: How Americans Can Join Across Racial Differences." Having lived through the Soweto Uprising in South Africa, where hundreds of Black students were massacred by police, Ms. Soni plans to draw parallels between the uprising and America's own ties to racism. She also hopes to tie in the recent Black Lives Matter protests that have led many Americans to, as the program description states, "question their own beliefs and long-held assumptions about race and privilege in America." Through the event, Ms. Beaudreault said that



Photo Courtesy of CHS

A photograph of Black Caucus members at a Hartford Civil Rights Event in 1967 will be a part of an exhibit at the CT Historical Society.

the library hopes "to showcase more diversity within the community and to highlight Black history Month."

Even if you don't live near the Hartford area, chances are your local library is hosting Black History Month events as well. The Ridgefield Library co-sponsored an art lecture on February 7 about the evolution of African American art in the past century as part of their ARTalk series with the Ridgefield Guild of Artists. In Southeastern Connecticut, the Public Library of New London plans on using Canopy for their public movie screening of *I Am Not Your Negro* next Thursday. Lastly, the New Haven Public Library helped to present a five-day show about stepping led by dance company Step Afrika!, which ended on February 5. They are also currently in the middle of a four-part African cuisine series called "Pan-African Kitchen Lab," which occurs every Wednesday afternoon over Zoom.

Non-profit organizations are also participating in celebrations, including the Hartford Yard Goats Foundation, which is an organization that sup-

ports the local youth community through various social events and educational opportunities. The foundation is hosting a virtual panel called "The Impact of Racism" to discuss the personal challenges caused by systemic racism. Panelists include member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's National Board of Directors Scot X. Esdaile, retired Major League Baseball player and sports analyst Doug Glavine, and Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreation at Bowie State University Clyde McDoughey Jr.

The foundation also plans to use this event to highlight historic Black athletes, namely those who faced discrimination while playing at Historically Black Colleges & Universities and Negro League Baseball.

"With the backdrop of systemic racism now highlighted in our everyday lives, it was essential to use our platform to foster the conversation while hopefully encouraging others to do the same," said Ms. Tiffany Young, the Executive Director of the Hartford Yard Goats Foundation. Through the joint

efforts of the Hartford Yard Goats Foundation and Yard Goats Management, Black athletes and those in the sports' industry at large were contacted to share their experiences.

"This is the first event of its kind hosted by the foundation," said Ms. Young. "The hope is to continue creatively highlighting the many contributions of Blacks in both baseball and our society at large." Attendees can register for the event on the Hartford Yard Goats Foundation website, which will take place as a Zoom Webinar. The event will also be livestreamed on Facebook Live.

The Connecticut Historical Society (CHS), in Hartford, has hosted a variety of Black History Month events in previous years. On February 24, it will organize a virtual talk titled, "No Haven: Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Panthers in New Haven." Led by Dr. Yohuru Williams, the Founding Director of the Racial Justice Initiative at the University of St. Thomas, the event will "focus on national attention on Black militancy in Connecticut at the end of the 1960s," according to Ms. Natalie Belanger, the

Adult Programs Manager for the event. Specifically, Dr. Williams will examine the New Haven Black Panther Trials in 1970, where members of the Black Panther Party were prosecuted in connection to the murder of teenager Alex Rackley.

To complement the event, the CHS has acquired archival material about the Black Panthers, including posters, protest photos, and copies of the organization's newspaper — *The Black Panther*. "Many people in CT tend to think of civil rights protests as something that happened in Southern states. But the Black Panther trials are a good opportunity to look at the specific problems of racism and inequality that affected the North," Ms. Belanger said.

Besides this talk, the CHS has also prepared two Civil Rights Movement exhibitions that will be displayed in their galleries at Hartford. One exhibit is titled the "Connecticut Freedom Workers: Remembering the Civil Rights Movement," which showcases Connecticut young adults and teens who fought for equality. The other exhibit, "Freedom Journey 1965: Photographs of

the Selma to Montgomery March by Stephen Somerstein," was organized by the New-York Historical Society.

Connecticut's universities are also taking time to honor the heritages of their Black community members. Southern Connecticut State University's Multicultural Center is helping to lead campus efforts through organizing conversations about white supremacy and Black Lives Matter, a luncheon to learn about and experience Black cuisine and music, and even a Jeopardy tournament focusing on prominent Black figures in history. Different organizations at University of Connecticut have come up with their own event ideas too. UConn's African American Cultural Center (AACC) started the month with their annual Black History Month Opening Ceremony with keynote speaker Patrisse Cullors while the Undergraduate Student Government at UConn is hosting a speaker series focusing on Black identity and experience.

When asked about the pandemic's impacts on event planning, Ms. Beaudreault explained, "At first, the pandemic crushed our programming. However within a few months, our programs were up and running again with the same program numbers as before the pandemic."

The CHS encountered similar challenges. "The idea was to have [Dr. Williams] come to the CHS to give the talk in person, but the pandemic happened, and we put our plans on hold. Like many museums, we've moved all our events online. We were finally able to agree on a new date for a virtual event for this February," Ms. Belanger said.

Though Black History Month will be ending in two weeks time, "it's important to celebrate the history of Blacks and their continual contributions, not just in February, but throughout the year," said Ms. Young.

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Photo Courtesy of Journal Inquirer

Pheobe, Connecticut's official hedgehog, whispers her prediction of the arrival of spring.



Photo Courtesy of CT Post

Health officials in Norwalk line up to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine.

## Valentine's Day Blooms in Wallingford

By **Trista LeBlanc Serbyn '22**  
Staff Reporter

Despite restrictions set in place by the Covid-19 pandemic, love is in the air in Wallingford as the town prepares socially-distant Valentine's Day celebrations. The Green Petal, a Wallingford flower shop, has been busy preparing flower bouquets for many locals looking to spread the love during this season.

Allison Corbett, owner of The Green Petal, has been running her business for the past six years, but within the Wallingford community for only the past four. First introduced to the art of floral design at New Haven's agricultural high school, The

Sound School, Corbett quickly found her passion for horticulture. After working at a flower shop in Martha's Vineyard while in college, she was inspired to move back to Connecticut to start her own floral business.

Specializing as an event florist, Corbett produces bouquets and arrangements for bridal showers, baby showers, and other special events such as weddings, which make up approximately 80% of her business. "When I started the business, I was unsure if I wanted to have that traditional flower shop and do the local deliveries daily," she said. "After a few years of working, I decided that I do love just the weddings, and I wanted to stick to the events."

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, The Green Petal has continued to serve the community. "If you think back to last year at this time, we didn't really know Covid was coming," Corbett said, "As soon as spring 2020 hit, there were no weddings." When health restrictions shut down large gatherings and events, Corbett was forced to get creative.

Last spring, Corbett began a pop-up shop on the sidewalk near her office in the center of town so her business could keep running, and she could connect to the community again. "Mother's Day was the first weekend I started, and it kind of just took off," she said.

Throughout that spring and summer, Corbett assembled her

pop-up every Saturday, selling a small variety of different flower arrangements each time. "I definitely met a lot more customers and got a lot more bookings," Corbett said.

As quarantine and social distancing continues, many are looking for new ways to celebrate Valentine's Day safely. "People are staying home, and not everyone will feel comfortable going out to eat," said Corbett, who will run her pop-up shop in the center of town this Saturday, February 13. "I'm expecting to be very busy."

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Photo by Trista LeBlanc Serbyn/ The Choate News

Local flower shop The Green Petal is ready for Valentine's Day.



# THE CHOATE NEWS



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# TikTok Goes My Mental Health

By **Medha Illindala '21**

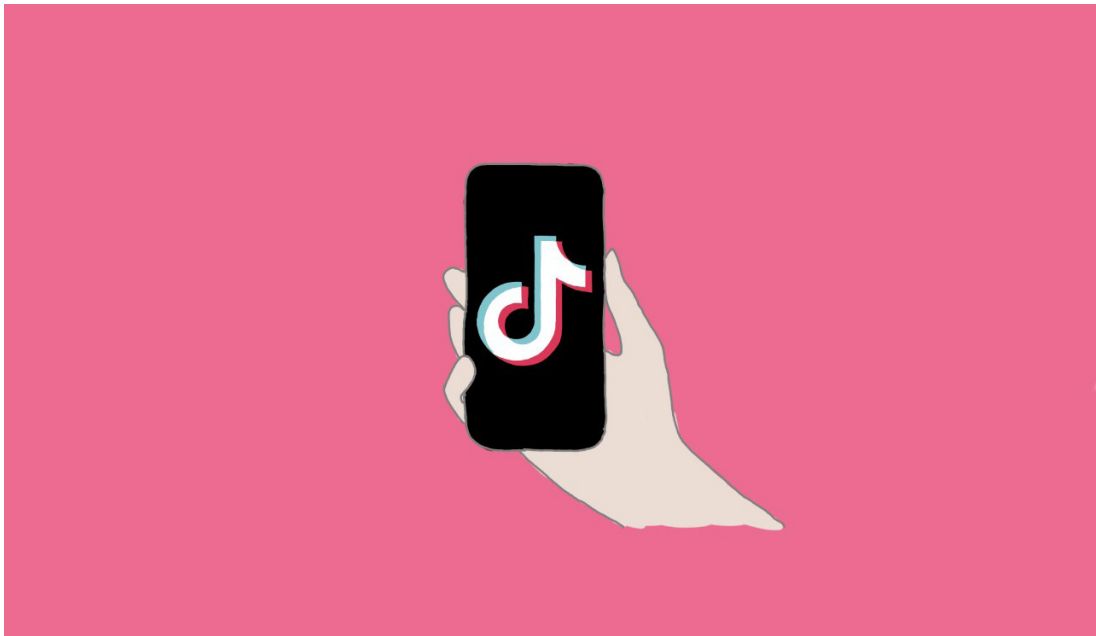
*Opinions Writer*

I downloaded TikTok for the same reasons everyone else did: I thought it would be funny, and I was bored. But, just like everyone else, I found myself using the app much more than I had intended to.

I admit that these hours were not completely wasted. Through TikTok, I rediscovered my passion for roller skating, found cooking recipes, became more comfortable with my Indian culture, and even met a friend whom I still talk to sometimes. But, as time went on, I discovered more and more downsides to the app, and a couple of weeks ago, I deleted it. Since then, I've felt so much better.

For one, I was spending way too much time on TikTok. The app structure is addicting: each video is 15 seconds to one minute long, just the right amount of time to capture viewers' attention. If you get bored, fresh, bite-sized entertainment is one swipe away. Because every video is so short, it's easy to fall down the TikTok rabbit-hole. Often, I found myself mindlessly scrolling for hours, completely absorbed in the content no matter how mediocre it was. My weekly Screen Time messages from Apple were, shall we say, embarrassing. When I became bored of watching a show on Netflix, I would open TikTok — that's when I realized how grossly my attention span had been warped. Since deleting the app, I've noticed that I am more focused and present.

Because of their short nature, TikToks allow viewers to catch glimpses of other people's lives but neglect to portray reality. Those short, romanticized moments affected me deeply. I found myself jealous of rich content creators whose glamorous



Graphic by Yuko Tanaka/The Choate News

orous makeup and symmetrical faces lure millions of views.

TikTok has derived qualities from the 2014 Tumblr era, notorious for spurring body image struggles and inciting eating disorders. While there are several creators working to change this culture (shoutout to Sienna Mae Gomez, who posts body-positive content and invites her followers to eat with her), the issue remains. Due to some physical health problems, I've recently been struggling with my body image, and I found my self-image worsening with the more time I spent on TikTok. Deleting the app has helped me begin to feel better about my body.

Another major problem with TikTok, I've found, is that you never know what you're going to see next when you swipe up on your screen — whether it will be an inspiring Sienna Mae Gomez video or something potentially triggering. Although there's been increased advocacy for including trigger warnings in TikToks, it's up to the creator to decide if and how they include one. Besides, reporting TikToks for inappropriate

ate content rarely results in any real change. After seeing far too many stories about sexual assault and domestic abuse that I wasn't prepared to hear about, I realized that I could find the content I was looking for on other social media platforms. So far, on platforms like Instagram, I've been able to better control what I'm consuming.

Likewise, the app has a hugely toxic community centered around trauma and mental illness. While some people may find validation in shared experiences, feel liberated after telling their stories, or discover support from an online community, there's a line between using TikTok to cope in a healthy manner and exploiting trauma for views. Unfortunately, the latter is all too prevalent. I've seen creators put on a big, lip-glossed smile as they describe their experiences and the unhealthy ways they've dealt with them. When influencers neglect to mention that their coping mechanisms aren't normal and that there are resources if you are going through something similar, young, impressionable viewers are left with a skewed understand-

ing of mental illness and how they should deal with it. TikTok isn't therapy, but my "For You" page was filled up with people who use the app as counseling — for my own mental health, I needed a break from that.

Don't get me wrong, TikTok has done several good things. Our generation has united on TikTok in a unique and powerful way — through the app, we've made national headlines for our political engagement. However, since deleting the app, I haven't missed it. I'm still able to enjoy good entertainment on other platforms, and I'm definitely spending a lot less time on my phone. I've been working on feeling better about myself: I can control what I'm seeing, and I no longer feel like a stranger's therapist. Not everyone should delete the app expecting immediate life improvements. But, by taking the step to regain control over my time and my mind, I've found a happier, healthier me.

**Medha Illindala** is a sixth-former from Cheshire. She may be reached at [millindala21@choate.edu](mailto:millindala21@choate.edu)

# SWIMMING: THREE OF FIVE STARS

By **Harry Chen '22**

*Staff Reporter*

The "Anthropocene Reviewed," a podcast hosted by author and YouTuber John Green, reviews different facets of the human experience on a five-star scale. Inspired by this idea, I decided to give it a shot, too. Why not? I've got time to kill, and I also happen to be an authority on the human experience. So, today, I will be reviewing the human activity of swimming.

I grew up in the pool. My mom started taking me to swim lessons when I was just a few months old. My older brother was a decent swimmer, so I guess my mom wanted to harness whatever talent was in my veins and give me a head start. In the beginning, swimming was just a hobby. While I don't exactly remember

after training, my mom, and the fact that my times were getting faster kept me going. But then, even my times began to slip. I equated my self-worth with those times. And despite swimming so much, I was getting nowhere. I felt trapped in both the 50-meter stretch of water and the sport of swimming itself. So, I quit, ending my 13-year relationship with the sport.

I didn't stop swimming completely, though; I just stopped swimming competitively. I realized that swimming wasn't about how fast I could go but about getting to know myself and the world around me.

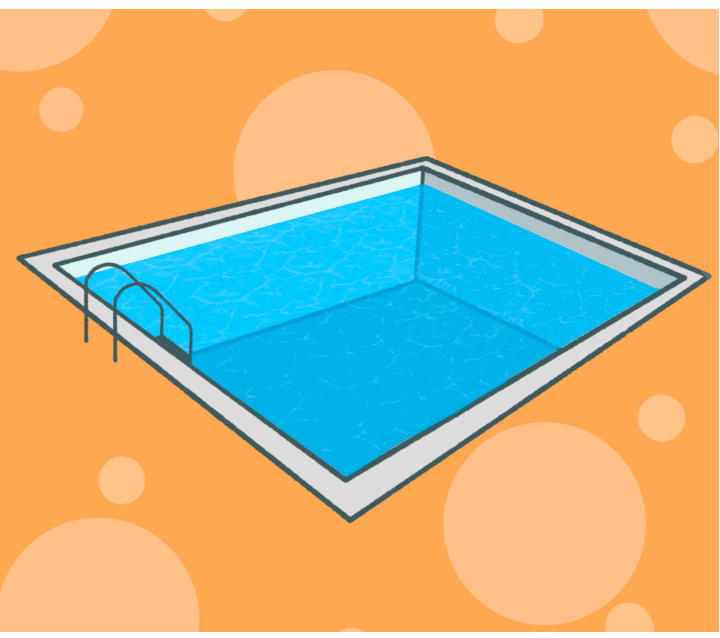
After I quit the swim team, I began swimming on my own — whenever I got the chance, I swam in the ocean. Open-water swimming is one of the best things this world can

*Open-water swimming is one of the best things this world can offer.*

offer. It was meditative, liked swimming in a pool, but without the torture of pressure-inducing competitions. With open-water swimming, there are no rules. No boundaries. There's no telling where you're going to go. You're at the mercy of the natural world, and there's something so beautiful and pure about that. For me, it is only when I am drifting in the ocean, alone with my thoughts, that I feel totally connected to the world around me.

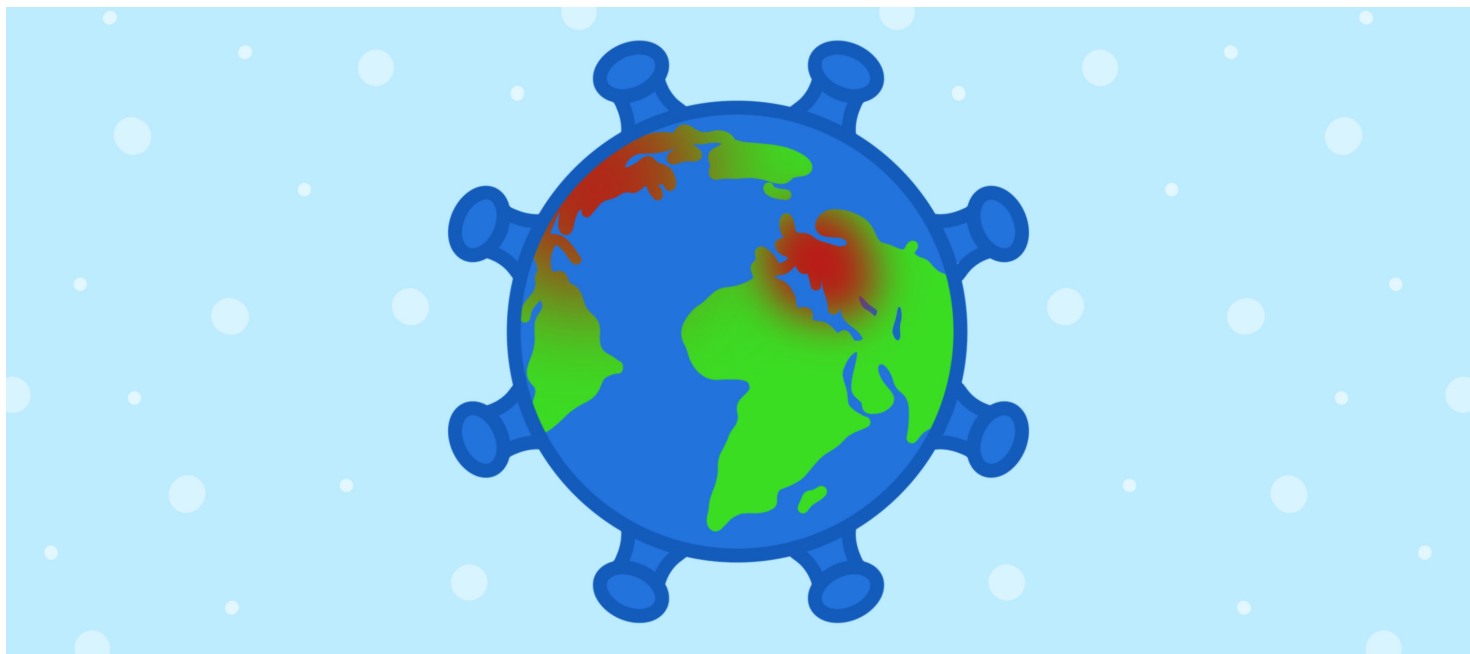
As torturous as swim practices were, I can't help but to be grateful for swimming's presence in my life. So, in good faith, I give swimming three of five stars.

**Harry Chen** is a fifth-former from Vancouver. He may be reached at [hchen22@choate.edu](mailto:hchen22@choate.edu)



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

# Covid-19 Culture Shock



Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe/The Choate News

By **Praj Chirathivat '22**

*Associate Editor*

"Yeah!" my friends and I shouted as Manchester United, our favorite soccer team, scored a goal. It was Saturday night in Bangkok, and my friends and I were elated, spilling a glass of lemonade on the carpet as we leapt up and cheered. We hugged and laughed as our team took the lead in an intense game against our rival club, Liverpool.

After the match ended, we decided to take a taxi to a nearby mall for dinner. In the small vehicle, I saw cars and buses filling the noisy streets, and pedestrians flooding the narrow sidewalks. At the mall, we decided to eat at our favorite hotpot restaurant. The place was packed, and the rich pork bone soup aroma pervaded the air. Hastily grabbing pieces of meat with our chopsticks and dipping them into our shared pot, we laughed over funny stories of our middle school years. Broth spilled from my nose as we reminisced over a hilarious memory of our field trip to Chiang Mai. I was living life like Covid-19 never existed.

Besides wearing a surgical mask whenever I went outside,

life in Thailand was back to normal. With only double-digit daily cases for most of my stay back home, national paranoia was relatively low. I would gather with friends and family throughout the week with Covid-19 far in the back of my mind. I even boarded a plane to southern Thailand, where I enjoyed the warm beaches.

Coming back to Choate during the winter term, I wasn't prepared for the constant fear I would feel. When I hopped off the plane in New York, my heart began to race — I was in the heart of a Covid-19 hotspot. "This isn't like back home," I thought. I had been safe in my Thailand bubble for so long that I forgot the pandemic still existed. Returning to Choate brought back the anxiety I felt during March — the feeling of vulnerability, of mortality, flooded my body.

At the airport, I used hand sanitizer every minute, wore two surgical masks, and even slapped on gloves. Whenever someone walked a little too close to me, I would hold my breath and exhale from my nose so that the virus wouldn't flow through my nostrils.

Despite having 500 times the number of Covid-19 cases

as Thailand, the restrictions in the United States seem to be the same and possibly even looser than I experienced back home. When I traveled back to Thailand last spring, the airport had a body temperature scanner, and the workers wore gloves, masks, face shields, and sometimes even full suits of personal protective equipment (PPE). Although everyone wore masks in New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, it was clear that the United States was not taking the virus as seriously as many Asian countries. Myriads of travelers still walked through the terminals, and social distancing still wasn't apparent.

Combatting Covid-19 goes far beyond finances, resources, and economic power; it also has to do with culture. Having encountered previous viruses, citizens of many Asian countries have learned to comply with government rules for their own safety, and many Asian governments have realized the extent to which one should restrict their cities. When a relatively small outbreak of 500 daily cases occurred in Samut Sakhon province, the whole province

went into lockdown. However, in Florida, where more than 200 Covid-related deaths were reported on February 9, 2021, many businesses remain open without mask mandates.

Many Asian countries had a mask-wearing culture before Covid-19. Ever since I was little, my parents would tell me to wear a mask to school whenever I got sick, so I wouldn't infect others. Even if it was just a slight fever or cough, it was my responsibility to ensure that others stayed healthy. During every flu season, some of my classmates and teachers wore masks to school to protect themselves and others. However, America's pandemic culture is still developing — and the late start is proving to have fatal consequences.

As I adjust to life back at Choate, I can't help but to keep one eye trained on the Covid-19 deaths that continue to pile up in the United States. I've learned that a culture of mutual responsibility is missing in America, and, if we don't adjust, we will never recover from the pandemic.

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# President Biden's 100 Days Scorecard

	YES	NO
1. Implement a \$20 billion federal program to oversee vaccine roll-out, with the ultimate goal of vaccinating 100 million Americans by the Biden administration's 100th day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Launch an economic stimulus package, which would extend unemployment insurance, allocate \$130 billion to schools to help them reopen safely, and give \$15 billion worth of grants to small businesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Reverse former President Donald Trump P'00's immigration policies, including his policy that attempted to exclude undocumented immigrants from the Census. In addition, Biden is assembling a task force charged with reuniting the 600 plus children that were separated from their parents after they crossed the U.S.-Mexico border under Trump's "zero tolerance" policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Prioritize pandemic relief for low-income communities of color by investing in small, minority-run businesses and expanding community health centers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Rescind Trump's anti-environment policies and stimulate demand for green products.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Graphic by Sesame Gaetsaloe / The Choate News

Check out future issues of *The Choate News* for an updated scorecard.

## Can Biden Redefine U.S.-China Relations?

By **Tyler Kuo '23**  
*Opinions Writer*

No single foreign policy topic is more critical to the world than the future of U.S.-China relations. When President Joe Biden delivered his acceptance speech on November 7, he promised to rebuild the U.S.'s multilateral alliances. Unsurprisingly, one of his first actions in office was to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement. But, what's in store for relations with China?

There is no denying that U.S.-China relations have suffered serious damage over the past four years. Tensions between the two states are exacerbated by the U.S.'s insistence that China unabashedly disregards human rights in pursuit of world domination and China's belief that the U.S. is hindering its peoples' pursuit of a better future.

Observers of U.S.-China relations are keeping a close eye on what changes the Biden administration may bring to the deteriorating relationship, well aware that it was trapped in a vicious downward cycle under former President Donald Trump P'00. While Biden's stance toward China is not expected to be as hostile as Trump's, we should expect continuing areas of tension between the two superpowers. Throughout his campaign, Biden pledged to stand up to China while simultaneously seeking to build common ground.

Biden is no stranger to China and has boasted that he has spent more time with Chinese President Xi Jinping than any other world leader. However, Biden's stance

toward China has hardened. During the presidential campaign in February 2020, Biden said that Jinping "is a guy who doesn't have a [democratic] bone in his body."

There are a number of points of contention between China and the U.S., namely the ongoing trade war, Chinese trade practices, and the country's history of intellectual theft. But, the greatest issue is China's egregious human rights violations in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Taiwan — these issues were largely unaddressed by the Trump administration, but we can expect Biden to approach them with hard-line policies.

According to BBC News, China has detained around one million Uighurs, a Muslim ethnic group in Xinjiang, with the intention of forcing them to assimilate into Chinese society. Beyond the estimated 350 detention camps that the Chinese government constructed to house the Uighur people, those living in the Xinjiang region are under constant surveillance.

Many governments have expressed concerns. The U.S. State Department said, "These actions undermine China's claim to be a rule of law society, run contrary to China's human rights commitments, and hinder its attempts to build a more transparent and effective justice system."

The European Union echoed this sentiment, saying "These cases are part of a worrying trend and call into question China's respect for the rule of law and for its international human rights obligations, not least freedom of speech." However, these institutions have



Photo courtesy of The Nation

Biden delivered his first foreign policy speech on February 4.

not proposed a clear course of action in response to China's reprehensible human rights abuses.

In the past, China has been largely successful in stifling criticism, as most other countries are reluctant to oppose China out of fear of losing a powerful trading partner. This concern has fueled the world's disregard for China's human rights violations.

In order to combat China's indifference for human rights, Biden must bring together U.S. allies and spearhead a coalition to promote access to independent media and unbiased information in China. The global community should also strive to engage with Chinese activists without putting them in danger. This could include meeting with Chinese dissidents living in allied or partner countries to raise awareness about unlawfully imprisoned ac-

tivists and lobby for their release. This would not only put pressure on China to respond but also shine a spotlight on the country's human rights violations. This united approach could also reassert the U.S. and its allies' influence in the Pacific, which might compel China to agree to terms of cooperation and even spark an opportunity for the U.S. and China to work together.

U.S.-China relations will be fraught with tensions. Biden will need to take a strong stance toward China while also finding areas of common ground. Fortunately, Biden has extensive foreign policy experience, which should allow him to effectively navigate this thorny relationship.

**Tyler Kuo** is a fourth-former from Hong Kong. He may be reached at [tkuo23@choate.edu](mailto:tkuo23@choate.edu)

## THE UNPRECEDENTED PLAY THAT FELL "SHORT"

By **Wesley Boatwright '22**  
*Staff Reporter*

At the start of 2021, one share of GameStop stock was worth less than \$20. At 10 a.m. on January 28, the stock was worth \$480. How did this happen?

The Reddit community WallStreetBets noticed the stock had been shorted by several hedge funds such as Melvin Capital. Millions of small investors decided to pool their limited resources to buy GameStop share and stock options. With the collective power of the internet, they put the stock on a rocket and sent it to the moon, increasing GameStop's market value from \$2 billion to over \$24 billion.

By juicing the price of GameStop, WallStreetBets has cost hedge funds around \$20 billion and sent a message louder than any of the Occupy Wall Street protests. These internet investors proved that anyone with a trading account can play the stock market. In a true David vs. Goliath story, the little guy beat the big guns on Wall Street.

However, the GameStop play shifted from a get-rich-quick scheme to a protest against the hedge funds and the elite who deceive the working class any chance they get.

For decades, Wall Street has been playing with house money. They privatize their profits, making billions upon billions of dollars, without regard for the consequences, before socializing their losses. The perfect example of this is the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis when Wall Street sold mortgage-backed securities they knew were worthless to investors and stripped away millions of Americans' retirement accounts, homes, businesses, and livelihoods.

Did Wall Street pay the consequences for its deception? No. Washington bailed out the firms — to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars. Only one banker was indicted.

The playing field has never been even — Wall Street can take on extreme risk knowing that if it screws up, it will be rescued. That is what happened with Melvin Capital and other hedge funds that took out an ungodly number of shorts on GameStop. Except, this time, the people struck back.

They sent a message to Wall Street that small-time, everyday investors can no longer be ignored, deceived, and trampled.

But who really wins here? WallStreetBets users have made a lot of money — the user who first inspired this play turned \$53,000 into \$48 million. But, when this all comes crashing down, who will be left holding the bag? Who will be left with worthless GameStop stock? It certainly won't be Wall Street. They have the money and the political connections that allow them to revel in the spoils of war without suffering any of the casualties. Given that new Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen took nearly \$1 million in "speaking fees" from Citadel, the backers of Melvin Capital, it is easy to see why Wall Street never gets seriously punished.

Wall Street should pay for its mistakes. But, what happens if it does? If the short squeeze goes nuclear and the margin calls start coming in, hedge funds will be forced to sell their assets. But, it's not their own money the hedge funds would be losing. Hedge funds are made up of investments, much like retirement accounts. So, who really loses when they go down?

Not Wall Street. Even worse: if the hedge funds sell off their assets, the entire stock market will crash, and, once again, millions of Americans will lose everything.

We've already seen something similar during the coronavirus pandemic: the economy tanked, but the stock market rose to new heights. While many Americans struggled to find work and make ends meet, Wall Street got richer than ever. When the players in the system are too big to fail, you know the system is rigged.

GameStop gave people a chance to stand up for themselves and do something unprecedented. But, at the end of the day, Wall Street will win like they always do. Small investors accomplished incredible feats with the GameStop play, but they'll never be able to truly compete within a corrupt, broken system.

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Photo courtesy of CNBC

GameStop storefront in New York City.

## Nuclear Disarmament Requires a United Global Effort

By **Sabahat Rahman '21**  
*Staff Reporter*

When citizens and the media discuss President Joe Biden's policies, they often gravitate to those regarding the economy, climate change, or, most recently, the coronavirus pandemic. How often do nuclear disarmament policies come up? Not often enough.

According to the Arms Control Association, the U.S. has an arsenal of around 5,800 nuclear weapons, Russia 6,375, China 320, and North Korea an estimated 30 to 40. Included in this stock are thermonuclear bombs, which release a hundred times more energy than the ones used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. If just one of these bombs were deployed, the effects on not just its target but the entire

world would be catastrophic, perhaps even apocalyptic.

These statistics are frightening, especially since former President Donald Trump P'00 left the White House with "an unimpressive record on arms control," according to Director of Brookings' Arm Control Initiative Steven Pifer. For starters, Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018. Soon after, tensions between the U.S. and Iran escalated as Iran steadily increased stockpiles of uranium, and the U.S. ordered a drone strike that assassinated Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani.

Further, the former president withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in August 2019 — a 30-year-old treaty calling for the eradication of nuclear weapons systems that enabled countries to hit targets

500 to 5,500 kilometers away in under ten minutes. In November 2020, the U.S. also withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty, which was negotiated in the latter years of the Cold War, signed in 1992, and implemented in 2002. The treaty has played an important role in transatlantic relations by enabling countries to conduct unarmed reconnaissance flights over foreign territories, thereby increasing transparency of military activities.

These actions have jeopardized the future of nuclear disarmament, further exacerbating relations between the U.S. and other nuclear powers.

Nuclear disarmament requires a coordinated effort: no country will willingly reduce their weapons stockpiles if other nations will not do the same. Fortunately, the Biden administration has shown

eagerness to collaborate with other nations and once again prioritize nuclear non-proliferation.

During his first weeks in office, Biden has made significant steps. For one, just days before the expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), Biden asked the Russian government for a five-year extension. The New START treaty calls for the U.S. and Russia to reduce their nuclear delivery vehicles and to increase transparency to support efforts toward complete disarmament. Russia accepted President Biden's request.

President Biden also appointed Rob Malley, a key figure in the development of the Iran nuclear deal, to his administration. Mr. Malley's role as the U.S. special envoy for Iran symbolizes a new era for U.S.-Iran relations. This demonstrates President Biden's

eagerness to renew discussions with Iran; we can expect him to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal or potentially form a new agreement.

These actions are certainly steps in the right direction, but I am anxious to see if the Biden administration continues to prioritize nuclear disarmament. In particular, I would like to see President Biden make an effort to repeal or amend Cold War-era policies that prevent a transition to a nuclear weapons-free world.

These outdated policies include the authority of the president to launch any nuclear weapons and the right of the U.S. to initiate a nuclear war. These policies present a major threat to the livelihood of billions. Allowing any single person to launch a nuclear weapon on their own is alarming, and the U.S. should set an international standard by

promising to not begin a nuclear war. Dismantling these Cold War policies will be a challenge, but I hope there is at least discussion on the topic.

More broadly, I am eager to see the U.S. engage in international discourse with Iran, Russia, North Korea, China, and other nuclear states. This might be my inner Model U.N.-er coming out, but I believe that these interactions are essential. The Trump administration placed foreign relations on the back burner. If the U.S. is to address nuclear proliferation, it must be willing to work with other nations to make compromises that promote global peace and security.

**Sabahat Rahman** is a sixth-former from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. She may be reached at [srahman21@choate.edu](mailto:srahman21@choate.edu)



# Lonely Hearts Club

## with The Choate News



**Claire Yuan '21**

Editor-in-Chief and flautist on the lookout for someone who can keep up with her in the pool and the chemistry lab. Must be willing to share their Netflix password and read her the “Percy Jackson & the Olympians” series as a bedtime story each night. Love of Marvel movies preferred (and extra points if you’ve starred in one).



**Esther An '21**

A friend of trees, this *News* editor seeks someone who can protect her from mosquitos. Would appreciate a partner with an extensive cooking resume or, preferably, who has won the “Great British Bake Off.” Having been a remote student for so long, she is now one with Zoom; the promise of freshly baked snickerdoodle cookies may draw her back out of the screen.



**Peter Di Natale '21**

Catch this man painting the town, humming a tune he learned on the ukulele. Word on the street is that he’s engaged to Niki Gummadi '21, but don’t let that stop you! If you rotate between the same three baseball caps, live in the library, and dream of raising baby ducklings, you’ve met your match.



**Rachel Pittman '22**

This beret-wearing queen of creative email sign-offs can often be found calling her friends “guppy” — potential suitors must find this, and her habit of cracking dad jokes, an endearing quirk. Looking for someone to put up with her many multitudes *and* realize that that’s a Whitman reference. That’s all. Send applications to her future home in the Alaskan forest.



**Henrik Torres '22**

This bio fanatic wants someone to make his dopamine levels go crazy! Ability to read minds is a plus, as he will never tell you what he’s thinking. Potential companions must appreciate corporate crap music and *Downton Abbey* marathons. But, if you’re going to shoot your shot with this tri-intramural athlete, don’t do it during Scorpio season.



**Greer Goergen '21**

This sporty gal is looking for an athletic man that, of course, will let her win in everything (beware, she’s very competitive). He must have an equally extensive and fashionable sweater collection as her. Also required that he speak another language and be a world traveller. Fresh-baked cookies are the way to her heart.



**Gretchen MacLean '22**

Photography editor seeking a man who will serenade her on a guitar and in the kitchen with some homemade pizza and pasta. Must be athletic, a pro surfer, and basically excel at everything. Bad jokes, a weird sense of style, and ability to perform magic tricks for her all preferred. And points for a cool accent.



**Niki Gummadi '21**

This bone-enthusiast is looking for the Troy to her Gabriella. If in search of someone to go bird-watching with, she is not the girl for you. Must enjoy heart-to-hearts about mom jeans (never skinny jeans) and have a penchant for overusing the email “send later” function. Love of purple walls and cult-like friends preferable.



**JeeHuan Kim '21**

EDM lover interested in sharing his affinity for both crazy late-night dance music medleys and sad songs. You may have seen him on campus with his hood on: he is unintentionally being mysterious, but don’t be afraid to approach. Looking for someone bright and sweet, not unlike coffee ice cream, and who doesn’t overthink (like he always does).



**Amanda Li '21**

This C-POP fanatic loves to take advantage of Costco discounts, but she’ll never take advantage of your heart. She’ll swing into your DMs to complain about her cancer research. If you affirm that she’s the better twin, she’ll gladly give up her chance to participate in her beloved Chinese match-making shows to be with you. So, do you meet her “par”?



**Bianca Rosen '21**

Debate mastermind and legendary queen of McCook seeking a man overly enthusiastic about literature that can top her impressive linguistic skills. Bonus points if you can prepare a solid bowl of pasta or afford Chinese takeout! In desperate need of someone who can accommodate her constant struggles with technology.



**Tony Lee '21**

5’10” math nerd searching for an acute angle to complement his obtuse heart. Wants someone to baby him. Has been trying to force an artsy reputation since freshman year but spends all waking hours playing League of Legends; he’s Platinum 1 but can only play a plant lady and an eyeball. Must embrace all that comes with dating a Leo. Likes hugs.



**Laura Jiang '21**

Between ruling over the yearbook club and coddling baby freshmen, this nature enthusiast needs somebody to match her maturity level. Despite the thousands that have crossed her path, none have caught her eye as much as a certain food-loving Instagram influencer. He adores her even more than he adores “Star Wars” and wants to know, “Laura, for LH, may the LJ be with Khuu?”



**Sesame Gaetsaloe '21**

TikTok queen looking for her TikTok king. Ideal type: lanky spaghetti stick-shaped skater boi with floppy brown hair, à la Harry Styles or Matthew Gray Gubler. Must be eager to constantly serenade this chronic choreography-crammer with love songs. Love for Marvel, sweatpants, and avoiding confrontation are musts.

## SECRETS TO SPICING UP SAGE FOOD

By **Cassatt Boatwright '24**  
Reporter

As on-campus students endured the mandatory Covid-19 quarantine period, the food provided to them by the campus dining service, SAGE, remained a chief complaint. Without the dining hall’s range of options and the ability to order food, students were left with the three daily meals and an occasional snack. But, students didn’t simply accept these meals as they came. I talked to some fellow Choate students on how they spiced up SAGE’s rather monotonous quarantine meals.

**Get Saucy:** Each day, SAGE drops off a variety of sauces along with new boxes of food. Salad dressings aren’t exclusively for salads; they can be repurposed for other food items, too. Unseasoned broccoli? Dip it in ranch! Hot sauce, mayonnaise, and sun butter are also offered — all of which can add some much-needed flavor to your quarantine meals.

**Creative Combos:** If you’re tired of eating the same foods over and over again, combine a few together to create a new dish! Mix oats and banana with a bit of milk, or perhaps add the filling of your favorite wrap to a plain salad to make a healthy, delicious alternative. Leftovers from late-night snacks are great to use as well. Once you start getting creative with the combinations, you can discover many more flavorful meals.

**Mix and Match:** If you’re like me, you brought a few of your own treats to snack on during the quarantine period. Incorporating both the SAGE food and your own makes for a more enjoyable meal. Nutella and peanut butter are fun additions to any breaded foods, and hot cocoa powder with warmed-up milk from SAGE makes for a cozy late-night drink.

One thing that most students may even miss more than home-cooked meals is eating together. So, my final bit of advice is to safely share quarantine meals with others! Food is always best shared. So, take these tips, spice up those meals, and eat them with others.

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# COMMUNITY SERVICE GOES VIRTUAL: A NEW NORMAL?

By **Brian Harder '23**  
Staff Reporter

Covid-19 and the resulting social-distancing limitations have drastically changed the face of volunteering. Although some projects have shifted online, others are simply no longer possible. Eventually, some community service programs will likely revert to pre-pandemic operations, but many virtual community service opportunities appear to be here for the long run.

“Before the pandemic, you had the option of either doing online or in-person volunteering, but now the other half has been cut out,” said Claire Fu ’22, who has used the pandemic as an opportunity to further her online tutoring. Before the pandemic, she had been teaching English to a student from rural China virtually. “It’s a very rewarding experience because, as a tutor, I learn a lot about the lifestyles of people who are very different from me,” Fu said.

Berk Gokmen ’21, the president of the Community Service Club, acknowledged the increase in traditional online volunteering while also recognizing the pandemic as a chance to invent new ways of helping others. Those looking for ways to give back, Gokmen explained, might

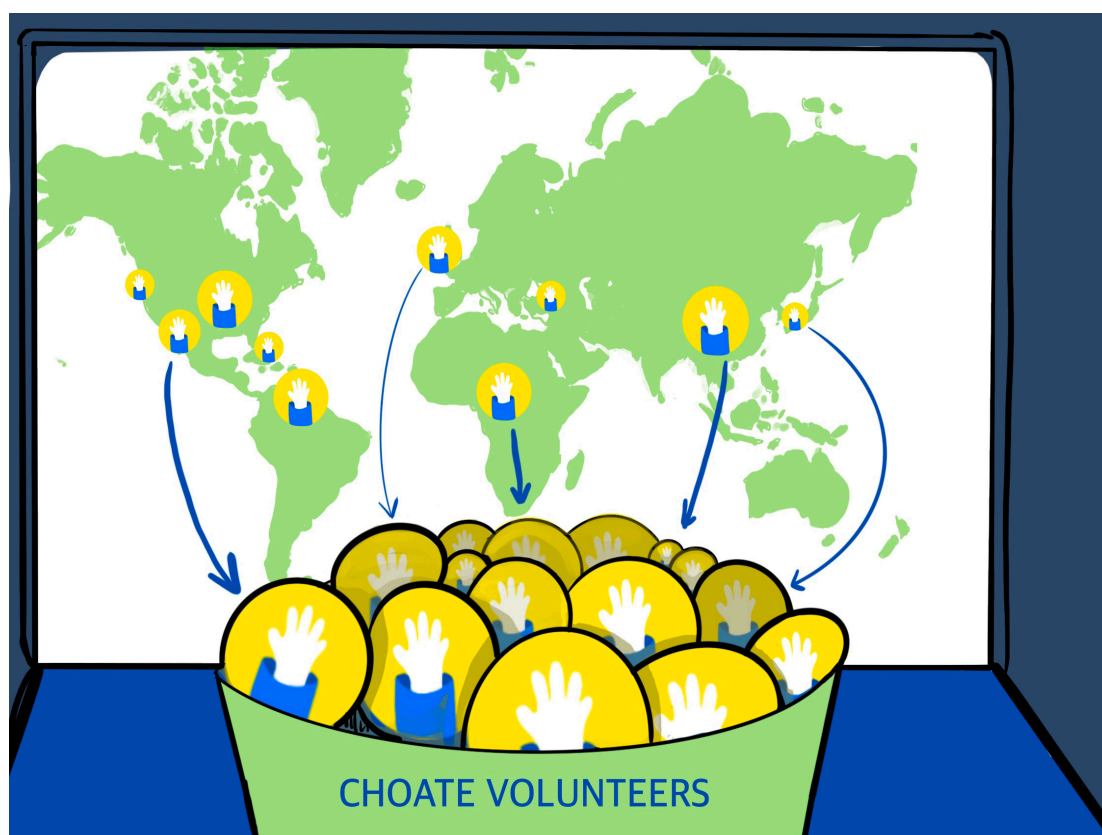
consider finding creative ways to shift in-person projects online.

For instance, Michael Korvyakov ’23 has recently started an online chess tutoring organization, NYC Chess Connections, where, he explained, “Tutors and students sign up, and the tutors teach the students over Zoom once a week for an hour.” (Korvyakov’s group maintains a website at [nycchessconnections.org](http://nycchessconnections.org).)

Still, the truth is that Choate-sponsored volunteer opportunities, most of which are typically held in-person, have become scarce. “I didn’t see much through school, so I’m trying to come up with my own project,” said Rajeev Roy ’23.

Given the new online community service environment, individual, non-Choate projects might be the best way to earn hours. Community Service Director Ms. Melissa Koomson said, “There has been an uptick in proposal submissions, as you need them for non-Choate sponsored activities.”

Although it’s now more difficult for the School to offer volunteering projects, Choate is still encouraging community service efforts. “In the last week of fall term, the Community Service Club organized a panel in which we explained our projects and what we do, and we also en-



Graphic by Rose Shen/The Choate News

couraged others to make their own proposals,” said Gokmen.

Amidst the new challenges, Ms. Koomson has pushed students to reconsider how to most effectively support communities in need. “Community service has adapted to what people’s needs are during this time. The digital divide, in particular, is really taxing for vulnerable populations given access to technology, which

is something folks might take for granted,” said Ms. Koomson.

Organizations that focus on closing the digital divide, like the national nonprofit Connected Nation, have been working even harder to provide technology and WiFi to communities without internet access. Given that basic aspects of life like school and work have now gone virtual,

their work is especially paramount right now.

Within the School, however, “All Choate students have access to devices, and the school has made a commitment to help those with internet connectivity challenges,” explained Ms. Koomson. As such, maintaining a 10-hour requirement for all students is reasonable despite the fact that most community service is now virtual. Further-

more, there are still some pandemic-safe volunteering opportunities such as “making and delivering cookies to food pantries, sewing masks for vulnerable populations, [and] writing letters and cards of thanks and encouragement to essential workers” that are not strictly online, Ms. Koomson said.

However, Ms. Koomson believes that even after the pandemic, online options for community service will continue in addition to in-person offerings. “The way I see it, there will be more virtual opportunities available, but the food banks, for example, will always need that physical labor,” said Ms. Koomson. She also acknowledged the unique benefits of virtual community service, such as allowing for a diverse set of volunteers to foster connections in a global community.

Both Fu and Korvyakov also mentioned how online community service connects people from all around the globe, allowing both tutors and students to better understand each others’ ways of life.

“With online volunteering, you can meet someone on the other side of the world, with a different culture than you,” Fu said. “That type of volunteering is very special.”

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# Fringe Festival Goes Digital

By **Angel Guo '22**  
Associate Editor

Hunching over your laptop on what seems like a Zoom call set in gallery view, the boundary between actors and audience in this year's annual Fringe Festival slowly blurs. Seeing the Zoom squares pop up one by one, you might even begin to feel that, instead of a spectator, you are a silent participant in the play.

The Fringe Festival — a student-run production established in 2013 — aims to connect actors and audience members through performances written, directed, and performed by Choate students. The Fringe Festival has typically spanned a few nights at the end of the winter term. This year, however, the performances will be recorded and accessible on the student portal.

The switch from in-person performances to video recordings posed new challenges for the Fringe team, such as navigating technology, finding spaces suitable for recording, and maintaining video quality. The Fringe team removed all extra flourishes such lighting and sets and instead concentrated on simply depicting each story clearly through dialogue and body language alone.

Since Zoom recordings generally show only a portion of an ac-



Logo courtesy of The Fringe Festival 2021 Board

tor's body, actors focused primarily on conveying emotion through facial expressions. Fringe actor Austin Zhao '23 said, "A majority of what we convey is through the body language, and it is very difficult to construct complex characters when only my face is being shown. As a result, we had to simplify some scripts to not confuse the audience."

Stage Manager and Production Supervisor Lara Stone '22 agreed that the challenges of acting over Zoom has pushed the ac-

tors to find creative ways in constructing their characters.

"It might be frustrating because there is so much you can't do, but you have to look at it and think about the positive side," Stone said. "How can you master these particular aspects and how can you most effectively illustrate your characters through certain parts of your body?"

Despite the limitations of acting on Zoom, the cast's sense of camaraderie remained unaffected. In fact, collaboration and

communication has become even more efficient through Zoom. In previous years, for example, the writers were unable to see the rehearsals that conflicted with their other commitments. This year, writers could log onto Zoom and see their scripts come alive.

In addition to the constant communication between cast members, English teacher and advisor to the Fringe Festival Board Ms. Kate Doak recognized the importance of holding regular rehearsals and having a small cast in maintaining a tight-knit community.

"It is hard to stay engaged in Zoom if we don't meet regularly," said Ms. Doak. "Theater for young people, especially, is about continuity and building connections between multiple shows. Having that disrupted can be jarring for performers who see theater as a way of building friendship."

She added, "We also intentionally kept the cast small to ensure that students could know each other, and the directors, very well and feel more engaged as they are working on different pieces."

Featuring a variety of student written artworks ranging from poetry to play to film to documentary, Fringe will be streaming on February 19.

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Photos courtesy of Dior

Looks 1, 18, 22, and 43 (below) of the Dior Spring 2021 Couture Collection.

## From Medieval Tarot Cards to the Runway: Dior's Newest Couture Collection

By **Reagan Colton '24**  
Reporter

Christian Dior once said, "Individuality will always be one of the conditions of real elegance." The late French fashion designer's wisdom is reflected in the Couture Spring 2021 Dior Fashion Collection; inspired by a deck of tarot cards from the fifteenth century, the 45-piece collection has a distinctly timeless and elegant feel, which certainly would have made Dior proud.

Spearheaded by Maria Grazia Chiuri, Dior's Creative Director, the pieces in the Spring 2021 collection pay homage to the Visconti-Sforza deck — a deck of tarot cards designed by Italian artist Bonifacio Bembo that are more than 600 years old, adorned with gilded depictions of Italian royalty and stunningly painted wildlife.

Chiuri tastefully juxtaposes ornate fabrics of varying textures and weights such as velvet and jacquard, evoking a celestial and luxurious feeling in the fashion line. Although every outfit in the 45-piece collection is meticulously crafted and exquisitely intricate in detail, Look 43 is undoubtedly the shining star of the lineup. The floor-length dress is constructed from shimmering, sheer

Robin-egg blue fabric (organza or perhaps chiffon) with a classic A-line silhouette, bishop sleeves, and horizontal ruching that accentuates the waistline. Shining beads resembling stars are stitched throughout the dress, and a hooded cape in the same sheer fabric — reminiscent of Red Riding Hood or perhaps medieval cultist witch-es — completes the monochromatic look.

In contrast, Look 18 falls slightly short from the high standard placed by the rest of the collection. A black two-piece velvet suit complemented by a simple white dress shirt and a matching black beret, this outfit exudes sophistication. Yet, compared to the rest of the lineup, especially the celestial and mystical motifs that dominate companion looks, it feels too traditional, even boring.

The Spring 2021 Dior Couture Collection draws inspiration from the European Renaissance and exemplifies grace and refinement. The collection transports the audience from the depths of the Italian countryside to stone torch-lit halls of a French castle. With this line, Dior makes us believe in magic once again.

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## REMINISCING ON LOST EXPERIENCES: WHAT COVID STOLE FROM THE ARTS

By **Gigi Chen '24**  
Reporter

Taking a quick look at my schedule, I confirm my hunch that it's time for my last class for the night. At 11:30 p.m., Hong Kong time, on the first day of winter term online learning, I wearily make my way back to my desk to join the Symphony Orchestra through Zoom, already missing the liveliness of the in-person ensemble playing last term.

Playing in Orchestra while being online — a feat sometimes not even possible for those in time zones halfway across the world — and not hearing anyone else certainly has made the extracurricular activity lose part of its charm and community connection.

Art is often an intimate activity that requires closeness. Theater, dance, and music — none of the various forms of art in the world are meant to be isolating experiences. Even outside of an academic environment, concerts, theater, and dance are best experienced in-person. I wish I could have experienced a normal

year at Choate, one full of ensemble performances, art showcases, and productions. I wish I could have experienced art at Choate in a Covid-free world.

As I've heard from Choate upperclassmen, the most popular arts events on campus are plays and musicals each term. I've heard of the show nights at the end of each term and the fun weekend experiences of watching productions with friends. The school year also normally promises other exciting events such as Acapellooza — a big joint a cappella fundraising performance in the spring term — the annual dance concert, and even guest performers whose shows are open to the general Wallingford public. But, as I hear these stories from older students, I wish I could experience these events alongside my freshman friends.

Art productions and showcases are not just opportunities for artistic expression, but also community-building experiences. I'm sure that many students are already more familiar with these events than I, but hear-

ing about them as a freshman this year was deeply saddening. I could only imagine the could-have-beens — what I could have experienced without Covid-19. What evenings had I missed out on where I could have freely gone to watch a show in the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) with friends in a parallel universe?

**Theater, dance, and music — none of the various forms of art in the world are meant to be isolating experiences.**

The challenges of consuming art in times of Covid are further exacerbated by the presence of hybrid learning. While I was lucky enough to be on campus during the fall term, virtual students had even slimmer pickings in terms of immersing themselves in the arts. For example, in Orchestra, it was difficult to gear rehearsals to be inclusive of virtual students when there was a live student orchestra

present and audibly playing that the teacher could focus on.

Even as we return to hybrid learning on campus, remote students, social distancing, and room occupancy limits will no doubt hold arts programs back from replicating the same experience as in-person arts events as we once knew them. Yet, while the pandemic has made the quintessential Choate Arts experience impossible, I am still thankful for what the School has been able to offer and accomplish within these constraints, especially through a digital platform.

Art isn't isolating, and especially in these times, it should connect us. I look forward to the days when we can all head down to the PMAC to watch the latest production, huddle in the Chapel to hear an a cappella performance, or perform on the Colony Hall stage with Orchestra. Some day, I will live out my dreams and experience art at Choate as it was meant to be: together, live, in person.

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## A MIDWINTER'S SNOWY CAMPUS



Clockwise from left, photos by Rhea Shah '22, Yoyo Zhang '24, and Kenadi Waymire '22.





An official makes a call during a Boys' JV game in the 2020 winter season.