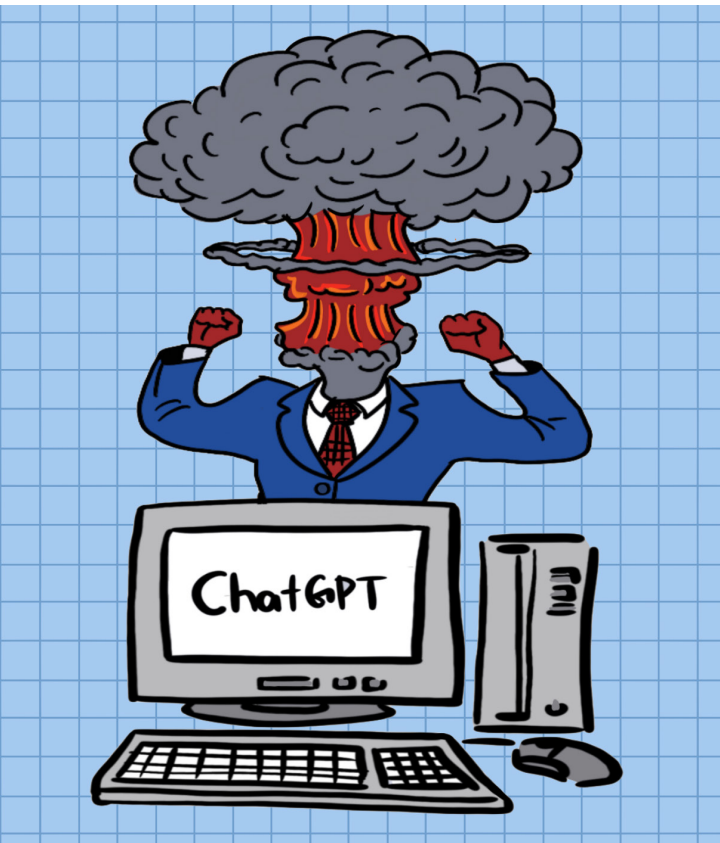




## SCHOOL RECONSIDERS AI POLICIES



Graphic by Andra Ionescu '24/The Choate News

By **Leilani Gao '26**  
*Reporter*

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot with an auto-generative system developed by the company Open AI this past November. While the initial release was months ago, ChatGPT has become increasingly popular in recent weeks. The AI functions in a conversational way, powered by large amounts of data and computing

techniques to make predictions and string words together in a meaningful way. The results are eloquent enough to pass standardized tests, write essays, and perform in special fields such as programming and music production. Its data is sourced from textbooks, websites, and articles, which ChatGPT uses to model its own language for responding to human interaction.

See **EFFECTS**, Page 2

## CHOATE SUPPORTS EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

By **Erin Li '24**  
*Associate Editor*

From February 14-17, students from the Community Service Club (CSC) organized a fundraiser, collecting donations to support earthquake relief in Turkey and Syria. Although the club tends to prioritize hands-on service activities over monetary aid, the club leaders, Begum Gokmen '23 and Racquel Welcome '24, and faculty adviser Ms. Melissa Koomson, agreed that financial donations to on-foot organizations — Kadın Hekimler Eği-time Destek Vakfı (KAHEV), White Helmet, and Mercy USA — would be the best form of support for victims of the earthquake.

Ms. Koomson, the Director of Community Service at Choate, highlighted the importance of “community outreach and supporting a vulnerable population who have already been through so much.” She added, “It’s the right thing to do to care for the community,

especially coming from a place of privilege.”

A table was set up throughout the week for students to stop by and donate money through their Choate Student ID cards or with cash. According to Ms. Alexandra Long, Director of Student Activities, the funds will be delivered through checks to said organizations.

Sarah Yildirim '23, a boarding student from Turkey, commented on the many underlying issues the earthquake has revealed in Turkey. “The earthquake brings our attention to a number of political and administrative problems that already exist in Turkey,” she said. “Although it’s devastating that it takes 36,000 lives lost to get media attention on issues such as lack of construction codes and efficiency of response from the government, it is important to act on these issues. Turkey is known to be a vulnerable region for earthquakes; we must do our best to ensure the least de-

struction when we know more quakes will hit.”

Indeed, government organizations, like the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), were slow in responding to the crisis during the initial hours, and the destruction of many buildings has been linked to poor construction by developers. Non-governmental organizations, to whom the donations will be going, have been playing a critical role in ensuring the safety of those who are trapped under debris and left stranded without homes.

Specifically, KAHEV focuses on funding sustainable education. “Attending school brings an end to cycles of poverty when you get access to things,” said Ms. Koomson. “There’s a connection between education and earthquakes. When you’re investing [in] people, you are really investing in the community and the country.”

A small donation can go a long way, especially when victims have lost their entire livelihoods in a single night. Ms. Koomson said, “There’s a lesson to be learned from students here in terms of raising awareness of inequities and cultivating a perspective of compassion and empathy.” The fundraiser successfully raised \$1844.67 alongside increasing awareness of the destructive forces of natural disasters and mobilizing Choate’s student body to take transformative action toward this issue.

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## CHOATE CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

By **Nilan Kathir '25**  
*Reporter*

To celebrate Black History Month (BHM), the Choate administration and student organizations hosted a wide variety of events and initiatives for the School community. These initiatives sought to engage community members in promoting education, pride, and awareness about Black culture and history.

Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers will be hosting a “Soul Food Sunday” event for Black-identifying community members with the rest of the Equity and Inclusion Office. Hoping for Black community members to share food and culture, build connections, and create joyful memories, Dr. Myers based the event largely on what it means to her to be a Black person. She emphasized, “That is the core of what Black History Month means to me as a Black person: celebrating the people and aspects of Black culture and history that bring me joy.”

Cory Williams '23, founder and president of the Choate Caribbean Club, expressed his excitement for the event. He is particularly “looking forward to the barbecue later on this month.”

Williams noted his appreciation for what Choate has done in the past and what it is continuing to do for Black History

Month. For example, the Administration put out a call for video submissions from Black community members to celebrate. Williams said, “Dr. Myers did a great job of reaching out to students to get their own story to share with the student body.”

Black Student Alliance (BSA) is hosting their event in partnership with the Andrew Mellon Library this year. The student organization collaborated with the library to do a display. The Library made a display case with books in the Reading Room featuring topics of Black joy, such as Black hair and Black people who have surpassed barriers.

The curated display provides a lens into deeper topics related to Black identity.

Many student groups are also holding events collaboratively and using this opportunity to increase communication amongst themselves. For example, BSA is planning to host a joint meeting week with numerous different clubs on campus. The Caribbean Club is working closely with clubs of similar interests, such as Choate African and Latino Men and BSA. Williams hopes to “[learn] from [his] peers who have been here longer.”

In order for the goals of these initiatives to be met, it

is necessary for all members of the Choate community — not just those who are Black-identifying — to make an effort to learn and participate. Caribbean Club, for example, is “not only for Caribbean students,” but for the “whole Choate community because we wanted to educate and teach others about our cultural heritage,” according to Williams.

Although much is being done for Black History Month at Choate, improvements can always be made. Danielle Storr '23, the President of BSA, hopes that

See **BHM**, Page 2



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

## Public Speakers Engage in School-wide Competition

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

On Tuesday, February 21, Connor Zeitlin '25 was selected as the 2023 Charles Krause Junior Fellow, a title given to the winner of the annual Pratt-Packard Declamation Contest. Zeitlin was distinguished amongst over 20 participants, including four finalists — Ivie Ojior '24, Faer Son '24, Connor Zeitlin '25, and Vicky Grechukhina '23, who delivered their speeches during School Meeting.

The contest, honoring former Choate dean and drama

teacher, Mr. E. Stanley Pratt, and former Department Head of History, Mr. H. Jeremy Packard '55, challenges fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-formers to train their public speaking skills with clarity of thought, confidence, and enthusiasm. Students who participate write a speech about anything they feel passionate about and want to share with the rest of the student body.

English teacher Mr. John Cobb facilitates the competition and oversees several rounds of voting. The first round consists of students submitting their speeches to a group of readers, as well as reading them to a panel of

staff judges who decide upon the best eight pieces. In the second round, the semi-finalists present their speeches to a new set of judges. Finally, they are narrowed down to the four finalists.

Mr. Cobb describes the contest as vital to the Choate community because it “is an opportunity for students to say whatever they want in front of the entire school body, which I think is a privilege, and I think people understand it’s a privilege and they work hard at this.”

Zeitlin wrote his speech on his journey through a pop-

See **PRATT**, Page 2

## Students Explore the Korean Diaspora

By **Friday Acuna '26**, **Bowen Jin '26**, and **Reinah Lee '26**  
*Reporters*

Over the winter long weekend, six Choate students, accompanied by Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers and HPRSS teacher Dr. Yaser Robles, went on a trip to Philadelphia to learn about the Korean diaspora, traditions, and culture. This trip was sponsored by Envoys, a global immersion company that designs enriching programs for public and private schools. Partnering with Choate, co-founder of Envoys and trip guide Ms. Marina Lee led the group through three days of Korean studies engagement.

The group began their trip at the recently opened Faith and Liberty Discovery Center. Students learned about various impactful historical figures like Dr. Philip Jaisohn, who was the first Korean to become an American citizen. They also explored the history of Philadelphia and the radical ideas of the state’s founder, William Penn, regarding freedom of religious expression.

After exploring the museum, the students switched gears to a lesser-known topic, appropriately dubbed “the Forgotten War.” The group visited an outdoor Korean War Memorial located in Penn’s Landing and took time to learn and discuss

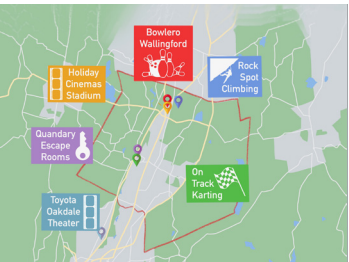
the conflict and its effect on Korea’s legacy. They paid respect to the lives lost in the war and reflected on repercussions that carry on to the present day.

Over dinner at the authentic Korean restaurant, Seorabol, the students were introduced to the President of the Korean Adoptees Association, Mrs. Liz Wade. Together, they discussed Korean identity and the struggles that come with the intersectionality of being American. Mrs. Wade was born in South Korea and immigrated to the United States shortly after birth. She was raised in New Jersey with adoptive

See **KOREAN**, Page 2

### What’s Up in Wallingford?

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Earthquake Disrupts Life in Turkey  
**Opinions N/W • P5**

**A Theatrical Trifecta**  
Fringe Festival, Student-Directed Scenes, and One-Person Plays  
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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Yujin Kim '23,  
Melody Qian '24, Toffy  
Prakittiphoom '24, and  
Maddy Childs '26



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## Korean Culture in Philadelphia

Continued from Page 1

parents, growing up without any knowledge of her Korean heritage. Now working with other Korean adoptees, Mrs. Wade makes it her mission to help adolescent adoptees have a future that embraces their culture. The Korean-American students and Mrs. Wade conversed over their shared struggles of feeling “white-washed” and disconnected from their backgrounds, productively creating solidarity that Korean-Americans are just as Korean as international Koreans.

Building on the momentum from the first day of activities, the group traveled to the Emmanuel Church to learn about the history of the *hanbok*, which is traditional Korean clothing. Teaching the group about the history of the robe-like clothing was Principal Yi of Emmanuel Church. Everyone was able to try on different styles of hanbok provided by Principal Yi.

Based on the color, custom designs, and accessories, *han-*

*boks* can symbolize various things, such as marital status, personal virtues, and social position. Experiencing culture through its unique fashion was a great privilege and piece of educational knowledge.

Later that day, the student group went on a deep dive through the history of the Korean immigration culture in the United States. The students discovered that, just like many other recognized immigrant cultures, the layers of Korean diaspora lie deep and integrated within the American culture itself. Going with the theme, the students were enjoyed a meal at a Korean-American fusion restaurant named KPod.

The final day of the trip was the most action-packed of all. Bright and early, students were given a hands-on opportunity to immerse themselves in Korean culture and delve into Korean cuisine through a guided cooking lesson. Hosted at a private cooking establishment, Hudson Table, they prepared *dak bulgogi*, *japchae*, and scal-

Soon after, they headed to the University of Pennsylvania to meet with the Korean Studies Department. The students gained a new perspective and a fresh understanding of the Korean diaspora through this discussion. Furthermore, they continued their study of Dr. Jaisohn at the Jaisohn Memorial Center, where the lasting impact of Dr. Jaisohn’s medical accomplishments was discussed. To aid the center’s mission of protecting vulnerable communities, the students also helped prepare Covid-19 mask packets and self-test kits.

The final activity the group participated in was a traditional Korean drum lesson. Then, the students dined at a traditional Korean restaurant that specializes in soft tofu stews known as *soondubu*. Over steaming pots, the students discussed issues such as different cultural traditions and unique experiences with their own upbringing.

Today, society is quick to group hundreds of cultures into one category of “Asian,” thus ignoring the individualism of each country. It is crucial to diversify one’s knowledge in order to recognize and represent all of Asia adequately. More importantly, as a country that has not only gained a lot of attention for its pop culture such as K-pop and K-dramas, but has also played a vital role in the global economy, geopolitical sphere, and technological advancements, South Korea and its people deserve to be appreciated and included in classroom discussions.

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Photo courtesy of Reinah Lee '26

Students watch a food preparation demonstration at Hudson Table.

## Pratt-Packard Contest

Continued from Page 1

ular game called Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). Zeitlin found a strong passion for the game and believed he should tell his story to the School.

Ojior decided to enter the competition because she enjoys public speaking and connecting with the Choate community. She wrote about her favorite movie, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before*, and spoke about the impact the film had on her. In her speech, she expanded on the portrayal of femininity and women of color in the media. Ojior said, “I feel like it’s just something that resonated with me a lot, and I hope maybe other people will understand that too.”

One symbolic aspect of the contest is the student’s use of S.P.A.T.E: stance, projection, articulation, tone, and eye contact. When it comes to the similarities among the four finalists, Cobb said, “They first deal with the anxiety that speaking publicly

naturally creates. Engaging your audience in a number of ways is, I think, an important thing.”

Participants appreciate the honor of recognition for their exceptional delivery. “I used to be a really shy kid. Over the years, I learned how much I could enjoy public speaking and eventually, it just became more natural and it helped in my confidence,” said Ojior. The contest is an opportunity to celebrate the confidence and courage of community members.

The Pratt-Packard Declamation Contest allows students to showcase their public speaking skills while delivering meaningful messages to the community. With participants challenged to present an original piece that is both personal and engaging, the opportunity is an highly-anticipated by students and faculty alike.

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Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

2023 Pratt-Packard Declamation Contest first place winner Connor Zeitlin '25 gives his speech about Dungeons and Dragons.

## BHM

Continued from Page 1

Black History Month can be more actively promoted around campus through posters, announcements at School Meetings, and other means of communication. More widespread knowledge about Black History Month and related initiatives will help foster learning and understanding, a mutual goal held by the Administration and student body.

“Black Student Alliance isn’t a place only for Black students,” said Storr, encouraging all students to join. Knowledge, awareness, and understanding among non-Black-identifying students can only happen through commitment, genuine interest, and concern. However, she added that non-Black community members should be “supportive of their friends” and not be “relying on [their] Black friends to teach [them] things about Black issues.” Dr. Myers also affirmed other ways in which students can recognize and appreciate Black people by supporting Black-owned businesses all year round.

The many initiatives produced by the Administration and student organizations on campus are instrumental in promoting education, recognition, and celebration of Black history and culture. Through feedback and engagement with clubs such as the Caribbean Club and BSA, students can amplify Black voices. Choate community members should always make an effort to gain knowledge and understanding of the pivotal aspects of Black culture — Black history is American history.

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## COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON MALE AND MUSLIM IDENTITIES

By **Ethan Zhang '26**  
Reporter

On January 31 and February 10, Choate held two Community Conversations on male identity and Muslim identity, respectively, in Colony Hall. Students and faculty alike shared their personal experiences and educated the School on the unseen and unacknowledged aspects of their identities.

Dean of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Rachel Myers, shared, “I think the conversation went really well. I appreciate anyone who is willing to be honest and vulnerable enough to share their thoughts, feelings, or lived experiences for the benefit of shedding ignorance in this diverse community.”

Collective dialogue starts conversations on experiences and

challenges of different groups, which allows the community to address their struggles. “It was really helpful to learn about the things our male students are struggling with, and proud of, as well as ways we can improve the experience of Muslim community members at Choate,” Dr. Myers said.

While these conversations are a great way for the community to come together and connect as a whole, Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion Ms. Jillian Forgue found many questions challenging to answer. “It was illuminating, in that [some] questions had really robust answers versus the ones that maybe no one wanted to answer,” she said. “That gives you a lot of information about where the community is at and what con-

versations might be better suited to an affinity space.”

More broadly, many community members expressed a lack of personal connection to the conversations despite the variety of topics that have been addressed this year. Topics and questions for Community Conversations are submitted through a Google form. Since there is a limit on the number of Community Conversations each year, the Google form is a way for members of the community to select what they believe needs to be discussed most. However, some identities are consequently left out of the pick. For example, there have been no conversations on female identity or other religions in the 2022-2023 school year.

Nevertheless, as someone who identifies as neither Mus-

lim nor male, Ms. Forgue said, “I feel like there is something to be learned from all of the [Community Conversations]. There’s this concept of windows and mirrors and windows are insights into other people’s lived experiences that you don’t necessarily connect with because it’s not your experience. And a mirror is someone who reflects your own lived experiences and I found that these have all been windows for me, not mirrors.”

Even though many members of our community have not personally identified with the Community Conversations so far, there is still meaning to be found in learning about others’ experiences.

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Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Faculty and students listen to the Community Conversation.



Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Dr. Rachel Myers moderates the Community Conversation.

## THE EFFECTS OF CHATGPT’S RISE

Continued from Page 1

Choate has recently encountered an influx of ChatGPT users, as it has become an area of interest for many students and faculty. Dean of Students Mr. Michael Velez '00 shared how the novelty of ChatGPT has made it one of the biggest challenges the Administration currently faces. He said, “AI has been around; open sourcing has been around. We’ve navigated those, but ChatGPT in some ways presents a novel platform that we have encountered in other forms, if you think of translation software, use of tutors, [and] other resources that are pretty concretely under our academic integrity policy.”

While Mr. Velez personally sees ChatGPT as a violation of the academic integrity policy, as it is a “form of unauthorized aid,” he shone a positive light on the platform at the same time. Looking to the future, Mr. Velez said, “Given the recency of the program being unveiled, the School’s next step is to articulate a stance or position.”

Mr. Morgan Harris, Director of Academic Technology, recognizes the importance of ChatGPT and its ability to both help and hurt students. He noted that while he has “not personally seen any students use it yet,” a group faculty from every department has been exploring the platform to find the ways it can be used.

Mr. Harris, however, also feels that ChatGPT can be a “BS fountain.” He commented, “The nature of AI is to comb through various outputs that humans have put out there and try and synthesize its own way. So, it’s artificial intelligence, but that is not to be confused with consciousness.” He noted that AI can only do what humans have already done, and it

has trouble incorporating creativity and art in its responses.

Mr. Velez added that many colleges and universities are acting upon ChatGPT already. The widespread negativity around ChatGPT makes him note that “when technology is put under the spotlight for negative reasons, it has forgotten the positive aspects that these technologies can offer.”

When asked if all teachers and administrators were aware of ChatGPT, Mr. Velez said, “The deans are definitely aware — teachers, more or less. One of the challenges is detecting, and I know now there are bots that can detect if a writing was ChatGPT, and are still being examined.”

While Mr. Velez has not seen students using the bot firsthand, he has heard anecdotally about students using it, but often “in curious, expository ways” with the intent to “just to see how the platform operates.” This curiosity towards ChatGPT’s capabilities is shared by the Deans’ Office, which has also “gone onto it to see what it is able to produce.”

Hannah Quan '26 shared her perspective as a student. She said, “Personally, I haven’t used ChatGPT, but I know some friends who use it. Some people use it as a new, advanced Google — a sort of search engine to find facts — while others play around with it. I don’t know of anyone who uses it in a negative way.”

While the School has not yet done anything to ban students’ usage of ChatGPT, there may be regulations put in place. Given how advanced the technology already is, it will be interesting to see how the platform will flourish in the future.

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Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Dr. Rachel Myers listens attentively as community members speak.



Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Muslim Chaplain Mr. Jawad Ashraf speaks on Muslim identity.



# WAYS TO ENJOY WALLINGFORD



Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

By **Lauren Hsu '24**  
Associate Editor

Searching for some off-campus fun? Look no further than our own town of Wallingford, which offers activities from movies to escape rooms.

Located at 970 North Colony Road, Holiday Cinemas Stadium 14 is showing newly released movies such as *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* and *Avatar: The Way of Water*. Nighttime tickets are \$10, while matinee pricing is \$8. Teniola Obayomi '25 visited the cinema with the Black Student Alliance to watch *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* and noted, "They had unlimited drinks, and it was a nice atmosphere ... we had a good experience."

Down the road from the cinema is Bowlero Wallingford, a bowling alley at 980 North Colony Road. For under \$20, a party of six can bowl and rent shoes for two hours. In addition to 40 bowling lanes, Bowlero also has private rooms, an arcade, an on-site pro shop, a sports bar, a lounge, and free Wi-Fi. To book lanes or host an event, simply book a reservation on the Bowlero website. "The facilities were very nice. The music was good. Their auto lights didn't break when I was

bowling ... overall, a very nice place," said Zach Starr '24.

Just a seven-minute drive away from campus, the Toyota Oakdale Theater is at 95 South Turnpike Road. The multipurpose venue seats 4,803 and has a domed theater and an auditorium. Popular celebrities like Dua Lipa and Kevin Hart have performed at Oakdale Theater, which hosts a variety of performance types from dance to drama. Upcoming events include *ABBA The Concert - ABBA Tribute* on April 8 and a stand-up comedy show by Chelsea Handler on May 14. Tickets are still available on the Oakdale Theater website.

At Quandary Escape Rooms on 342 Quinnipiac Street, guests have 60 minutes to puzzle their way out of a private escape room. The two adventures currently offered are the "Son of Zodiac" murder mystery and "Operation Gambit." Quandary requires at least two people for an escape room but recommends parties of four. Online reservations can be made for groups of up to eight, and prices are upwards of \$30.

Right next to Quandary Escape Rooms is Rock Spot Climbing: Prime Climb at 340 Quinnipiac Street. This indoor climbing facility includes two sections for a combined 14,000

square feet of climbing: Mountain Fun, for beginner climbers and children's birthday parties, and Prime Club, for regular climbers. Shoes, harnesses, belays, and other equipment are up for rent at the location. Membership is available, but students can purchase day passes for \$29 and rent required climbing shoes and harnesses for \$5 each.

Aspiring go-kart racers can head to On Track Karting to use gas-powered karts on a long and winding indoor track. Located at 984 North Colony Road, customers have eight minutes to complete as many laps around the track as possible. For \$25 dollars, On Track Karting will provide an all-inclusive go-karting experience, including safety equipment and optional race suits. "They have a course that you go through and it times you and you play among your friends and it's cool to see. They have all these televisions up so you can watch replays," noted Alexa Scarlett '24.

Life at Choate can sometimes feel confined to campus boundaries, but entertainment and enjoyable pastimes await in the town of Wallingford.

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# CHOATE ICE HOCKEY SLEDS AGAINST LOCAL TEAM



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Secreto P'21 '23

Sophia Rodham '23 (left) and Cadence Secreto '23 (right) celebrate Choate's first sled hockey fundraiser.

By **Analy Vega '25**  
Staff Reporter

On February 12, 2023, Choate Ice Hockey held its first sled hockey fundraiser game in over three years against the Gaylord Adaptive Sports Program. The event was organized by Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey captains Cadence Secreto '23 and Sophia Rodham '23.

Choate competed against Wolfpack, the Gaylord Sports Association's sled hockey team. One of the 15 sports teams managed by the Gaylord Sports As-

sociation, the group is part of Wallingford's Gaylord Specialty Healthcare, a rehabilitation-oriented, non-profit health system that also works to serve the local disability community.

For many players on the Choate team, this was their first time playing sled hockey, which is a variation of ice hockey where athletes sit on specially designed sleds and use two short sticks to hit the puck and propel themselves. "It was tough at first," said Rodham, "I think [for] 90% of the people, it's just tipping over and trying to figure out how

to push themselves back up. After a while, we started wanting to figure it out."

Reflecting on the experience, Ms. Laura DiCarlo, Head Coach of the Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey team and Associate in the Teaching & Learning Center (TLC), shared, "It was a learning experience to see how difficult it is and to be in their natural environment on the ice but to feel like they're learning a whole new game."

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# BOOK CLUBS MEET AT THE WALLINGFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

By **Calvin Moon '24**  
Reporter

Craving a good book to read? Do you enjoy meeting new people and uncovering hidden ideas about your favorite stories? Well, look no further than the Wallingford Public Library (WPL) book clubs!

Within the five book clubs open to the public, different groups read about diverse topics such as science-fiction novels to Spanish-language novels, with meeting frequency varying from monthly to quarterly.

Ms. Cindy Haiken, the Readers' Advisory Librarian at the WPL, said, "Book clubs create community and bring people together. There's a lot of sharing of ideas and personal stories, and this really fosters trust. And of course, reading is great."

The Hibernation Book Club, whose mission is to "tackle one long classic novel every winter, dividing it up into shorter sections and meeting six times over the course of three months," according to the WPL website. The group meets every other Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. from January to March. This year, they are discussing *Middlemarch* by George Eliot.

Truth Be Told is another book club dedicated to discussing "popular and timely nonfiction books." Meeting on Thursdays every other month in the Collins Room of the WPL, the group is currently reading *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau.

Do titles like *The Great Gatsby*, *Moby-Dick*, or *Pride and Prejudice* catch your eye? WPL also has the Classics Book Club, which meets every first Thursday of February, June, and October at 6:30 p.m. in the Collins Room. Recently, they discussed *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. They will be exploring *My Antonia* by Willa Cather in June, followed in October by Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*.

Interested in more regular meetings? The Thursday Night Book Club meets each month on the third Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in the Collins Room. Throughout the rest of the year, they will be discussing *This is How it Always Is* by Laurie Frankel (March 16), the One Book, One Wallingford (a town reading program) title (April 20), *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng (May 18), *Seating Arrangements* by Maggie Shipstead (June 15), *The Guncle* by Steven Rowley (July 27), *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles (August 17), *Zorrie* by Laird Hunt (September 21), *This*

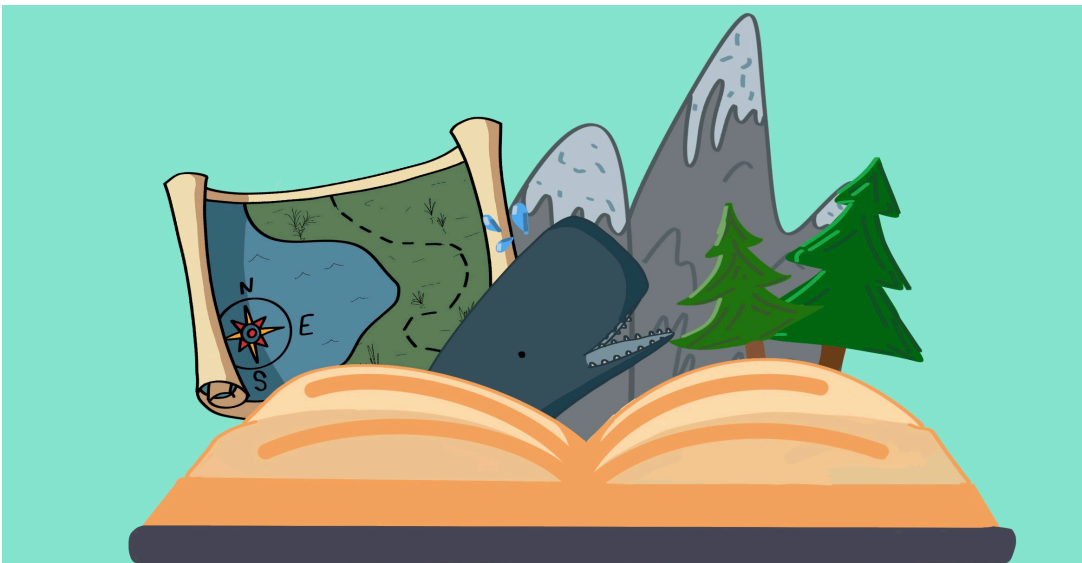
*Time Tomorrow* by Emma Straub (October 19), *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus (November 16), and *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan (December 21).

Intrigued by the suspense of the unknown? The Mystery Book Club reads about the latest works in mystery and detective fiction genres. Meeting once a month on the first Wednesday except for January, July, and August, the club assigns specific themes for their seasonal book choices. Spring 2023's theme is the "Urban Detective," and the group is reading *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett.

In addition to the English-language book clubs, the Wallingford Public Library also collaborates with the Spanish Community of Wallingford (SCOW) to offer a Spanish-language book club.

To further bolster the community's engagement, the library administers all club meetings in-person and over Zoom. They also provide free copies of the books for all participants. If you are interested in participating in any of these book clubs, contact Cindy Haiken at [chaiken@wallingfordlibrary.org](mailto:chaiken@wallingfordlibrary.org).

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Graphic by Maddy Childs '26/The Choate News

# ORIGINS OF THE LIBRARY WINE BAR AND BISTRO

By **Brendan Beng '26**  
Reporter

Residing on Wallingford's North Main Street, Library Wine Bar and Bistro restaurant has served the local community delicious Portuguese food and rich wine for over 40 years.

First built in 1899 to house the original Wallingford Public Library, the property was purchased by Mr. Joe Gouveia, the owner of Gouveia Vineyards, in 1982. He extensively restored the old library building to preserve and highlight the landmark's historic architecture, reopening the building with a new purpose: a restaurant.

The Gouveia family immigrated to the United States from South America and originally moved to New Haven. However, Mr. Gouveia took a liking to the small community of Wallingford and eventually made it his home. Mr. Michael Wulff, the current manager of the Library Restaurant, commented, "At that time, it was just farmland, and he used to drive by it with his brother, and he'd always thought that he wanted to turn it into a vineyard to pay homage to his roots in Portugal."

Although he was the owner of a successful vineyard, Mr. Gouveia participated in other ventures as well, such as real estate and owning a coffee shop. Mr. Wulff said, "Joe had many successful businesses, but a restaurant was something he always wanted to venture into." So, when the opportunity arose for him to turn the site of the old Wallingford Public Library into a business, it was not a surprise that he decided to turn it into a restaurant.

In May 2022, Mr. Gouveia sold the restaurant to the Massella family, the owners of the restaurant Bagelicious, based in North Haven and Cheshire. The rationale behind the selling, according to Mr. Wulff, was because Mr. Gouveia "just wanted to focus more on the vineyard and then pass the restaurant on to new owners that would care for [the Library] as much as he did."

When asked whether the new owners made any significant changes to the restaurant, Mr. Wulff responded, "You had the wine and everything, but now you have the new owners that have more experience in the food service industry. So, it's just bringing

in a much better understanding of the food itself."

Having been an employee since 2019, Mr. Wulff has seen how the Library has grown, especially over the Covid-19 pandemic. "The Library definitely grew to be a much better restaurant," he said. "We became a much better team with much more teamwork." Its patrons have also attested to the restaurant's improvement in its service and catering over the years. "When I got up to tables and I talk to customers, everyone's saying that it's just a much better dining experience and that the food is more amazing than it has ever been in the past," Mr. Wulff said.

As the restaurant plans to undergo renovations to accommodate more people and improve its serving efficiency, Mr. Wulff stressed the restaurant's dedication to the community. "We've just upgraded our behind-the-scenes facilities that can just bring us to have more capacity of people and be able to properly serve the customers," he said.

Brendan Beng may be reached at [bbeng26@choate.edu](mailto:bbeng26@choate.edu)



Photos by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Library Wine Bar and Bistro, formerly the Wallingford Public Library, is located on North Main street.



Out with the old...

The Choate News



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An Ode to the Colony Hall Dance Studio

By **Laya Raj '24**  
Associate Editor

I was visiting the School to speak with former Arts Department Head Ms. Kalya Yannatos, who suggested that I try out one of the classes in the Colony Hall dance studio while on campus. As soon as I walked into the studio, I remember being mesmerized by the expansive space that was enlivened through the dancers' energy and the golden sunlight streaming through the glass windows.

I was nervous about taking this class with a room full of high schoolers who I'd never met before and were not expecting me to be there. Additionally, as I had only been trained in Indian classical dance forms, I didn't know what to expect from the class.

However, as soon as the teacher, Ms. Angharad Davies, introduced herself to me with her warm smile, and I began following along, I started to feel comfortable in the studio. Little did I know that the Colony Hall dance studio would be-

come one of my favorite places on campus.

What I love most about the dance studio is that the nature and architecture surrounding Colony Hall are integrated into the experience of being inside the space. Since one of the studio walls is glass, the PMAC, Archbold, Lanphier Center, trees, and lawn become the backdrop of the room. As I look at myself in the mirror while dancing in class or while choreographing, I see my movement against the canvas of landscape behind me.

One of my favorite times in the studio is when I'm at the barre on a winter evening during ballet class. Through pliés and tendus, my gaze shifts toward the vibrant washes of purples, pinks, and oranges that fill the sky marking the sun's retirement for the day.

I have interacted with the studio in many different ways evolving as a dancer over the past three years. For example, while learning remotely during the winter term of my freshman year, I would follow along with classes through

the virtual student from my home's basement. The studio looked even more vast and impressive through the camera's wide lens. Dancing alone in my basement, I wanted nothing more than to rejoin my peers in that space and to feel their energy as we danced together.

The pandemic and the isolation it induced on the dance community have made me appreciate the Colony Hall dance studio even more for its ability to bring dancers together.

There are days in this space when I am frustrated with the dancer that I see in the mirror trying to embody the movement that I see in my mind. Yet there are many more times in the studio that I spend enjoying the experience of taking technique classes, working with student choreographers, and experimenting with classical Indian dance movements that make it a space that will forever remain close to my heart.

*Laya Raj is a fifth-former from Hamden, Conn. She may be reached at lraj24@choate.edu*



Photo by Sydney Alleyne '23/The Choate News

Laya Raj (far left) poses with dancers after stage managing for the Student Choreographer's Showcase.

The Grammys Neglect Lesser-Known Artists

By **Chelsea Branch '25**  
Opinions Writer

The annual Grammy Awards is a live television must-watch for America's biggest music fans. With its live performances, heartfelt speeches, and comedic hosts, there is no wonder the event has held the attention of audiophiles for 64 years. On February 5, 2023, over 75 gramophone-shaped, golden statuettes were distributed to the songwriters, singers, instrumentalists, and producers the Recording Academy (NARAS) deemed worthy of praise.

While the Grammys make a commendable effort to celebrate the diversity of music by recognizing 91 different genres, their major category winners often fail to reflect the varying opinions of those outside of the voting room. A prime example of the disconnect between panel and people is folk singer Bonnie Raitt's shocking win in the Song of the Year category.

For most categories, members of the Recording Academy select nominees and choose award recipients in only the genres they specialize in. However, for the Big Four — Album of the Year, Record of the Year, Best New Artist, and Song of the Year — all Academy voting members vote regardless of their areas of expertise.

Nominated with some of the most popular and acclaimed songwriters such as Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and Adele, Raitt's victory raised some eyebrows. So, why exactly did she win? Considering the demographics of the Recording Academy, and the older panelists' affinity towards long-standing artists like Raitt, her triumph is not surprising at all.

After public scrutiny caused the Recording Academy to rethink its demographic distribution in 2019, the 2022 members reflect more



Graphic By Andra Ionescu '24/The Choate News

diversity than ever. To become a voting member of the Recording Academy, artists must receive two recommendations from peers in the music industry and submit a resumé that proves they have a primary career focus in music. Then, it is up to the discretion of a peer-reviewed panel of music professionals to approve membership.

Still, the nearly 2,000 members of the Academy do not adequately represent the global music community. For some quick statistics: 52% of voters are male, 33% are white (compared to 25% African American and 10% Hispanic), and 33% report they specialize in or prefer to listen to pop music.

Leaving the fate of such a prestigious prize to such a limited group of people is a shallow approach to appreciating music. It fails to recognize the personal connection that listeners have with their favorite songs. The Recording Academy should consist of experts who, at their core, are concert-goers and

headphone-wearers just like the rest of us. After all, the music industry could not exist without the support of its passionate fans.

Big Four nominees, with the exception of Best New Artist, tend to be the same few musicians who create for the same few genres — for example, pop artists like Lizzo and Harry Styles, whose songs regularly have mainstream radio success. While these people are undeniably talented and have garnered a devoted audience for a reason, there is so much beautiful musical creation that takes place outside of A-Listers. The Grammys should not be a competition of who has the most hits or highest streams, but of who can create a transcendent experience for their audience.

It is worth recognizing that the Grammys's relevance in terms of artists' success has waned in recent years. With social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels, whose entire brands are fusing videos and music, musicians do

not necessarily need the support of the Grammy Awards to become known. Even so, it does represent a certain amount of career merit, to be seen and honored.

Good music is more than quality production and textbook musicianship. It is the melodies that make us dance in the shower, the lyrics that make us cry when we realize they are frighteningly reflective of our lives, and the songs we blast in the car, singing every word at the top of our lungs. It is not a mysterious panel that has never heard of our favorite artists before, it is us.

Let the Grammys be a celebration of music and the people who embrace it. Let the public vote, let the music we listen to be the music that is recognized, and let the Grammys be an award show that honors the music that drives us all.

*Chelsea Branch is a fourth-former from Phillipsburgh, NJ. She may be reached at cbranch25@choate.edu*

Choate Takes: Black History Month

How do you celebrate Black History Month?

"I try to think about the people that come before me. I educate myself on some things I don't know about the history, and most importantly, I just try to be unapologetically black. I used to be an avid Big Sean listener and Big Sean said I celebrate every day in February like it's my birthday. So, I try to do the same. I should feel free to dance and play my music and try not to code switch as much, I should be saying what I want to say without a filter and doing what I want without a filter, and being who I want to be without a filter. It's Black History Month."

- ANDREW GODDARD '23

What message do you have for non-Black students this Black History Month?

"To all non-Black people, please stop appropriating Black culture and, instead, appreciate it. This month especially, we need to enjoy and celebrate the music and work of Black artists because Black people have created such amazing pieces of art throughout history. It's so important to consume that media and grow our creativity using it. Also, please stop saying the N-word."

- CHIA EKE '26

Does Choate Adequately Celebrate Black History Month?

"This year, like in most years, the movement to have Black History Month recognized at Choate was entirely recognized. I reached out to multiple members of the school administration, wondering what the school's plans were to celebrate, publicize, and educate about Black History Month, but they all deferred my questions to Dr. Myers. So, frustrated with Choate, I did what I should not have had to do and decided to make a school meeting announcement myself. Otherwise, we would've gone the whole month without anyone saying anything."

-SIMONE JOHNSON '23



# INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RELIEF COULD MEND RELATIONSHIPS

By **Stan Cho '25**  
*Associate Editor*

The 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck southern Turkey and northern Syria in early February has devastated the region. To add to the crisis, the area had already been dealing with a massive influx of refugees and a decade-long war. Yet, despite its political and financial implications, this natural disaster offers the United States a diplomatic opportunity to mend its relationship with Turkey and Syria. The quakes have led to the destruction of thousands of buildings, a death toll of around 47,000 people, and millions in need of aid. Though the chances of rescuing survivors decline each day, disaster relief services continue to support the region. For example, Turkey declared a three-month emergency in 10 provinces and mobilized over 230,000 relief workers, thousands of vehicles, and a makeshift healthcare system to assist earthquake recovery efforts. This mobilization rescued countless lives, but there's still a shortage of workers on the front lines. Though Turkey's partnership with Russia has strained the U.S.-Turkey relations, the United States sent hundreds of additional personnel to Turkey

to help with earthquake relief efforts, announced \$85 million in humanitarian assistance, and worked with Turkish teams in Adiyaman to conduct search and rescue operations. In the aftermath of the earthquake in Syria, the only border crossing for aid into northwestern Syria approved by the United Nations (UN) was initially out of service. This further exacerbated an already desperate situation for the many people who were displaced and struggling to survive in the region. On February 13, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria agreed to open two additional border crossings from Turkey, which allowed the UN to deliver humanitarian relief to Syrian revolutionaries. This moment marked the first time since the start of the Syrian Civil War that al-Assad has cooperated in opening opposition-held areas to aid. The Syrian government has blamed U.S. sanctions for worsening the country's humanitarian crisis, and, despite calls to lift prior sanctions, the State Department has refused. These sanctions refer to export sanctions and ineligibility to receive most forms of U.S. aid or permission to purchase U.S. military equipment in Syria due to their presence on the list of states that sponsor terrorism. Despite these

claims, none of the sanctions have hindered international aid. In fact, the U.S. has called on the Syrian government to allow aid through all border crossings, pledging to offer continued humanitarian assistance if it receives welcome support from the Syrian government. As the quakes continue, the disaster has offered a moment of peace in the ongoing Syrian Civil War, and attempts to recover from it must be utilized by the United States to support not just the recovery of Syria, but the resolution of the military conflict. Although the United States has no legal responsibility to aid in international conflicts, the humanitarian crisis offers the U.S. government a valuable opportunity to mend diplomatic relationships. Natural disasters as methods of building diplomatic relationships have long been ignored. In a time of such high political tension between the United States and Syria, the U.S. has fantastic potential for mending the relationship. The United States is posed with a unique circumstance: the ability to protect lives overseas and increase the U.S.'s presence on a global stage.

**Stan Cho** is fourth-former from Busan, South Korea. He may be reached at [scho25@choate.edu](mailto:scho25@choate.edu)



Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News

# HECKLING AT STATE OF THE UNION UNDERMINES U.S. POLITICS

By **Helen Ryan '24**  
*Associate Editor*

During the State of the Union, President Joe Biden fit tens of issues into a one hour speech. He addressed plans for welfare development and upcoming policies to combat unemployment. However, select Republican lawmakers had a different plan. They immaturely interrupted the President's speech, revealing the unprecedented levels of political polarization and its impact on political policy making. To begin the speech, Biden addressed the elephant in the room — the recovering economy, a critical topic of contention in the 2020 presidential election. He said, "I ran for president to fundamentally change things. To make sure our economy works for everyone, so we can all feel that pride in what we do." He emphasized protecting American supply chains and bringing jobs back to the United States. Speaking on job creation, President Biden stated, "Outside of Columbus, Ohio, Intel is building semiconductor factories on a thousand acres. Literally a field of dreams. It is going to create 10,000 jobs, that one investment, 7,000 construction jobs." Biden cited it as evidence of his impact on the growing economy, and he's not wrong. It was just recently that Intel made this decision to give jobs to the American people instead of moving them overseas. It was refreshing to hear tangible evidence of change as opposed to ideas — a common occurrence in State of the Union speeches. His speech made it clear that his priority is his constituents. This is vastly different from the priorities of those who shouted at him from their seats. Seizing an opportunity to be disruptive, these lawmakers made it clear that they were more concerned about their political positions rather than

the well-being of the American people. Demonstrating his maturity and eye towards change, President Biden did not turn down requests for funding in the districts of the Republicans who voted against the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Instead, he stated, "I promised to be the president for all Americans." President Biden's laws regarding infrastructure and employment are just some examples out of many mentioned in his speech. But, whether it be construction or medical care, President Biden puts the people first, and that is what I think will be most important going into the 2024 election. It was disappointing to witness the state of our divided political system, evidenced by the Republican's heckling. This outcry, usually something you would see at a sports game between impassioned fans yelling, was shown in the President of the United States's most important message of the year. Americans were taken aback. In a place where monumental, impactful policies are created, the churlish behavior of select Republican lawmakers demonstrated an offensive lack of decorum. As the President emphasized his concerns about the implications of Republicans' plans to cut down Medicare and Social Security, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene shouted "liar!" How can our nation grow if the leaders whom we rely on are shouting things like "China is spying on us," (a quote from Representative Greene) during official proceedings — especially well-intentioned proceedings that are supposed to focus on solutions to prominent issues in America that citizens face on a daily basis. It saddens me that our leaders cannot engage in constructive discourse and instead feel it is necessary to shout in a manner akin to an angry fan at a baseball game. Let that

sink in: a member of Congress shouting at the President mid-speech because she disagrees. How can anything be achieved and how can compromises be reached if congressmen are so quick to interrupt the simple political process? Disagreement is important, but yelling "liar" is an unjustified, inappropriate reaction that brings no value and undermines civility. Between the commotion during the Speaker of the House election and outburst a few weeks ago, a pattern among Republicans sticks out: many of our nation's leaders have lost sight of the importance of what they do and the impact they have on real people's lives. Their actions reflect their own interest or affiliation but do not improve our country. Many try to minimize the significance of the heckling. Those in support of the heckled statements chalk it up to friendly fun or a necessary expression of free speech in the political process. However, the reality is much more dark, and the implications of this utter disrespect extend past the speech. In the modern day, politics seems to have lost its decorum, and the effects it has on citizens have not wavered. When politicians are bashed for working across the aisle, the immediate impact is that bipartisan policy, which is necessary to address every major political issue, becomes an impossibility. How is one to compromise with Greene, for example, after her comments give a bad look to anyone who works with her? At the end of the day, the government must focus on passing laws that will help those in need. Acts of outcry demonstrated during the State of the Union will do nothing but create further tension and polarity in our sysem of government. **Helen Ryan** is a fifth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at [hryan24@choate.edu](mailto:hryan24@choate.edu)

# TECH COMPANY LAYOFFS EXPOSE A CORE ISSUE IN THE MENTALITY OF WALL STREET EXECUTIVES

By **Xiu Lim '25**  
*Opinions Staff Writer*

A wave of shock pulsed through Silicon Valley recently, with some of the largest companies in the world laying off 50,000 employees. The list of companies included Meta, Amazon, Apple, and Google. The process through which this was done was equally shocking. A series of viral clips popped up on TikTok showing the firing decisions. They were seemingly random, sudden, and had no basis in performance. These clips showed employees waking up and immediately losing access to all work-related platforms with only a single text notice from their boss. What's more ridiculous about the layoffs, however, was how avoidable the situation in the months before. This event is a consequence of tech giants' irresponsibility in the form of zero planning and the "spend cash as quickly as possible" herd mentality. Tech companies funneled funds into cryptocurrency and special-purpose acquisition companies (SPACs) during the Covid-19 bull market. With crypto shrouded by a cloak of hype and short-term interest rates at a record low of under 0.5%, tech companies and venture capitalists with excess cash were eager to dump mon-

ey into the most absurd cryptocurrencies, such as a photo of a rock selling which sold for \$1.3 million. All of this was done for the sake of growth and security — an all-too-familiar story. The other culprit, SPACs, are shell companies designed to bypass a startup's IPO process. The system, often blamed for depleting both precious funds and time, makes it necessary for startups to hire swathes of lawyers and bankers for up to a year for the purpose of ensuring that the startup complies with the strict Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) standards. The SPAC process, by comparison, was almost too good to be true. By forming a shell company with minimum structure, no business operations, and minimal stated targets for acquisition, SPACs can bypass the sluggish IPO process with minimum funds and time. They first form this shell company, bring it to IPO, then acquire the original private company, thereby making it public. Before the SPAC-startup acquisition can occur, however, they need to gather enough funds for the purchase. These funds were sourced by tech giants like Google and Amazon. SPACs gathered hype just as its partner-in-crime crypto did, with 613 SPACs in 2021 gathering \$162 billion in funds. Using the return on investment



Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

from SPACs and crypto, tech giants excessively employed new workers. As expected, many of these workers provided no actual contribution, as evidenced by the swarm of "a day in the life" TikToks of employees at Meta. What made these layoffs surprising was that they were seemingly well-positioned for long-term growth. What drove this process downhill? As with every bub-

ble, crypto and SPACs lost their attractiveness. After months, the initial boost of the sensational new product dissappears. After all, who spends millions on internet monkeys for any extended period of time? Tech giants were forcibly confronted with the consequences of their reckless hiring and spending. When interest rates finally rose back up to normal levels of roughly 4.4%, companies

like Amazon could no longer pay employees with their current stream of revenue. Therefore, employers had no choice but to let them go. So, while it's easy to jump to blaming corporations, the reality is that their hand was forced. The recent layoffs reflect not only the one-time event of companies racing for SPACs and cryptos, but also the larger culture of Silicon Valley: a

tunnel-vision focus on growth without consideration of any long-term planning. This inevitably leads to consequences that are devastating to investors, and, above all, the regular employee, who is left wondering how they are going to pay next month's rent. **Xiu Lim** is fourth-former from Singapore, Singapore. He may be reached at [xlim25@choate.edu](mailto:xlim25@choate.edu)



# It's Time to BeReal

By **Lilli Goldman '25**  
*Reporter*

Over the past few months, a new social media platform called BeReal has taken the Choate student body by storm. The app prompts users to post an authentic snapshot of their lives once every 24 hours, and students have been using it faithfully to share their unfiltered experiences.

Taylor Rossiter '25 explained that BeReal's transparency is what sets it apart from other social media platforms. She stressed, "So many things on social media are fake these days!" The inability to edit BeReal posts fosters real, meaningful online connections.

Leilani Gao '26 agreed, "I like that it really forces you to be real, unlike other social media apps where you don't really get to see what people are doing in the moment."

Many students at Choate are drawn to BeReal for its user-friendly interface and range of exciting features. The platform has a clean, simple design that makes it easy to navigate.

Dylan Bershtein '25 explained, "BeReal isn't too complicated. It's nice that all I have to do is take one picture, but I get to look at everyone else's."

The desire to see what other people are up to is what motivates students to post regularly. Unlike Instagram and TikTok, if users don't participate in BeReal, they will be unable to see others' posts.

A sense of urgency is created in users when the BeReal notification goes off — to act fast and post within the two-minute window. Although many are excited by this, Rossiter pointed out that "notifications can start to feel annoying — it's like a nag." She shared that the unpredictability of posting, which is an aspect of the app that other students also dislike, has led her to use BeReal less frequently.

Elia Ahmadi '24 recently deleted several social media apps, including BeReal. He feels that most BeReals do not capture real moments, and the app contradicts with living in the moment because it promotes constant scrolling. "I never catch the two-minute window because I'm too busy being real in real life," he said.

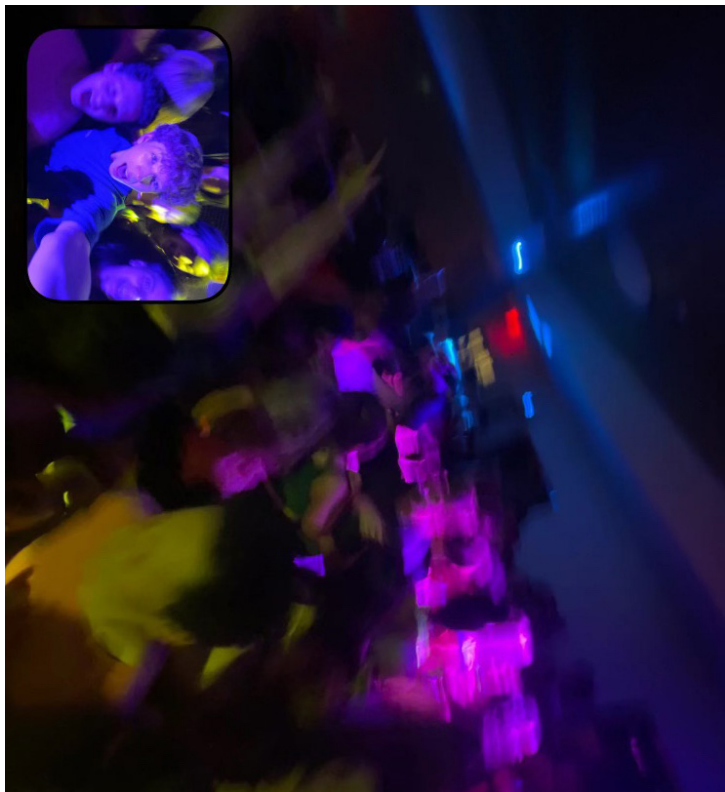
While the platform has its critics, there's no denying that BeReal has made a big impact at Choate. Bershtein remarked, "I'll just be sitting at a table with my friends in the dining hall, and all of a sudden the notification will go off, so everyone gets out their phone and rushes to post."

BeReal offers students a place to post without the pressure to present a certain image or lifestyle to their friends. Regardless of your stance on BeReal, the app is here to stay, and will continue to shape the way students at Choate connect with each other.

**Lilli Goldman** may be reached at [lgoldman25@choate.edu](mailto:lgoldman25@choate.edu)



Students capture real moments of their day and share it with their friends.



Photos Courtesy of Yuki Zhang '24, Ramsey Scott '23, Nicholas Ng '23, and Henry Gillibrand '26

# Healthcare by Day, Coaching by Night

By **Analy Vega '25**  
*Reporter*

Leading a double life may seem exclusive to spy movies, secret agents, and superhero comics. Unknown to many, the Choate community is home to multi-talented individuals who lead double lives at the health center and on the athletic teams.

## Dr. Miriam Cohen

Before coming to Choate, Dr. Miriam Cohen was part of the U.S. Navy and went on to pursue medical school with an interest in orthopedics. After that, she worked in a private pediatrics clinic for 17 years.

Now, as our medical director, her work focuses on creating a healthier Choate community by giving teenagers the opportunity and tools they need to take care of themselves. Dr. Cohen's work does not stop there, as she also serves as an assistant coach for Girls' JV Hockey. Prompted by her love for playing and watching the sport, she decided to take on this additional role.

A commonality between coaching and being a medical director is the ability to connect with students. "It's kind of fun to meet students in a very different manner in a different environment," Dr. Cohen said. Dr. Cohen's commitment to the health center and her prioritization of student health requires creative time management. Her support system on campus has helped

her significantly with making it on time to practice and managing her roles.

Although it can be mentally and physically exhausting to keep up with her "double life," it is certainly a very rewarding responsibility. "A lot of it has to do with the wonderful support that I get from everybody I work with here, and we work as a team," she said.

Dr. Cohen continued, "We had a game against Westminster, which we didn't win, but some of our players who had never played before did amazingly. You could see what we worked on in practice come into life in a game, and so to be part of that and to guide them there, it just makes [everything] so joyful."

## Mr. Ryan Roddy

Nurse and Wrestling Head Coach Mr. Ryan Roddy has always loved sports. Having shared many enjoyable experiences with his coaches growing up, Mr. Roddy was inspired to become a coach himself. "You want to make sure that you can give back to the community and have good coaches. This is something that I can give back to the community," he said.

Mr. Roddy maintains his devotion to the nursing profession and chose to work at Choate because it allows him to work in pediatrics with high school students while still being able to coach.

As a coach, Mr. Roddy wants his wrestlers to understand that sports is not just about winning, but also about

learning. He applies the lessons learned from his early days to his current profession.

Alternating between being a nurse and a coach can be a challenging task. However, Mr. Roddy appreciates his wonderful co-workers and staff who allowed him to coach. He continued, "Students also understand that my job [of being a nurse] here is number one, and they still come up with a team even though we start practice a little bit later, at 4:30 p.m."

Mr. Roddy is clearly passionate about coaching, having coached at every school that he has worked at. This year, he feels confident in the team's great potential. "Everybody's so excited to learn every single day they're coming in, they're excited, and I don't have to go chase them down to show up or to work hard," he said. "They want to work hard, they want to learn something new. They're just sponges for knowledge."

Although Dr. Cohen and Mr. Roddy may not be undercover spies, they are true heroes of our community. With their wide range of skills, they work tirelessly to ensure that students get the best possible experience. Next time you see them in the health center, at the ice rink, or in the wrestling room, make sure to say hi to these "double-agents."

**Analy Vega** may be reached at [avega25@choate.edu](mailto:avega25@choate.edu)



Photos by Emily Ma '25 and Junho Lee '24 / The Choate News

Dr. Cohen and Mr. Roddy coach on the ice and on the mat, respectively.

# White Supremacy Roots in Wallingford

By **Semi Obayomi '23**  
*Reporter*

*This is the second 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.*

Over the years, Wallingford has become a town synonymous with racism and white supremacy. The town's population of white supremacists came to light during the 1990s with the militant resurgence of right-wing extremist groups. Anti-government factionalism began as a reaction to controversial standoffs in Ruby Ridge, Idaho and Waco, Texas. Soon, such ideas made their way to Connecticut.

However, first reports of the KKK in Connecticut date back to 1924, and Wallingford's tumultuous connection with this racist organization came to a head in 2000 and 2001.

In January 2000, Wallingford Mayor William Dickinson announced his refusal to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a paid holiday for Wallingford residents due to his concern for the town's budget. Less than two days later, Klansman Harry Pender and two others marched through Main Street, dressed in full KKK regalia. This demonstration shook the town and threatened those who were not part of the 94% white population.

It prompted numerous discussions at Choate and beyond, centering on Mayor Dickinson's decision and Wallingford's history of racism. The mayor's unwavering stance made Wallingford the only municipality in Connecticut — out of 169 — to not recognize MLK Day with paid time off. Such a decision outraged many people — from residents to activists like Rev. Jesse Jackson and CT governor John Rowland.

In April 2000, before Rev. Jackson traveled to Wallingford to advocate for the holiday, Gov. John Rowland made MLK Day official on April 27, 2000. With the initial issue resolved, the situation highlighted the racial

realities in Wallingford, which would soon attract another dispute in the town when Matthew Hale visited the following year.

Matthew Hale, the "Pontifex Maximus" or supreme leader of the racist and anti-Semitic World Church of the Creator, gave a speech at the Wallingford Public Library.

Due to Hale's invitation from the Wallingford branch of his church, the Wallingford Public Library was obliged to allow him a space to speak. However, they were convinced his message wouldn't be accepted by the Wallingford community.

On March 10, 2001, the citizens of Wallingford lived up to that expectation by organizing a counter rally that overshadowed Hale's speech. Some Choate faculty also participated in the rally, despite much of the community's absence for spring break. After the event ended, police, some of whom were prepped with full riot gear, swiftly escorted Hale out of the building.

Undeterred by the backlash and counter protest, Hale saw the event as a success due to the publicity, prompting him to return to Wallingford the following month. Contrary to his expectations, the event was received in a similar way as its predecessor, with even more confrontations, arrests, and police to prevent mass violence and riots.

The appearances of Matthew Hale in Wallingford showed both the town's appeal to those who share his beliefs and the ability of the Wallingford community to stand against racist values.

On September 20, 2016, Wallingford residents saw sightings of a KKK mannequin dressed in uniform, including a white robe and hood, and posed with a Nazi-like salute. At Choate, Mr. James Stanley, Dr. Alex Curtis, Dr. Keith Hinderlie, and Ms. Kathleen Wallace were the first four adults to be aware of the situation and decided to monitor it before notifying the community. The news spread quickly, and, by September 28, most of the community was aware of the situation, sparking an announcement at School Meeting that shared the reason-

ing behind not disclosing the salutation to the community and extended an invitation to students for an open dialogue. No students participated in the forum and opted to make their opinions heard in their own way.

Blair Cox '17, president of the Choate Afro-Latinx Student Alliance (CALSA), and other campus organizations sent a letter to the four faculty members and outlined tangible changes the administration could make. Some of these included positioning a community safety officer at the intersection of Christian St. and Elm St. — ensuring the administration provides transparency, honesty, and timeliness in instances that impact the student body and their safety — and creating reporting guidelines for street harassment from cars. The latter was in response to frequent instances of racial slurs targeted against Black students from passing cars.

Although the administration's response to the original KKK Wallingford sighting was less than ideal, the rallying from the students and receptiveness from administrators showed the strength and commitment of the community as a whole to make Choate a safe place for everyone.

In November of 2019, many posters with the phrase "IT'S OKAY TO BE WHITE" were found spread throughout Wallingford. This phrase is affiliated with white supremacy and neo-Nazi groups in igniting fear among people of color. A day after receiving the news, Dr. Hinderlie emailed the school community with more information about the situation. The Equity and Inclusion team worked closely with the Wallingford police department to ensure student safety and were assured that the threat was not to the Choate community directly. The response to this situation was swift and transparent, a major improvement from the 2016 mannequin incident. It demonstrated Choate's ability to handle these situations with effectiveness and their ability to improve their approach in service to the wider community.

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## HEAR FROM THE STARS OF THE WINTER GELB THEATER TRIFECTA

Every winter, the Gelb Theater in St. John Chapel is bustling with activity. Towards the end of the term, audience members file into the cozy basement performance space to watch the works of directors, actors, writers, and production teams of the Fringe Festival, Student Directed Scenes (SDS), and One-Person Plays.

### 1 Fringe Festival

The Fringe Festival, which was held on February 9 and 10, presented a range of student-written, student-directed, and student-produced works. This year, four plays, three short films, a song, and a poetry performance were thoughtfully chosen from over a dozen submissions by the festival’s adviser, English and theater teacher Mrs. Kate Doak P’22, and the students on the Fringe board. Then, directors, chosen via application, ranked their preferences among the selected plays. Actors were cast in the winter and participated in the festival alongside the directors and the production crew during their afternoon activity slot.

#### Describe your work or experience in the Fringe Festival with one sentence.

“I usually let the directors interpret it however they want. They’re directing it with a good vision, and I trust them.”

• **Audrey Lim ’23** (play: *swim, lie, read*)

“The only factor I needed to consider with creative decisions was, ‘Is this funny to me?’ and I really worked well under those guidelines.”

• **John Freeman ’24** (short film: *Absolute Power*)

“Inspired by the mathematical thought experiment, my play imagines the antics and dilemmas that go on in an infinitely-growing hotel; I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have watched the words I put down on paper come alive and made tangible.”

• **Sunny Vo ’24** (play: *Hilbert’s Paradox of the Grand Hotel*)

### 2 Student Directed Scenes (SDS)

In SDS, students direct a play of their choice as the culminating project of their two-term Honors Directing course. In the fall, the students practiced directing in class to develop their skills. Then, they selected SDS play options and reviewed them as a class. After an open-call audition for Choate students interested in acting in the winter term, the directors considered how the different puzzle pieces — including the directors’ and actors’ availability and preference — would fall together before making casting decisions. Throughout the term, the seven directors held rehearsals outside of class time with their cast, leading up to the final performances on February 24 and 25.

#### Why did you choose the play you are directing?

“I chose an excerpt from the beginning of *The Lover* by Harold Pinter because I thought the premise and its themes were really interesting. Throughout the play, there are only two actors, and they each play different characters. The play itself experiments with casting characters and the constructs of that. Traditionally, one actor plays one character, but this play throws all that up in the air.”

• **Audrey Lim ’23**

“*[Bride on the Rocks by David Weiner]* is funny and it challenges me in the sense that the actors don’t have much blocking, so I have to find ways to keep the audience engaged all throughout the show.”

• **Eve Stanley ’24**

### 3 One-Person Plays

In the Honors Acting 350 course, students are the playwrights, directors, designers, and actors in their own play — thus, the “One-Person Plays.” This year, five students wrote a 15-minute script on any topic, chose their own costumes, designed the lighting and sound, and starred as the main character. Students wrote their plays and received feedback during in-class showings. Towards the end of the winter term, students moved to the Gelb Theater for longer rehearsals under the guidance of their teacher, Mr. Bari Robinson, in preparation for the February 27 evening premiere of their plays.

#### How does your character resonate with you?

“I play different versions of myself — myself today, and then my 3rd grade and 8th grade selves through my diary. Despite it being myself the whole play, I still see how I have outgrown certain aspects of myself when I was younger and see some other mannerisms influencing how I portray my present self.”

• **Sofia Muñoz ’23**

“I’m obsessed with murder mystery books, so I wrote a murder mystery. I did something not related to myself at all, so I get to have a lot more fun with the character; I can connect her to aspects of myself, but she’s not really like me. It’s a crazy setting and storyline, and it’s fun to play.”

• **Andra Ionescu ’24**

“I play two teenage girls. Their personalities are woven from bits of myself and other people that I’ve grown up with to create wholly new people. The process has required me to be incredibly vulnerable, which is scary, but the task also reminds me of what makes art so special in the first place. There’s something very human about artistic expression.”

• **Chloe Jacobs ’23**

## WHO’S ON THE KEYS AT STUDENT RECITALS?

By **Grace LaPlaca ’25**  
*Reporter*

Each term, musicians perform pieces they’ve been practicing at a culminating recital. During the winter recital held on February 19, students played their works accompanied by pianists Ms. Susan Cheng and Mr. Nathaniel Baker. These professional musicians on the piano bench play a crucial role in supporting students in their musical endeavors.

Ms. Susan Cheng is a musician in the Wallingford Symphony Orchestra and has been a Choate piano teacher for over 15 years. She performed 12 pieces this term with string, woodwind, and brass instruments at the recital.

Mr. Nathaniel Baker has taught piano at Choate for almost seven years and helps direct the fall and spring musicals. At the winter recital, he played with four vocalists and four instrumentalists.

Each performance is a collaborative process between the student performer and the accompanist. Leanne Parks ’25, who sang with Mr. Baker in the fall recital, said, “Usually, for the first time through, we just do it the way we both learned it.” Then, they share and discuss their thoughts on tempo and rhythm. “We compromise and meet in the middle ground, so that way, I’m comfortable, and he doesn’t have to relearn the whole thing,” Parks said.

Ms. Cheng’s role in accompanying students on the piano depends significantly on their pieces’ composition. Some students perform concertos, in which musicians are typically backed by an entire orchestra. For those pieces, Ms. Cheng plays the piano reduction of the orchestral arrangement that covers the parts of different instruments.

“It sounds a lot better because otherwise, they’re just playing this one-line solo part,” she said. “It may be a very beautiful line, but it needs the harmonic support; it needs more instrumentation to make it fuller and sound better.”

The piano and soloist parts are more intertwined in chamber music, where the parts were written specifically for the two instruments. “When it’s written more like a cello sonata, where the piano has a big part, the two of them are almost more equal,” said Ms. Cheng. The interdependent nature of those pieces often results in a need for extra rehearsal time — a struggle considering the busy schedules of both students and faculty.

The process of working with a pianist becomes easier for students as they gain more experience. “Some of these students are really experienced because they’ve done a lot of these different competitions or auditions, and they’re used to having to just meet with a pianist for a rehearsal or two and just going with it,” said Ms. Cheng.

With extensive experience in both teaching and accompanying, Mr. Baker is well acquainted with the process of both. “I think a particular challenge of doing this at Choate is that you guys are all perfectionistic to a fault,” he said.

Considering the variety in both the levels of musicians and the difficulty of their pieces, students are commonly stressed. Baker tries to alleviate this anxiety while producing a good performance. He added, “Accompanying, I guess you could say, is more about, ‘How can I make them look good at the level they’re at right now?’”

Jason Cao ’25, a flute player in the Wind Ensemble, was accompanied by Ms. Cheng at the winter recital. Having performed in a recital every term since his third-form year, Cao finds playing

with a piano accompaniment easier when it comes to classical pieces and feels more challenged by late romantic or modern pieces.

For many students, working with an accompanist is preferable to playing solo. “I do prefer playing with a pianist on a lot of these pieces because it also helps you learn about the harmony of the piece,” Cao said.

The mutual dependence between Cao and Ms. Cheng ultimately facilitates a higher-quality performance. Cao shared, “It’s a really beneficial experience for your audience. You have to be more on tempo, and you have to be clear with your phrasing with cuing the pianist, which I think is a valuable skill for a musician.”

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Photo by Sophia Kim '24/The Choate News

Mr. Nathaniel Baker accompanies violinist Paloma So ’23 in the winter recital.

## Acapella Groups Riff-Off at Lit Launch

By **Zoe Dieringer ’25**  
*Reporter*

Popularized by the movie *Pitch Perfect*, acapella riff-offs have found their way to Choate. On February 17, the School’s oldest all-female acapella group, Whimawehs (Whims), and their all-male counterpart, Maiyerros, collaborated on a riff-off performance at a launch party for Choate’s literary magazine, *The Lit*. This unique performance opportunity was the brainchild of Whims Vice President Tiffany Xiao ’23 and Maiyerros Junior Officer Chris Childs ’24. They presented the idea to the other leaders of the acapella groups, who were instantly on board.

Part of the appeal was the history between the two acapella groups. In 2019, they performed “Coldest Winter” at School Meeting. Whims Junior Officer Elsa Franks ’24 said, “The current seniors are always reminiscing about how good it was, but with the pandemic, we haven’t been able to do a collaboration since, so it was on our to-do list this year.”

Maiyerros President Zach Halna du Fretay ’23 and Maiyerros Vice President Case Sakamoto ’23 added that in addition to paying tribute to the historical bond between the two groups, the riff-off was an exciting venture into a richer

auditory experience. “Maiyerros is just a tenor bass group, and Whimawehs is just a soprano-alto group. It’s nice having all of those voices together,” said Halna du Fretay.

Because of the “romantic” chemistry between Whimawehs and Maiyerros, they decided that Valentine’s Day was the perfect occasion for a collaboration. With this in mind, the acapella groups reached out to *The Lit*, who holds a winter launch party every year around February. Childs said, “We performed at the Lit Launch last year. We knew we would be able to do it again, and, with the rehearsal times, this is the day that made the most sense.”

Cassatt Boatwright ’24, a member of *The Lit* Masthead, approved of the plan. She said, “We were obviously all for it because we thought it would be a really fun thing to see.”

At the performance, Whims and Maiyerros performed a medley of love songs composed of “Can’t Help Falling in Love,” “Grenade,” “Love Story,” and “Can’t Take My Eyes Off You.” They ended with a grand finale of Whitney Houston’s iconic “I Will Always Love You,” swaying in unison from side to side before audiences erupted in applause.

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## Interactive Painting Combines Visual and Auditory Art

By **Laya Raj ’24**  
*Associate Editor*

Different art forms have a way of coming together to complement each other. This union is apparent in Paola Diaz del Castillo Rosique ’23’s multimedia painting, *Looking for a song to match that feeling*.

The piece features conductive paint that transmits electricity with touch. It invites viewers to interact with it by touching the painted vinyl records on the canvases, which prompts the connected speaker to play a song.

Set in her dorm room, the painting features Diaz del Castillo Rosique’s roommate, Priscilla Chan ’23, who is lying on a printed carpet surrounded by vinyls and a record player. “I wanted to transmit coziness and comfort, and I chose my dorm because it’s

my safe place,” explained Diaz del Castillo Rosique.

Layers of vivid colors and patterns bring the scene to life. Diaz del Castillo Rosique features unique placements of different objects to relate back to the way she was first introduced to art: through collages. Her earlier work at Choate mainly featured a mix of watercolor, ink, and other mediums. However, after familiarizing herself with oil painting, she started to incorporate the medium into her pieces more often.

“Even though the painting is done from a reference picture, it still has a lot of patterns and colors that make it look like it is a collage, even though it’s just a picture,” said Diaz del Castillo Rosique. Among these elements are Chan’s plaid Choate pajama pants and her crimson hair against an



Photo courtesy of Paola Diaz del Castillo Rosique '23

Music and visual art intertwine in *Looking for a song to match that feeling*, intricately designed pillow, all of which add depth to the work.

As a member of the Visual Arts Concentration program at Choate, Diaz del Castillo Rosique spends four to five hours every day in the Paul Mellon Arts Cen-

ter (PMAC) working on her art. In order to keep herself focused while painting, she chooses to listen to music or audiobooks.

As an avid music listener, Diaz del Castillo Rosique often finds herself trying to find music that cap-

tures her emotions. Her inspiration came from scrolling through Spotify, looking for the perfect song to represent her emotions. “I painted the vinyls because I thought being able to see the different vinyls was a fun way to represent having different options,” she explained.

Meant to convey feelings of comfort, Diaz del Castillo Rosique incorporated some of her favorite songs, including “Still” by Niall Horan, “The Chain” by Fleetwood Mac, “Sucker’s Player” by The Decemberists, and “Like Real People Do” by Hozier. The four vinyls that lie on the carpet surrounding Chan each play their corresponding songs in response to touch.

The most challenging part of the art installment was learning how to code and use a microprocessor, attached to the back of the painting, in order to make the

songs play. After studying many YouTube videos, Diaz del Castillo Rosique finally got the technology to work. “It really allowed me to go out of my comfort zone and challenge myself, which is one of my main goals in the Arts Concentration program,” she said.

Through blending visual and aural components in her work, Diaz del Castillo Rosique found exciting ways to expand on her signature style. “Now I’m really excited to see how I could use conductive paints in other artworks,” she shared.

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Scan this QR Code to watch the finished painting in action.





# THE CHOATE NEWS SPORTS

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## FIELD REPORT

Choate Winter Record  
**113 - 84 - 7**

Varsity Games

**Boys' Basketball** (17-6)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 67-57

**Girls' Basketball** (11-8)  
vs. Suffield 39-33

**Girls' Ice Hockey** (10-1-9)  
vs. Taft, 2-1

**Boys' Ice Hockey** (3-2-16)  
vs. Northfield Mt. Hermon  
0-5

**Boys' Squash** (12-8)  
vs. Westminster, 6-1

**Girls' Squash** (12-5)  
vs. Ethel Walker, 7-0

**Wrestling** (13-3)  
vs. Avon, 72-12

J.V. Games

**Boys' Ice Hockey** (3-4-5)  
vs. Taft, 3-6

**Girls' Basketball** (5-3)  
vs. Northfield Mt. Hermon,  
24-43

**Boys' Basketball** (8-7)  
vs. Avon 48-37

**Girls' Squash** (8-2)  
vs. Hopkins, 5-2

**Boys' Squash** (7-7)  
vs. Westminster, 3-4

**Girls' Ice Hockey** (5-5)  
vs. Taft, 8-0

Upcoming Game  
Themes

Follow @boarpen on  
Instagram to stay up to  
date with themes.

## Choate Takes on the Super Bowl

By **Ellie Porter '24**  
*Reporter*

While the Super Bowl is not a nationally recognized holiday, it is often treated as one in many American families. To celebrate the significant annual tradition of the Super Bowl, people in the United States party with friends and family or sit down with a big bowl of chips to watch the games (and, for the non-football fans, the highly anticipated halftime shows). At Choate, there is as large a fan base as anywhere else, making it essential for the campus to have many offerings to enjoy the big game.

This event offers much more than a football game in terms of entertainment. Ms. Alex Long, Director of Student Activities, stated, "Regardless if you like football, there's something for everybody in the Super Bowl. Whether it's the game itself, the commercials, or the halftime show, I feel that even if you're not into the sport itself, you're kind of into the whole."

Due to its wide appeal, the Super Bowl is a great time to enjoy friends, family, and the excitement surrounding every aspect of the day. Zoey Schamis '26 said, "I love to watch the halftime show, but I'm not really into football." Sky Hinton '26, a Connecticut local, shared, "My favorite part is to watch it with my family."

The Super Bowl is not just a yearly game or show; it is a chance to sit back and enjoy the moment regardless of what that means to each individual. Choate provided a wide variety of traditional snacks to aid in the enjoyment of the event. The dining hall offered wings, pizza, and a taco bar for dinner, while the Student Activities Center (SAC) had snacks such as dips, cupcakes, and even popcorn in team colors.

With a winter term that feels like it may never end and term-end experience on the horizon, the

event was an excellent way to bring much-needed joy to the student body. Unfortunately, because of curfew hours, many students were unable to participate. According to Ms. Long, boarding students needed permission in order to spend their study time watching the Super Bowl. This meant that all underclassmen, or the majority of the Choate population, needed verbal consent from their advisers to view the game.

On top of this, when viewing the game, underclassmen had to remain quiet during study hours. To some, this hampered the entire point of the Super Bowl. Community is something we strive to cultivate at Choate. When the Super Bowl used to fall on Long Weekend, students could celebrate uninhibited by work. This year, however, the SAC was notably uncrowded due to its mainly senior attendance, wasting the food and thought placed into the event by Ms. Long and SAGE. Schamis stated, "I didn't get to watch it because you had to ask your adviser, and I had homework."

When asked if she would like to watch the Super Bowl with the same privileges as seniors and without the burden of homework, she stated, "I would appreciate that ... hopefully something can happen next year."

Day students and seniors are the minority who can watch the Super Bowl without explicit permission, and, even then, homework presents another obstacle. To address such challenges, Ms. Long hopes to make changes to the scheduling of the event next year. She said, "I'm always willing to do what the students want." However, as of 2023, while not under-recognized, the Super Bowl remains an isolated celebration on the Choate campus.

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Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

## Post-Graduate Life At Choate

By **Jacqueline Yan '24**  
*Associate Editor*

What do you think of when you hear the word "postgraduate" or, more commonly, "PG?" Amazing student-athlete? Intimidating? Old? Three post-graduates (PGs) reveal the inside scoop of being a PG at Choate.

**Ben Taylor '23**

Despite already receiving university offers, Ben Taylor '23's desire to pursue higher-level academics pushed him to take on a PG year at Choate.

The transition from going to a public school to attending a boarding school like Choate was "odd but easy" for Taylor, despite the differences between the two. He shared, "I think the environment at the School [Choate] makes it easy for new students because people are recycling through, and it's not like huge groups of people have been cemented for a long time." Since Taylor wasn't the only new student on campus this past fall, Taylor could form friendships and familiarize himself with the rest of his grade more quickly and comfortably.

Taylor shared that he feels very much involved and connected to his peers in the Class of 2023. He said, "The fact that we all live together and that all the dorms are interwoven makes us not very different." He also believes that many PGs share the same academic pressures as other seniors, contrary to popular belief. "A good number of PGs are taking the regular class load of any senior, especially the ones who are looking for higher education schools and want to maintain their academic profile."

Although he appreciates being "a point of advice for general questions" and sharing his prior experiences with college applications and the recruiting process with friends and other seniors, Taylor regrets not being able to have more time on campus. He recently signed with Brown University and is excited to pursue football at the Division I school level.

**Allie Grant-Clavijo '23**

An international student from Canada, Allie Grant-Clavijo '23, was deeply impacted by the pandemic when it prevented her from being seen by college coaches. To help further her soccer career, Grant-Clavijo decided to come to Choate. "I wanted to play at this great school, first of all, and I wanted to be seen by college coaches."

Adjusting to her new routine at a boarding school was a challenge at first, but Grant-Clavijo's dean, adviser, and teammates on the soccer team all helped make her transition smoother and more manageable. "I didn't know a lot of people, but after a couple of practices, the girls on the team were su-



Graphic by Maddy Childs '26/The Choate News

per welcoming and created a really nice environment." Although she can no longer see her teammates and practice with them every day as she had during the soccer season, Grant-Clavijo still cherishes and relies on those friendships she made during the fall term.

Grant-Clavijo pointed out the emphasis on college applications and recruitment when defining differences between being a regular four-year student and a PG. With this being her final year of high school, much of Grant-Clavijo's focus has been on the college process, and she has often looked to her college counselor for guidance. "My college counselor has been really supportive, and she's trying to help me the best she can. She knows that it's my last year in high school and deadlines are coming up soon," she said.

Grant-Clavijo has enjoyed many of the small perks of being a PG, such as having the freedom to use so many of the different spaces on campus during study hours, upon arrival at Choate. Still, the extra time to focus on getting the most out of Choate and preparing for college is most valuable to her. "I don't feel rushed. I can take a couple of extra courses and choose ones that I like as well. Soccer-wise, I got an extra year of playing to prepare myself, so that's nice."

Similarly, Grant-Clavijo appreciates how college coaches value and notice her contributions to the Girls' Varsity Soccer Team. Since high schools back home in Canada didn't prioritize athletics, Grant-Clavijo's focus was on her club team. Here at Choate, she can play her sport on campus and have a school soccer season that benefits her future.

For Grant-Clavijo, her PG year is invaluable for both her academic and athletic development, and she thoroughly appreciates all the opportunities she has received at Choate.

**Grant Masterson '23**

Having already committed to play lacrosse at The United States Military Academy (West Point), Grant Masterson '23 chose to pursue a PG year at the request of his college. Drawn to the School's strong lacrosse program and famed

academic record, Masterson chose Choate as his new home away from home. "I knew I had to take a PG year, so I was just looking for a good home for this one-year period."

Like all new students, Masterson was initially nervous about transferring to a new school. He commented, "You grow up with kids from your high school your entire life back in your town, but it's not the same here."

However, Choate's efforts to welcome him to the community made it much easier for him to find his place in the School. "From the beginning, Choate worked on ice-breaker games during orientation, and I made a lot of new friends there. It was a pretty easy transition overall." Similarly to Grant-Clavijo, being on a sports team also helped Masterson settle into his new role as a boarding student and grow closer to other students.

Since many other seniors are of similar ages to him and share his experience of being a repeat, Masterson doesn't feel that his experience differs much from that of the rest of his class; however, he does think that his familiarity with the high school journey has given him a clearer, more mature perspective and decreased academic pressure. "Choate is still a very hard environment, academically, but I think it's a little less stressful for me than other seniors or juniors."

Having heard many stories about his friends' past years at Choate, Masterson is glad to have missed out on early freshman-year study hours. "I don't have any FOMO from earlier years here. I think it's nice to be a PG," he shared.

Although Taylor, Grant-Clavijo, and Masterson each decided to take on a PG year at Choate for a different reason, all three have immensely enjoyed the opportunities, people, and resources at the School. They appreciate Choate's efforts in welcoming them to the community and love the perks of being a first-year senior. One key takeaway is that having to leave one's phone in the hallway during study hours is not something they will ever regret missing out on.

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## CONGRATULATIONS, SENIOR ATHLETES, ON SIGNING DAY!



Class of 2023 athletes celebrate their official signing day.

Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr