



Spring Term Brings Changes to Campus Protocols

By **Michael Korvyakov '23**
Copy Editor

As the spring term begins, student activities, sports, and academics are ramping up. However, much of the Covid-19 protocol has changed since the winter term. Eased restrictions are bringing a greater sense of normalcy to student life, but students remain cautious to defend themselves against the virus.

In previous terms, students waited weeks for sports to begin. This term, varsity sports began straightaway during the quarantine week. Last week for the first time all school year, Choate's athletes competed against other schools, including the Westminster School, the Hotchkiss School, the Taft School, and the Loomis Chaffee School.

Restrictions for ensemble practices have also loosened with the start of the spring term. Woodwind and brass musicians, who were initially excluded from in-person rehearsals, can now be involved as long as they use special masks that allow them to play their instrument with their nose and mouth covered, and if they attach a separate cover to the end of their instrument to prevent the spread of germs. Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen is also hopeful that theater, dance, and musical groups will be able to perform outdoors, in front of an audience, later in the term.

These modified guidelines, however, were met with new Covid-19 modifications to fit Choate's Safe and Sounder plan. For example, the return to interscholastic sports came with a five-page document regarding "Informed Consent in Interscholastic Sports," which explains the risks associated with playing sports during the pandemic and outlines how sports are to safely operate. The Health Center asked all students and parents to review this document before participating in on-campus athletics.

The administration has also begun to more strictly enforce the usage of the TRACE app, despite students' concerns about privacy. Every night, advisers are now required to ensure students' TRACE apps are running. The school also has the ability to see who is and who is not running the app. Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00 has made it clear that failure to adhere to contact-tracing guidelines violates the Community Compact, which every student signed at the start of the school year.

Many students who learned remotely during the fall and winter are now on campus, and some day students have become boarders. Deven Huang '23, typically a day student who now lives in Tenney House, said, "Everyone in my carpool decided to board, and I didn't

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By **Sabrina Wang '23**
Copy Editor

On Wednesday, March 31, the Choate community convened for its fifth Community Conversation, this one focused on Jewish Identity. Community Conversations allow students who share a particular identity to discuss their experiences and educate the rest of the School by answering questions from community members. Jewish identity was chosen as the topic for the fifth Community Conversation in light of Passover and through speaking with Jewish-identifying community members, including Rabbi Barbara Paris and the Hillel cabinet.

"It's important that we carve out time to intentionally have conversations on the beautiful diversity of identities in this community," said Director of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers. "The Jewish community, again like other historically marginalized communities, can often be overlooked and misperceived."

Many students appreciated this decision. "I think it's really important to have a Community Conversation on Jewish-identity, as it is incredibly complex, and there are so many different types of Jews who all have unique experiences," said Rosemary Wolff '23.

Held over Zoom and mandatory for all students and advisers, the conversation proved both pro-

LATEST COMMUNITY CONVERSATION EXAMINES JEWISH IDENTITY



Photo by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

The School gathered on March 31 to hear Jewish-identifying students' experiences.

ductive and challenging for Jewish-identifying members of the community. "I am grateful to all those people who made me feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and made us feel heard," said Elia Ahmadi '24. "I had never seen such a large group of non-Jewish people come together to understand my identity and the issues facing my people."

Wolff added, "I feel great about sharing my perspective. I was certainly scared because in the past I have not had great responses to me sharing my experiences as a Jew, but I received nothing but positivity from the Choate community."

Although the hour-long session addressed important issues and

highlighted a number of voices, Dr. Myers said, "There's never enough time for these conversations." She added, "I do think these sessions — even in an hour's time — have given time for some of the important issues to be addressed and for a number of voices to be shared."

Both students and faculty had takeaways from the conversation. Celine Pirard '21 said, "This conversation was powerful because of the strength and courage it takes for students to discuss their experiences. I hope our community is able to listen to our peers and learn that the conversation doesn't end here."

Many felt that the responses from Jewish-identifying community members were insightful and

gave other community members a chance to learn how to better support their peers. "It showed once again that no identity group is a monolith, and so it's important to recognize that no one can have the same experiences even though they share an identity," said Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion Mr. Filipe Camarotti.

The Community Conversation series has proven to be a simple yet effective event for students to share their identities and experiences. The next conversation will focus on mental health in light of Mental Health Awareness Month.

Sabrina Wang may be reached at swang23@choate.edu

COVID-19 FORCES PREFECT SELECTION TO ADJUST

By **Lauren Hsu '24**
Reporter

On March 29, juniors across campus refreshed their application portals to see if they had been selected to be a prefect — sixth-formers who mentor underclassmen. The application and selection process this year looked very different from years past due to restrictions created by the pandemic.

In previous years, students were allowed to visit dorms and talk to the advisers to get a sense of which dorms might be a good fit for them. Because dorm visits were restricted, students had to rely on other means of research.

Spencer Bowles '22 said, "For the most part, I just had to go off of previous years' experience with the dorms, things I had heard from other students, and interactions I had with the advisers beforehand." Bowles will be prefecting in Clinton Knight (CK) next year, a dorm he has been inside only a few times. Many other students won't



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

get to know their dorms until they move in next fall.

Kitty Yu '22 is in a different situation. She will be a prefect next year at her current residence, the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC). Yu was a

remote student in the fall and winter, so she ranked the KEC as her top choice in part because she would like to live there for longer than a single term. She said that being a remote learner in the Environmental Immer-

sion Program (EIP) broadened her perspective, something she hopes she can share with her future prefectees. "I think that having lived in the house can add a special layer to this position," said Yu.

Some were able to visit other dorms before the pandemic. Sophie Yang '22, a future Squire Stanley prefect, is already familiar with the dorm as she frequently visited Squire during her freshman year.

The Prefect Committee, a group of faculty members that selects the teams of prefects, has also faced many changes. This year, special consideration was given to how students had interacted with faculty in previous years. Additionally, the departure of a former Prefect Committee member in the winter term complicated the prefect-selection process. English teacher Ms. Victoria Pierotti joined the committee only last month.

Newly selected prefects are excited to energize campus culture as we return to more normal student life. "I'm really excited to work with the other people I'm perfecting with to create a happy environment in the dorm," said Charlotte Weinstein '22, who will prefect in Hall next year. "I know that feeling connected to a community has been hard during the pandemic."

Lauren Hsu may be reached at lhsu24@choate.edu

Revisit Day Club Fair Goes Virtual

By **Ryan Kim '23**
Reporter

On March 31, the first ever Spring Revisit Day Club Fair was held for admitted students and their families. Hosted by the Admission Office in cooperation with the Committee on Student Activities (COSA), the event consisted of two parts: a 45-minute panel discussion with student leaders, and time for students and families to

meet with clubs and their leaders over Zoom.

The event was hosted completely online due to the pandemic, yet the turnout was strong, with 149 students and 171 parents registered to attend. According to Ms. Brianne Ellis, one of the co-leaders of the Spring Revisit Day events, the panel consisted of "an overview of the opportunities available within the Student Activities Department," with panelists "providing families

with an overview of St. John's, SAC, Boarcast, and clubs." COSA President Allen Zheng '21 moderated the panel, asking panelists about club life. Families were able to ask questions in the chat that were answered by Student Activities Center (SAC) Director Ms. Alexandra Long, Assistant SAC Director Ms. Kolleen Kazar, and Admission Officer Mr. Ryan Strange.

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Another Pandemic Passover

By **Naomi Fleisch '22**
Staff Reporter

Each year, Choate hosts a Passover Seder to offer students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to celebrate Passover's core principles — community, connection, and togetherness. However, amid the pandemic, this year's Passover looked a little different on campus. Seders traditionally take place during the first two nights of Passover, but because students and faculty were in quarantine during that time, the Seder took place on April

3 in the Ruutz-Rees building on the second to last night of Passover. The seats were set at a distance, with only two people at each table. Traditional Seder plates were provided and Jewish food was served.

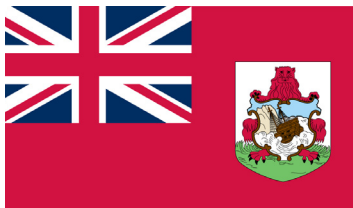
Every spring, Jews around the world celebrate Passover by hosting a traditional Seder, a meal during which they tell the Passover story and remember the formerly enslaved Jews who journeyed from Egypt to Israel. Although Passover is a celebration of freedom, it also serves as a reminder that not everyone has obtained freedom in the

modern world. While the holiday is Jewish, the message of Passover resonates with many people, even those who aren't religious at all.

"I was thankful to see many Jewish and non-Jewish people come to the Seder," said Hillel cabinet member Katie Gendrich '22. "I was also really happy at how fast the event filled up and at the large turnout. It was super nice that we were able to celebrate and eat together, kind of like a normal year."

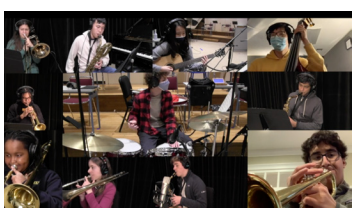
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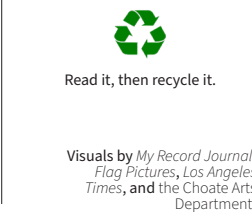
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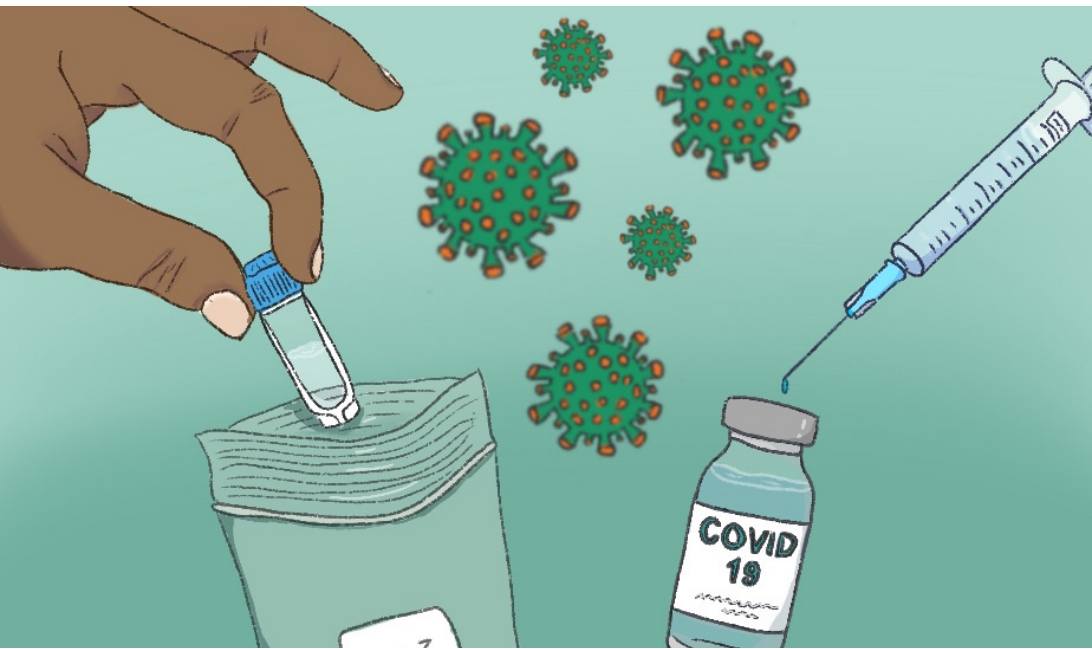
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NEW TERM, NEW COVID PROTOCOLS



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

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want to burden my parents with having to drive me to school every day.” He especially enjoys being with his friends in the dorm and getting to sleep in later each school day, as his commute is shorter.

As they were during the fall term, day students are allowed to commute to campus for in-person classes. Day student David Garsten ’23, who stayed home for the first two terms, is excited to meet the community in person. “Once the first vaccine takes effect, I will be returning to campus,” he said.

While the number of students on campus from winter to spring remained relatively constant, far fewer boarding students decided to stay online for the spring term. At the end of the winter term, there were 307 students online — comprised of 203 boarders and 104 day students — and that number has lowered to 104 for the start of April. This shift was a result of many

formerly remote boarders coming back in person, as well as 171 day students switching to daily commuting rather than staying home.

Additionally, students will be tested twice weekly for Covid-19, boarders in their dorms and day students at the health center. The number of weekly tests could increase if the health staff deems that it’s appropriate for the level of risk.

The loosening of the guidelines can be attributed, in part, to the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine in recent months. In an update shared with Choate students on April 2, Dr. Cohen spoke about Choate’s partnership with local organizations to vaccinate interested boarding and day students older than 16. These vaccinations will likely begin in late April and will be free. In addition, anyone who has received the first dose of the vaccine can schedule their second through the Health Center.

The vaccine rollout has also made faculty members more op-

timistic. “I’m hopeful that we will be able to move to the yellow, lower risk, category sometime this spring,” said Dr. Cohen. According to the Choate Safe and Sounder website, this would require no cases of Covid-19 on campus, less than five cases per 100,000 people in Connecticut, and a test positivity rate below 3%. Transition into the yellow phase will allow boarders to be unmasked in each other’s rooms. The health staff will attempt to devise a similar rule for day students to also be unmasked within their day student rooms.

HRSS teacher Mr. Jonas Akins echoed Dr. Cohen’s sentiment, saying that he hopes the spring term will be “intentionally shaped by lessons drawn from these four terms” and that the upcoming terms will “celebrate the best elements of our community.”

Michael Korvyakov may be reached at mkorvyakov23@choate.edu

Ryan Kim Wins Silver Medal at Global Tech Competition

By **Jonathan Zhuo** ’23
Reporter

On February 9, Ryan Kim ’23 received the silver prize for the Samsung HumanTech Competition, a science competition organized by South Korean technology company Samsung Electronics, for his novel robotic system.

As people around the world continue to be diagnosed with Covid-19, Kim has found a way to help keep people safe. Combining his creativity and passion for robotics, he constructed an autonomously navigating robotic system capable of accurately measuring body temperatures, so as to detect the most common symptom of Covid-19: a fever.

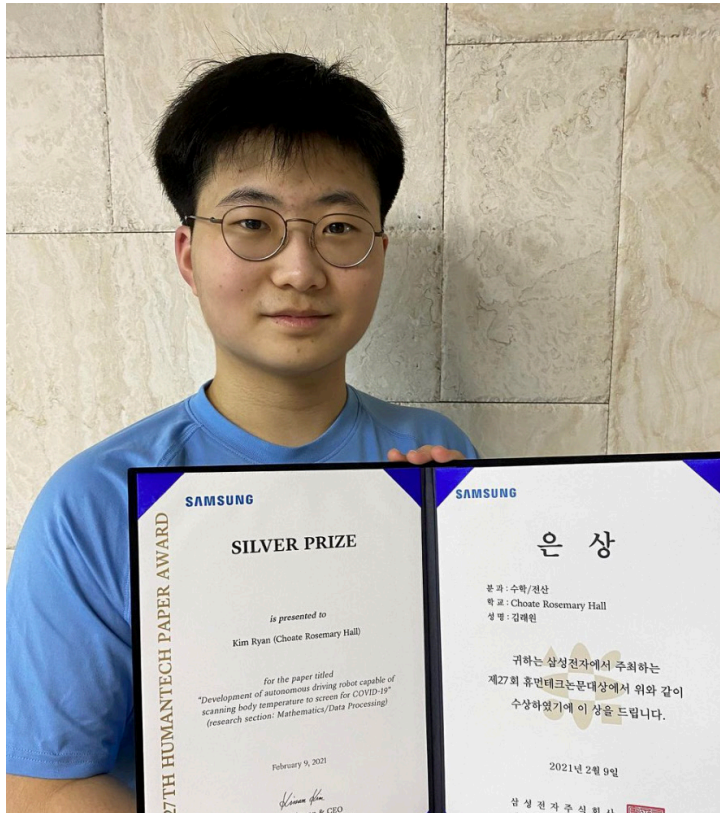


Photo courtesy of Ryan Kim

Ryan Kim ’23 won an award for a robotic temperature scanner.

“I wanted to help out,” Kim said. “I felt powerless and really sad watching horrible things happen on the television. I knew I should do something to contribute and help people during these unprecedented times, even if it isn’t the biggest thing in the world.”

Bringing positive change to the world is what Kim truly values, saying, “I was constantly motivated by the thought that this really could bring social good, and I really submitted it just for fun, with no expectations. I am really honored to earn this award, but it really isn’t about that. It’s about helping as many people as possible during these difficult times. As scientists, as engineers, as

entrepreneurs, as people, we should always work to try and help other people.”

Although there are many temperature scanners available, Kim has identified major issues with those currently in use. Remote temperature scanning kiosks are static and inefficient when used by large groups of people. The temperature readings can also be largely inaccurate as people may enter buildings from colder or warmer environments.

“A lot of stations are needed to cover a large area, and people often need to adjust their head to the scanner,” said Kim. “My system, on the other hand, can move autonomously and travel on its own between points marked on a map, able to avoid obstacles and stop to scan people if detected. It can also repeatedly scan people at room temperature for more accurate readings.”

Starting the project in April of 2020, Kim has invested countless hours into the machine. With this massive project, it was inevitable that he would run into challenges. “The hardest thing for me was definitely debugging — it took about 85% of my time. I had to figure what was wrong, and it could be literally anything. After doing this project, I can say that I have a lot of respect for engineers,” Kim said.

When asked about the competition, he said, “By no means did I start this project to enter a competition. It was never an intention or a goal. My intent was to apply my skills and knowledge to help people.”

Jonathan Zhuo may be reached at jzhuo23@choate.edu

REVISIT DAY CLUB FAIR GOES VIRTUAL

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The panelists consisted of Abby Lu ’22 of Chinese Club; Berk Gokmen ’21 of Community Service Club; Naina Sharma ’21 of Choate Diversity Student Association; Claire Yuan ’21 of Choate Public Health; Niki Gummati ’21 of March for our Lives; Tyler Neri ’21 of Ethics Bowl; Lani Day ’21, a Wellness Educator; and Luke Barrett ’21, the sixth-form Student Council President.

After the event, students and parents were provided with a list of club names as well as Zoom links through a shared spreadsheet. Although many admitted families joined the panel, the turnout for the second part of the Club Fair was much lower. Many clubs received no more than five visitors over the 45-minute session.

Max Su ’21, President of Asian Student Association (ASA), thanked the Admissions

Office for their hard work and acknowledged the difficulties in holding virtual club fairs. “I personally prefer an in-person club fair just because it’s much easier to be friendly in-person. It’s definitely scarier to join a Zoom meeting than to walk up to a desk,” he said.

Max Fan ’21, President of Chess Club, agreed. “I think an in-person club fair can have a much bigger impact than [a] virtual club fair,” he said.

Rory Latham ’21, President of Choate Young Democrats, also cited time-zone differences as another potential reason for lower turnout, as admitted students can join from across the globe.

Ms. Kazar said, “Spring Visit Club Fair will continue in the future, although whether it will be in-person or virtual is not yet decided.”

Ryan Kim may be reached at rkim23@choate.edu

Senior Spring Adjusts to Safety Guidelines

By **Yoyo Zhang** ’24
Reporter

For many sixth-formers, the spring term is the light at the end of a long tunnel stuffed with tests, essays, and college applications. During their last term on campus, many seniors prepare for the start of a new chapter in their lives, enjoy the last few months with their friends, and reflect on their last four years. This is senior spring.

Typically, Choate congratulates the seniors for their hard work and encourages them to strengthen their bonds with their friends and the School before their departure, including through traditions such as the Garden Party and the Last Hurrah.

For the Class of 2021, however, things will look a little different. Given the pandemic restrictions, all the time-honored traditions will have to be carried out with adjustments. Many seniors expressed concerns about the uncertainty regarding the spring term. Jack Sun ’21 admitted that the Covid restrictions in place make it difficult to have a “typical senior spring experience.”

Nonetheless, Choate is working to ensure the seniors have a great final term. In fact, the School is planning to allow for in-person celebratory events.

“We are working with a committee of sixth-formers to brainstorm about what senior spring can look like,” said Ms. Julia Brown ’83, one of two sixth-form Deans. “They would like to maintain many of the traditions but realize that things may look different this year.”

Chloe Brink ’21, a coordinator of the Sixth-form Event Committee, said, “The biggest issue is overcoming Covid-19 restrictions. We have to think

of creative new ways that allow for a fun environment while also enforcing safety standards.” For example, the Last Hurrah will be held outside instead of in the dining hall, its typical location.

“The Last Hurrah will happen in some fashion, but we do not yet know the details. Likewise, we are making plans for some type of Garden Party, Incendium, dance lessons, and senior events like Bingo,” Ms. Brown added.

Because social events in this year have been restricted, seniors are excited to experience the traditions however they can. “The senior class hasn’t had very much to look forward to these last few terms, so we now have a chance to participate in the great traditions and make lasting memories,” said Brink.

In the age of Covid-19, these senior spring events might feel more special than ever before. “For the entire year, we’ve been separated both physically and emotionally,” said Peter DiNatale ’21.

“These last events will hopefully bring us together and bring back the memories from pre-Covid times.”

Ultimately, a successful spring term will require Choate students to hold each other accountable and follow Covid guidelines. Ms. Brown recited what in the last twelve months has become the world’s mantra, “Wear your masks and stay six feet apart!” She went on, “We implore the entire Choate community to do their part so that we can all stay on campus and the Class of 2021 can enjoy their senior spring. Our class has been working long and hard to get to this point and deserves to celebrate.”

Yoyo Zhang may be reached at yozhang24@choate.edu

CHOATE CELEBRATES PASSOVER

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Gendrich also appreciated Rabbi Barbara Paris, Rev. Aaron Rathbun, Director of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers, and HPRSS teacher Mr. James Davidson, who helped to organize and set up the Seder in accordance with health guidelines.

Martha Chessen ’22, who attended the Seder, enjoyed the celebration and appreciated the chance to celebrate with Choate’s Jewish community. “Growing up, I went to Hebrew school on Sundays and celebrated many Jewish holidays with family friends, but I never really immersed myself in the culture. As I got older, I kind of lost touch with the religion, and I haven’t been to a Passover Seder since seventh grade,” Chessen said. She saw the event as “an opportunity to reconnect with Judaism and celebrate with a part of the community that I identified with.”

Ms. Brianne Ellis, who works in Admissions and attended the event, said, “As a new member of the Choate community, I really enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate the holiday with fellow faculty and students in person! While it was masked, distanced, and felt a little different than a Seder in a more normal year, I’m so thankful for Rabbi Barbara and the Choate Spiritual Life team for creating a space for us to come together.”



Photo by Ximena Castillo Nuñez/The Choate News

Rabbi Barbara Paris served traditional Passover foods, such as Shmura Matza, at the event.



Photo by Ximena Castillo Nuñez/The Choate News

Niki Gummati ’21 (left), Bradley Wang ’21 (middle), and Isabella Mandell ’21 (right) enjoyed a Seder meal away from home.

Naomi Fleisch may be reached at nfleisch22@choate.edu

LOCAL ASIAN AMERICANS FIGHT HATE



Photo courtesy of Amy Bui, via Instagram

Amy Bui leads a protest on March 27 in front of Wallingford Town Hall.

By **Niki Gummadi '21**
Managing Editor 114th Masthead

At 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 27, about 100 people gathered in front of the Wallingford Town Hall, carrying signs that read “Stop Asian Hate” and “Protect Asian Lives.” The group was participating in a joint Stop Asian American and Pacific Islanders Hate and Black Lives Matter protest, part of a growing movement denouncing the recent uptick in hate crimes against Asian Americans prompted by the coronavirus.

The rally was organized by Amy Bui, a Wallingford resident of Vietnamese descent and senior at Mark T. Sheehan High School, in response to a March 16 mass shooting in Atlanta that left eight dead, including six Asian women. Bui said, “I went to a West Hartford protest about a week before [the rally], and it just really inspired me to do something in Wallingford.”

Soon after the West Hartford rally, Bui reached out to Ms. Alexa Tomassi, a Sheehan graduate and an exploratory candidate for Wallingford Town Council, who organized Wallingford’s Rally Against Hate in August. Tomassi assisted Bui in organizing and publicizing the rally. Bui and Tomassi collaborated with members of BLM860, a Hartford-based branch of the Black Lives Matter movement. In addition to promoting the Wallingford rally on social media, BLM860 organized a rally in Glastonbury on March 27, to protest racism faced by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) residents of the town.

Those who attended the Wallingford rally listened to a number of speakers, including Mayor William Dickinson, Senator Richard Blumenthal, and Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, all of whom spoke out against racism and discrim-

ination and offered support to the Asian American community.

A number of local student activists also spoke at the rally, including Dilawaiz Rao, a senior at Mercy High School. At the rally, Rao spoke about the model minority myth that pits Asians against other racial groups and emphasized the importance of solidarity between Black and Asian communities. She said, “I was inspired to speak at the rally because, as a Pakistani Muslim, I have been the pawn of countless microaggressions that have altered my perception of the world. I am determined to bring change to all communities.”

For Southington resident Tracy Lam, her parents’ stories of their experiences with racism after emigrating from Vietnam inspired her speech at the rally. “I’ve had enough,” she preached. “Enough of this normalized racism where we are taught to ignore it. Now is the time to use our voices.” At the rally, she shared some of her experiences as an Asian American and her desire to make a difference for the future of the Asian community.

Though she appreciated the support of all those who attended the protest, Bui acknowledged that the event faced some backlash. “While the mayor was speaking, there were about four or five Trump trucks driving around, trying to cause a ruckus by revving their engines while waving Trump flags,” she said. On social media, some users responded to Bui’s posts by arguing that the Atlanta shooting was not a hate crime or suggesting that the people were paid to organize the rally.

Bui also used the protest to advocate for H.B. 6619, a bipartisan bill that would create a curriculum to teach Asian Pacific American, Native American and LGBTQ studies in Connecticut public schools. Connecticut State Senator Derek Slap, a democrat and one

of the bill’s co-sponsors, said that he hopes the bill will help recognize the experiences of Asian Americans, “which will ultimately get us down a road of acceptance and tolerance.” According to Senator Slap, the legislature intends to make education in Connecticut more inclusive through additional bills, including one on zoning that would further integrate the state’s schools. “We have to tackle racism in many different ways,” he said. “Certainly [H.B. 6619] won’t do it all, but it is a piece of the puzzle.”

Bui encouraged people to not get overwhelmed by the attacks or the backlash, but instead do what they can to help support Asian American communities. She said, “Call your local state representative and tell them that you want [H.B. No. 6619] passed, and support your local Asian-owned small businesses. A lot of people can’t drive or don’t have the money to donate, but sign petitions, and do what you can.”

Rao echoed that sentiment: “I want to see people using their voices ... check in with your BIPOC peers and empower them. Educate yourself about the history of Asian American discrimination, advocate for awareness in your community, reach out to elected officials, and do whatever you can in your power to protect BIPOC lives!”

The protest indicates that the recent surge in vitriol against Asian Americans will be met with a stronger surge of Asian American activism. Reflecting on the violent treatment of the Asian American community, Lam said, “This is not okay. This should never be okay. We will never stop speaking up and protesting until the day comes where we don’t have to fear for the lives of our families, friends, and ourselves.”

Niki Gummadi may be reached at ngummadi21@choate.edu

LOCAL VACCINATION RATE ACCELERATES

By **Eva Li '24**
Reporter

With vaccination increasing in accessibility, nearly 1.3 million more Connecticut residents became eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine on April 1. Connecticut has continuously ranked among the top five states in the nation for percentage of vaccinated citizens with 23.5% of the population already vaccinated. According to Governor Ned Lamont, the state expects to receive “more than 200,000 first doses per week by early April.” Based on Connecticut’s already vigorous vaccination program, Governor Lamont aims to “significantly accelerate the schedule so that we can equitably and efficiently vaccinate as many residents as possible.”

Prior to April 1, the vaccine distribution plan focused on specific populations: people over 45, healthcare workers and educators, and residents of congregate settings where large groups of people cohabitate, such as dormitories or nursing homes. Connecticut’s official state website reported that on April 1, vaccine eligibility was expanded to “all individuals 16 years of age and older who live, work, or attend school in Connecticut.”

Once the registration for 16 to 44-year-olds opened, vaccination slots filled up rapidly. “When we start a new phase, there will be many more people seeking appointments than [the number of] doses we are receiving this week,” said Connecticut’s Chief Operating Officer Josh Geballe. Priority access is being given to people with

intellectual or developmental disabilities, patients at Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital and Connecticut Children’s Hospital, as well as high-risk citizens.

The state has implemented an in-home vaccination program for the medically or physically homebound. It also created a vaccine appointment helpline for residents without internet or those with disabilities that inhibit accessibility to the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) online Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS).

Appointments can be made through VAMS and local vaccination sites, including those run by Harford Healthcare, Yale New Haven Health, and Stamford Health. Commercial pharmacies like CVS have their own scheduling system.

The Uncas Health District normally serves as the local health department for 11 municipalities in eastern Connecticut, but it partnered with Yale New Haven Health to provide closed registration to educators. It ensured that all educators received an appointment for their first dose of the vaccine in March. “For the Uncas Health District to provide vaccine[s], we were required to enroll in the Covid-19 Vaccination Program, which takes place in CT WiZ, Connecticut’s Immunization Information System,” said Mr. Patrick McCormack, the director of health at Uncas Health District.

After the first shot, providers give a card with the date of the dose and, in the case of Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, a reminder of the appointment

for the second dose. At Uncas Health, “patients must complete an online enrollment and sign an attestation sheet at the clinic. The information is collected in VAMS, which generates a vaccination certificate,” Mr. McCormack explained.

Over spring break, some 90% of Choate faculty members got registered and vaccinated. “We did it basically by a lottery since we knew that we would be able to get everyone vaccinated within the two to three weeks very quickly,” said Medical Director Dr. Miriam Cohen. “We didn’t feel that we needed to prioritize in the same way as those who had underlying medical conditions or consider age-based stratifications.”

Nurses from Choate volunteered to help at the vaccination sites. In return, the Wallingford Health Department allowed Choate to use batches of vaccines received from the state of Connecticut to vaccinate Choate employees. Choate will also be partnering with a local clinic to supply vaccines to students 16 and above. According to Dr. Cohen, the Pfizer vaccine will be available to anyone on campus by the end of April, and the second dose will be supplied in around the middle of May.

“I know that a lot of people are wary or nervous about this vaccine due to its newness, and I totally understand that,” she said. “With that said, I do think our way to get to the other side of the pandemic really is through vaccination.”

Eva Li may be reached at eli24@choate.edu

CONNECTICUT ESTABLISHMENTS CELEBRATE PASSOVER



Photo courtesy of Reuters

Jewish holidays such as Passover have adapted to the pandemic.

By **Meredith Syms '23**

From March 28 to April 4 this year, Jews celebrated Passover — also known as Pesach — which commemorates the freedom of the Hebrews from enslavement in Egypt. To Rabbi Bruce Alpert of Wallingford’s Beth Israel Synagogue, Passover is the “festival of freedom.”

On the first night, Jews hold an especially big celebration that includes a special dinner called a Seder. At the Seder, prayers, recitation of scripture, and foods representing the enslavement and liberation of the Israelites are shared. A popular Passover Seder food is matzah, also known as “poor man’s bread,” as opposed to “rich man’s” leavened bread that is consumed throughout the rest of the year. An employee at New Haven’s Edge of the Woods Market, Mr. Nathan Dodge did not even have time to properly inventory the matzah they sold because “it went so fast.”

Preparations are a major aspect of Passover. Jews spend at least three to five days preparing for the eight days of Passover.

Cleaning is an essential part of these preparations. Rabbi Alpert described the process of gearing up for the holiday as “fairly rigorous.” He said, “We are not allowed to eat anything non-kosher — no bread or pasta, no grains. We clean our houses out of all agents containing leaven.”

This ratcheting up and clearing out of kitchens highlights the relationship between Jewish people and the non-synagogue establishments that they patronize. For example, Mr. Dodge said because they knew “kosher pizza would be really busy that week because everybody [was] covering their kitchens ... [it] was nice that we could offer pizza.”

In line with Jewish traditions and their emphasis on community, Passover is meant to be spent with family and friends. Since 2020, Jewish communities have had to adjust in order to navigate the Covid-19 pandemic. Many ceremonies and traditions have been moved to Zoom or are held in small, physically-distanced groups.

Rabbi Alpert reflected on how older members of the synagogue have been affected by

these changes saying, “Older folks couldn’t get out and haven’t experienced the ‘community feel’ in over a year.” Fortunately, while the coronavirus has stymied festivities, it has reignited also community. At Edge of the Woods, Mr. Dodge reported being busier [this year and in] 2020 because all the other shops were closed.”

While celebrations have been altered, the history and culture surrounding Passover is still intact. “To me, Passover has always been this idea of retelling the story,” Zoe Fleischman ’23 explained. Part of this retelling includes emphasizing the experiences that can be done intimately at home. Fleischmann continued, “My family used the same Haggadot for years, so it is interesting to think about the texts of Passover as I grow over the years” she continued. Since it is such a joyful and important holiday, Passover has persevered in spite of all the barriers the pandemic poses, to deliver light in these dark times.

Meredith Syms may be reached at msyms23@choate.edu

CHARITY BEGINS IN TOWN

By **Sydney Alleyne '23**
Copy Editor

The AAPI Civic Engagement Fund, founded in 2014, is a non-profit, non-partisan charitable organization with the goal of increasing voter turnout and civic engagement among Asian American and

Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. The original donors decided that the best way to increase civic engagement in AAPI communities was to

*AAPI Civic
Engagement Fund*

create a fund dedicated solely to providing resources and awareness in order to aid the issue. You can learn more about the fund, and donate to it, through the organization’s website, aapifund.org.

Sydney Alleyne may be reached at salleyne23@choate.edu

Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

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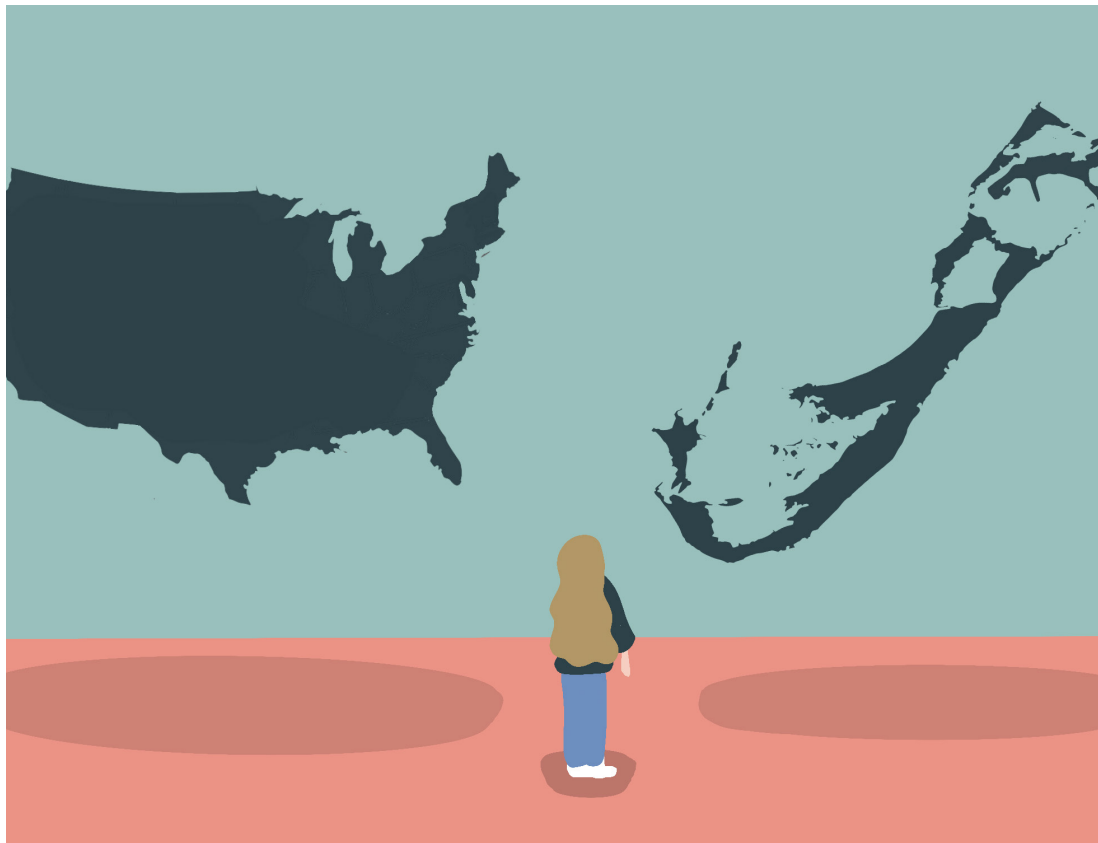
My National Identity? It's Complicated.

By **Charlotte Weinstein '22**
Opinions Writer

Because Choate students live all over the world, one of the most common questions asked on the first day of classes or when meeting someone new is, “Where are you from?” For several years now, I’ve struggled to answer this question. I was born and raised in Bermuda, but I have an American passport only because of Bermuda’s protectionist policies, which include not having birthright citizenship. The government requires that native Bermudians are considered for jobs and opportunities first. I first began to realize that I did not entirely belong in Bermuda when my old school sent everyone emails about exciting programs that I couldn’t participate in because of my American citizenship.

According to the government, I am not Bermudian. Government action has made it difficult for me to obtain a Permanent Residency Certificate, which means that, after I turn 18, I will not be able to live in the country where I was born. Many Bermudians are also not welcoming of those, like my parents, who moved to the island for work — they believe that those people are taking jobs away from native Bermudians. Despite living in Bermuda all of my life, I am constantly reminded that it’s not my country.

Still, when I used to live in Bermuda year-round, I was okay with not being Bermudian. In Bermuda, I was called an American, so I at least felt like I belonged somewhere. However, this identifier that I had grasped for so long as a source of comfort changed when I left for boarding school in the United States. At Choate, surrounded by so many students from Connecticut or New York or



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

California, I’m labeled as “the Bermuda girl,” the opposite of how Bermudians viewed me, and of how I’d come to perceive myself.

In truth, studying in the United States has made me realize how un-American I really am. Compared to Bermuda, everything is bigger and life moves faster in the United States — sometimes I feel like I can’t keep up. My childhood was spent in a completely different environment than most Americans: my school curriculum wasn’t centered around the United States, considering that Bermuda’s government is organized like that of the United Kingdom. Because of this, I never had discussions about American politics in a classroom setting until I came to Choate.

And yet my passport still says I belong here. It’s alienating to not identify with either the domestic or the international students.

The way I see myself in terms of my national identity has shifted many times. Honestly, I’m a little jealous of people who can confidently share their nationality, and I feel bad when I cannot provide a definite answer of where I’m from. For me, home has always been just where my family is, but people expect a more concrete answer.

I’m regularly asked why I would ever want to leave the beautiful island paradise of Bermuda. They don’t know my experiences, though. It was a lovely place to grow up, but it wasn’t a vacation every day. For me, it was simply where my brother and I started school and where my parents made their lives. I find myself unable to reply to this question, which gets too personal, too quickly. It makes me feel incredibly hopeless.

Because of this, I feel most secure in talking about my other

identifiers, like my gender or religion. I invest so much of myself into these other identifiers, so I don’t lose control of how I see myself — but I still lack a sense of where I fit in. In a way, however, I feel like not belonging to a specific country is a part of my identity now, too.

It would be impossible to ignore the impact that living in Bermuda has had on my life — it’s always going to be a part of me. Still, I don’t know if I’ll ever feel fully a part of a specific place. I guess, if I’ve come to understand anything, it’s that nationalities alone shouldn’t define our identities. One day, I hope to be okay with not having the perfect, singular response to the question of where I’m from.

Charlotte Weinstein is a fifth-former from “see above”. She may be reached at cweinstein22@choate.edu

LIFE SKILLS CLASSES WOULD BE A LIFESAVER



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Begum Gokmen '23**
Copy Editor

We go into Choate thinking that we will leave feeling prepared for everything life throws at us. But, how much of the things we learn in school do we actually use in our daily lives? In an *H&R Block* survey, 84% of respondents said they learned skills in high school that they never used after graduating. In fact, most high school graduates have no idea how to pay taxes, manage money, cook, or navigate a professional environment. They are thrown into an alien system and are simply expected to figure it out.

I believe that life skills should be introduced into Choate’s curriculums as either a required or elective course to at least provide students the option to learn more about basic yet essential skills. At Choate, for instance, we live in dorms with meals provided to us — a privilege, among many — that allows us to lean into Choate’s academic bubble. Does any of it really prepare us for life after Choate?

Yes and no. Choate does an excellent job at immersing students in a variety of extracurricular subjects. We get to follow our passions and immerse ourselves in a rigorous academic curriculum. What we learn academically qualifies us for the careers we aspire to pursue and prepares us to take on important positions. However, what our classes fail to do is prepare us for the basics of life as functional, independent adults.

When we leave high school, we know how to find the lim-

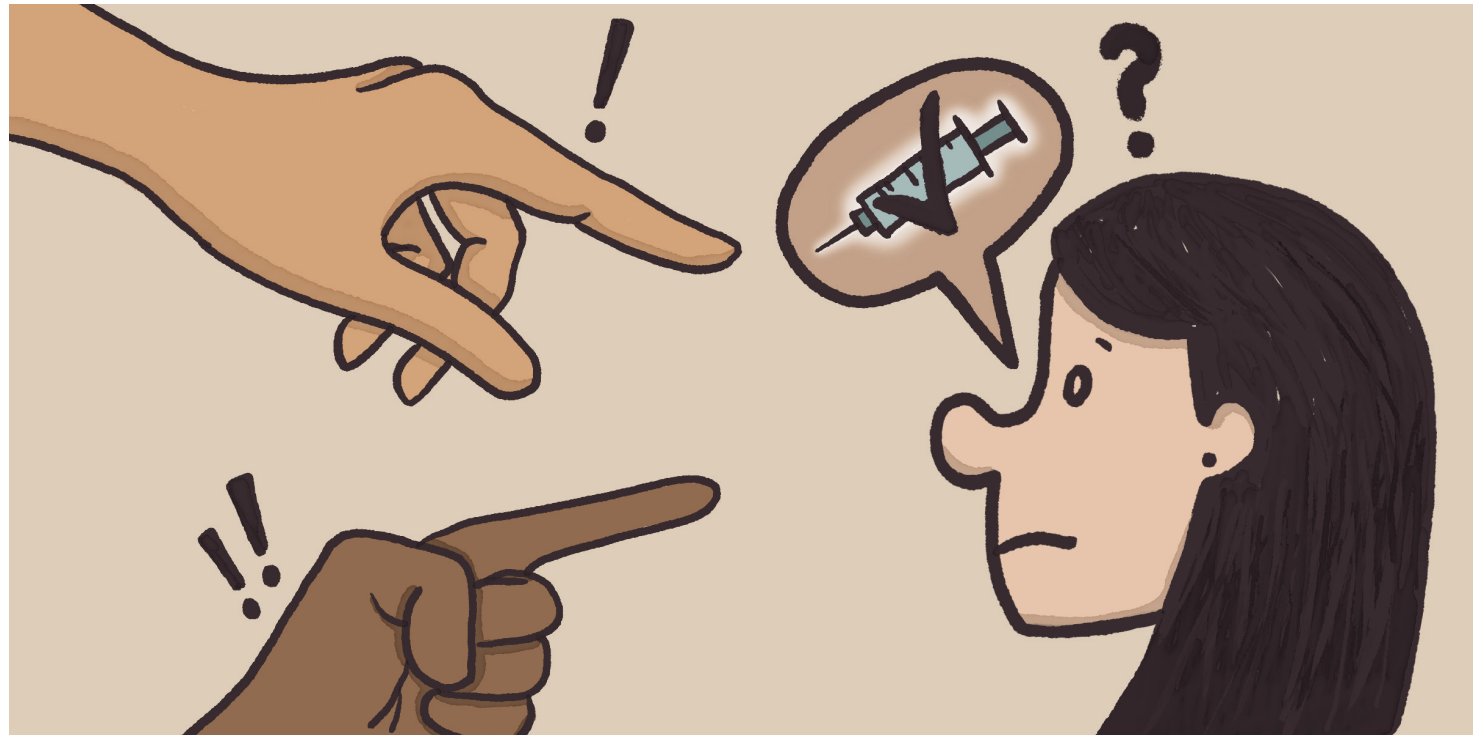
it of a function or calculate the velocity of a moving car, but we have no idea how to save for retirement. The responsibility of teaching these skills ultimately falls to ourselves or our parents — who may have varying understandings and experiences with these skills, especially considering the diversity of Choate’s student body. So, instead of gambling with the issue, wouldn’t it be easier if we just learned them in high school?

By introducing a life skills course into the Choate curriculum, students would feel more prepared for the responsibilities that await them as adults. This course should not only focus on fundamental skills such as cooking a meal or doing taxes, but it should also cover different career fields and leadership techniques. It will introduce students to skills such as personal and consumer finance and business communications that are necessary to find a job and succeed in the working world.

The benefits of a life skills course wouldn’t be limited to students. Employers will also benefit from more knowledgeable and prepared candidates. Its effects will not only increase individual profit but also advance the economy as a whole. Choate’s goal is to educate students and prepare them for a successful life in all areas — social, mental, and physical. A life skills course would ensure that a Choate education better prepares students for life beyond our campus.

Begum Gokmen is a fourth-former from Istanbul, Turkey. She may be reached at bgokmen23@choate.edu

Post-Vaccine Norms: Who Makes The Rules?



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Sydney Alleyne '23**
Copy Editor

Over the past year, we have all experienced the unavoidable conversations about how seriously to take the pandemic — the ones where we decide whether or not we ought to skip the big spring break party in order to avoid spreading Covid-19 to our family. Unsurprisingly, the interpretations of public health guidelines have often become largely influenced by our personal proclivities. For my friends who value their social life more than their own health, their pandemic ended once summer began. Others still remain cautious today, rather than spending their weekends as if it were 2019.

At a certain point, we all began making our own decisions regarding how closely to follow Covid-19 precautions. We’ve created our own cultures of what social behaviors we deem acceptable — cultures determined by geography, politics, and socioeconomic status, among other factors. Because of this, the debate of personal preference versus public safety has found substantial footing in the pandemic. At

the beginning of quarantine, some people stayed inside to mitigate the spread, while others ventured out in makeshift masks composed of a bandana and two hair elastics. Over the summer, the same conflicting viewpoints arose when it came to indoor versus outdoor dining.

At the center of shifting public precautions resides the big question: Who will be the arbitrator of these new social mandates? Despite national guidelines, it has become abundantly clear that there is no overarching authority that can enforce whether businesses and individuals will choose to follow them. The arbitrator is ultimately ourselves, so we must do our best to put aside our personal preferences for the greater goal of public safety.

Now that many Americans are beginning to receive the Covid-19 vaccine, the idea of re-entering a world of pseudo-normalcy isn’t too far-fetched. My parents, who both work in medical settings, were among the first in the United States to receive the vaccine. With this newfound privilege, their gatherings have grown in size, and their outings have become varied in terms of distance and activity.

My brother and I, who remain unvaccinated and vulnerable to

the disease, brought this conversation to the dinner table one night over spring break. While my parents weren’t susceptible to the virus and had a decreased ability to transmit it, my brother and I felt it inappropriate for them to flaunt their lightly-masked privilege in settings where others couldn’t do the same. It’s not as if other people dining at the same restaurant could tell if my parents were vaccinated or not. While they presented no substantial threats to public safety, wearing a mask and distancing is still a matter of respect — respect for the establishments they inhabit and their occupants.

As our perceptions of what is acceptable begin to shift, communication will become imperative to creating a society in which people can be safe. A solution to the possibility of miscommunication is a vaccine passport, nicknamed the ‘vax pass,’ which will allow only vaccinated people to do certain things and enter certain areas. These places could include cruises, international travel, sporting events, and theme parks. Not only will this encourage those who are unsure about receiving the vaccine to schedule an appointment, but it will also allow for ensured public safety and comfort.

The decisions we make as the vaccine rollout progresses ultimately comes down to our prerogatives. Not only is safety a priority, but remaining considerate of those around us is, too. While it is not our moral obligation to keep others in check and ensure that they follow the rules, we can choose to follow national safety guidelines ourselves. In the end, the scales will balance out: if we continue to be cautious and responsible, our actions as safe, precautionary citizens will balance out those of the negligent bystanders.

As the vaccine becomes more widely available and the world re-enters some kind of normalcy, maskless gatherings, various travel methods, and in-person education will resume, although other things will look different than before. Though it is helpful to consider all of the possibilities, we will never know how the Covid-19 vaccine will affect our global community until we see it in action. We can, however, remain vigilant in how we go about our daily lives.

Sydney Alleyne is a fourth-former from West Hartford, Conn. She may be reached at salleyne23@choate.edu

Correction

An article in the February 26 issue about recent elections for Student Council misquoted Abby Lu '22. She said that many members of the Choate community fear that sixth-formers would not vote sincerely in a student council election. Lu did not say that she, herself, thinks this (she does not).

The Choate News regrets this error. To submit a correction, email thechoatenews@choate.edu

BIDEN'S CABINET: A REPRESENTATION OF AMERICA

By **June Lu '22**
Opinions Writer

During his 2020 election campaign, President Joe Biden promised to build a cabinet representative of America's racial plurality. Upholding the promise, Biden's administration deviated greatly from past administrations, appointing women and ethnic minorities to positions that have long been held almost exclusively by white men. The Biden cabinet is now the most diverse in American history, with ten women, six Black Americans, four Hispanic Americans, and the first Native American. In stark contrast, the cabinet of Donald Trump P'oo was 82% white and 82% male.

Blazing the trail for the future generation of women in politics are Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai. These three women are making history as the first of the gender to hold their position, and Ms. Haaland and Ms. Tai are the first of their racial groups to lead their agencies.

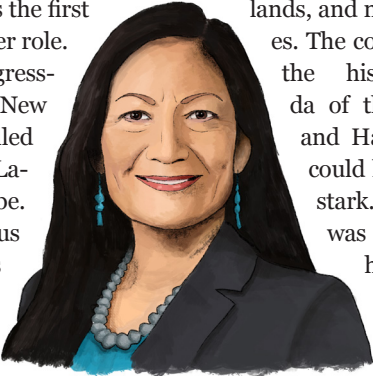
The nomination and appointment of Ms. Yellen marks the first female Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and it makes her the first person in American history to have led the White House Council of Economic Advisors, the Federal Reserve, and the Treasury Department. During her time as chair of the Federal Reserve, unemployment rates declined, inflation was kept relatively low, and the stock market hit record highs. In fact, no recent chair of the Federal Reserve has seen the market climb as fast as it did under Ms. Yellen. Given her experience, she is well acquainted with the American economic system, and she is celebrated for her bipartisanship and ability to communicate government regulations effectively.



Secretary Yellen's most pressing issue at the moment is the economic recession due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This pandemic has devastated American employment rates, disproportionately affected communities of color, created social unrest, and produced a devastating death toll of some 550,000 lives. As a result, Yellen is a strong advocate for the \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill, stating that "the spending [the federal government] is doing now is arguably helping our debt path by getting our economy back on track." While optimism

about the improvement of the economy as a whole, she suggests in her preliminary interviews that there will still be lasting inequalities in the nation's wealth distribution. Yellen notes that early stages of recovery from the pandemic have disproportionately benefited the upper class. She has advocated

In an equally unprecedented nomination by President Biden, the Department of the Interior is now headed by Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American to be appointed to a Cabinet position as well as the first woman to be in her role. The former congresswoman from New Mexico is an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe. As an Indigenous woman, she is now at the head of a department which has historically exploited Native American land, culture, and society. The department is directly responsible for the 1956 Indian Relocation Act, a law intended to enable urban-



for international cooperation to end the "destructive, global race to the bottom on corporate taxation," and it is probable that, under her leadership, the Treasury will begin to shift its focus to sustainable industries and a more equal distribution of wealth across both race and social class.

ization by coercing Native Americans to leave their traditional land. In addition to being responsible for government-tribal relations, the department manages endangered species, public lands, and natural resources. The contrast between the historical agenda of the department and Haaland's values could hardly be more stark. Ms. Haaland was notorious for her protesting of the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, and it is all but certain that she will express the same views when addressing the inevitable consequences of drilling and natural resource extraction.

Finally, with the looming trade war with China on the horizon, it is fitting that Biden's nominee for U.S. Trade Representative was Katherina Tai, the first Asian-American woman to serve in the position. She was unanimously voted into the position by the Senate. Katherina Tai

Most notably, Senator Tammy Duckworth from Illinois threatened to block future Biden picks over a lack of AAPI nominees to the cabinet.

As tensions between American and Chinese governments mount, Ms. Tai seems to be faced with the reconciliation of the two nations, especially in the face of tariff threats. So far, Ms. Tai has remained strict on China, singling out the nation as "the world's leading offender" in creating excess capacity in several sectors. In the 2021 National Trade Estimate Report — an annual survey of significant barriers to U.S. exports — Ms. Tai notes the danger of the "Made in China



2025" plan, various import bans and subsidies, as well as key issues with Chinese laws — notably those of labor, land use, commercial dispute resolution, and the treatment of non-governmental organizations. The report made clear that she would continue with a strict approach to harmful foreign trade practices that would impede American export growth, as well as maintain cooperation with U.S. allies. Further immediate concerns include crafting Biden's promised trade policy to center on the American worker and ensure that efforts to increase domestic manufacturing comply with trade agreements.

It is beyond refreshing to see the current administration's commitment to diversity and inclusion. The new cabinet reflects America, which tends to pride itself on its racial and ethnic diversity, better than any in the nation's history. President Biden and the senators who supported his nominees, have placed qualified women in high-ranking positions, chipping away at the gender barrier that is too deeply ingrained in our society. The widespread idea that "representation matters" — used often in the media to signify the need for equitable representation of gender, race, and other identifiers — is no longer just a millennial proclamation. America's future leaders are poised to make history while representing the beauty of the nation's diversity.

June Lu is a fifth-former from Vancouver. She may be reached at jlu22@choate.edu

Graphics by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

ATLANTA SHOOTING LATEST MANIFESTATION OF GROWING DOMESTIC EXTREMISM THREAT



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

By **Wesley Boatwright '22**
Staff Reporter

On January 6, 2021, a violent mob stormed the U.S. Capitol in one of the most visceral and tragic examples of the recent rise in domestic extremism. In the last year, there has been an increasing number of white supremacist groups and increased violence targeting marginalized groups. According to the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019, "White supremacists and other far-right extremists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the United States." Donald Trump P'oo's presidency exacerbated the issue, as his hateful rhetoric and prevalent support of white supremacy furthered radicalized domestic terrorism.

Recall the first presidential debate, when Trump refused to condemn the Proud Boys — a white supremacist and neo-fascist group — and instead told them to "stand back and stand by." Trump then encouraged the Capitol storming, which involved the Proud Boys. As white supremacy is on the rise, so are

racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs). Domestic terrorism — specifically racially motivated domestic terrorism — is the greatest threat to the American civilian population, the he most recent example being the mass shooting in Atlanta, Georgia.

The increase in RMVEs is directly correlated with the "White genocide" conspiracy theory, a perceived movement toward racial integration, and the extinction of whites through forced assimilation. Trump stood as a shining beacon of hope for these white supremacist hate groups as he lended credence to their conspiracies. His xenophobic, racist speech invited the country to become more hateful and more divided. Further displaying a concerning trend in the United States, more than two million firearms were bought in January of 2021, the third-highest one-month total on record, according to *The Washington Post*. So it is no surprise that firearms are used to target minority groups in RMVEs.

The country has seen a trend of violence targeting

Asian Americans over the past year. According to a report from Stop AAPI Hate, nearly 3,800 hate incidents targeting Asian Americans have been reported nationwide since last March. This issue was directly influenced by Trump, as he blamed the coronavirus pandemic on Asians and called the virus the "Chinese virus" and the "Kung Flu." Another example of anti-Asian racism came when NBA player Jeremy Lin was called "coronavirus" by another player during an NBA G League game. Whether it be violent shootings, hate crimes, or racist language, Asian Americans have been targeted by an increase in white supremacy.

America has a legacy of discrimination and violence against Asians that is often brushed under the rug. How many Americans know of the Chinese Massacre of 1871, when Asian immigrants were attacked by a mob and lynched in Los Angeles? Or of the Japanese Internment during World War II, when more than a hundred thousand Americans were forced from their homes and

businesses and kept in concentration camps? Anti-Asian prejudice has long streaked American society, and it's hardly surprising that such intolerance is resurfacing today.

While President Joe Biden did release a statement and establish some minor plans to combat racial violence targeting the AAPI community, the Biden administration can do more. Specifically, Biden can make it easier to prove hate crimes against Asian Americans. According to *The New York Times*, "establishing such a motive for attacks against Asians is even more challenging because there is no widely recognized symbol of anti-Asian hate, such as a noose or a swastika."

In order to combat this legacy of racism and counter domestic terrorism, the country needs more than statements. To effectively truly fight racism, policy change is needed.

Wesley Boatwright is a fifth-former from San Francisco. He may be reached at wboatwright22@choate.edu

Women's History Month Ends, But the Work Is Far from Over

By **Campbell Pflaum '23**
Opinions Writer

In August of 1920, Congress ratified the 19th amendment, delivering voting rights to American women. This year's Women's History Month, celebrated in March, honors these accomplishments, more than a century later. Yet, for all the progress feminists have made around the world in the last century, recent years have been marked by a spike in violence against women.

Samia Suluhu Hassan, Kamala Harris, and Nanaia Mahuta have all made history this year as the first women of color elected to their respective positions of power. Despite these breakthroughs, in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, rape has become a weapon of war against women in the ongoing civil war. Rape is being used by soldiers on both sides of the conflict as a means of violently controlling, punishing, or incapacitating women. Although the #MeToo movement has brought global attention to cases of sexual assault, many countries still aren't moving in the right direction. For instance, on March 19, Turkey dropped out of the Istanbul Convention, a 2011 pledge designed to protect women from domestic violence and promote gender equality.

In the U.S., the Atlanta shootings have brought international attention to the dehumanization of Asian women that has occurred in our country for centuries. The Minnesota State Supreme Court recently ruled that rape can be designated as a less severe charge if the victim voluntarily consumed alcohol prior to the attack; the justices found that the victim's intoxication qualified as "mental incapacitation."

Laws and in the U.S. have time and time again fallen short of protecting women's rights. The Violence Against Women Act was signed by President Bill Clinton in

1994. Designed to protect women against rape and other forms of sexual harassment, the Act expired in 2018. It offered \$1.6 billion over 6 years to the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women. It also created the Office of Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice. In 2012, upon the Act's first reauthorization, it was expanded to include protections for same-sex couples and victims of sex trafficking. The Act finances community violence prevention programs, safe houses, specialized programs for immigrant women and disabled women, and legal aid for the survivors of domestic violence. Despite the benefits from this Act, Congress let the bill expire in 2018. While the Act was re-instituted in 2019 as part of a separate spending bill, it expired again only a few weeks later.

With every stride toward gender equality there is always some stipulation — some "yet" accompanied by a body count. So, as another Women's History month ends, I wonder what this universal truth looks like today. The fact remains that sexism is still very much present from the spike in cases of domestic violence to the gender pay gap.

But I still see hope in the fight for gender equity. I see it in the House of Representatives, where the same Violence Against Women Act that sat inactive on a desk in Washington for three years was pushed to renewal by the most female-identifying House of Representatives in American history. I see it in the deconstruction of the gender binary by our generation. Gender discrimination continues to exist, and feminists will continue to fight to dismantle the patriarchy wherever they see it. Happy Women's History Month, and please tell your senator to renew the Violence Against Women Act.

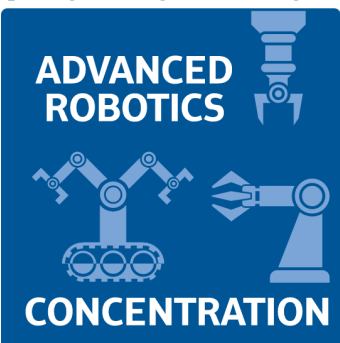
Campbell Pflaum is a fourth-former from Nashville. She may be reached at cpflaum23@choate.edu

THRIVING BEYOND SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

By Melody Qian '24
Staff Reporter

It's springtime at Choate, and that means warm weather, new classes, and, of course, long-awaited Signature Program decisions. Choate's nine Signature Programs — including the John F. Kennedy Program in Government and Public Service, the Science Research Program, the Environmental Immersion Program, and Advanced Robotics Concentration — allow students to specialize in an academic area of particular interest to them, but can be quite difficult to snag a spot in.

Many students enter Choate with the intention of participating in a Signature Program



for the opportunity to research and explore their passion with assistance and guidance they might not find otherwise. However, there are also some students who — despite having interests that align with the programs and the prestige wound up in many of them — choose not to apply to Signature Programs at all.

Conor Brown '22, Livia Fingerson '22, and Adriana Rivera '22 are three such students. Despite all coming to Choate with the mindset that they'd like to join a Signature Program, upon talking to their peers and seeing what they were like firsthand, for varying reasons they ultimately decided they'd be better off without them.



Graphic courtesy of Choate Rosemary Hall

"There's nothing inherently wrong with the notion of providing kids with the opportunities to specialize. In the abstract, Signature Programs could be fantastic," Brown said.

Brown, who is interested in the humanities and feels that he'd fit right into the JFK Program, says that rather than allowing students to take full advantage of the opportunities that Choate offers them, the JFK Program is restrictive, forcing students to give up elective slots in order to fit a slate of required classes into their already tightly packed academic schedules.

Although he acknowledged the potential benefits of the JFK Program — such as internship connections or the program's small seminar course — Brown believes that by participating in Signature Programs, "you are making an incredible sacrifice in your course autonomy for comparatively little gain."

Fingerson also brought up the idea of course autonomy in her rationale for abstaining from Signature Programs. Although she came to Choate eyeing the Science Research Program, she discovered an unanticipated love for humanities during her freshman year. Freed from the specialized, predetermined course requirements of Signature Programs, she's been able to explore a wide range of electives. "I'm a kid who likes all my classes. I think it's really cool — I can be in my philosophy class, and I'll see a concept that I

can relate to a math class. I want to spend this time [at Choate] taking as many classes as I can and finding out what I'm passionate about."

Still, Fingerson views the choice of whether or not to participate in Signature Programs as a personal one, saying that the programs can be incredibly beneficial for those who are laser-focused on a certain area, as opposed to those who feel pressured into applying.

"There's nothing wrong with the Signature Programs themselves, but rather the way in which they're talked about at Choate," said Fingerson. "I feel like the culture around Signature Programs should change a little bit, so you can have programs where the students are actually solely passionate about those areas" — rather than simply motivated by a desire to enhance their resumes, something she believes plagues Signature Program applicant pools.

Given the variety of her interests, Rivera would be a likely candidate for multiple Signature Programs. She plays the oboe, has a deep concern for the environment, and is interested in Spanish language and culture, yet has consciously chosen not to participate in Arts Concentration, the Environmental Immersion Program, or Term Abroad.

Upon arriving at Choate and consulting returning students to see which program might fit her best, she received mixed feedback. "After asking around,



Graphic courtesy of Choate Rosemary Hall

I saw that there were large expectations for these programs that often got overwhelming and time-consuming for those involved. Even though I am highly invested in my extracurriculars, I didn't want something that would dominate my everyday life in this manner and prevent me from exploring other interests," she said.

As an alternative to intense Signature Programs, Brown suggested that Choate should give students the option to have more relaxed schedules in their junior and senior years in order to allow for independent academic specialization beyond formal coursework. "The reason I can't research, that I can't read those books and do a deep

dive in my free time, is because, at Choate, we don't really have free time," he said. "There's a much grander problem at play here: Choate structures the time of students so that there isn't time for independent intellectual exploration."

A Signature Program is, of course, a major commitment. While there is prestige associated with participating in one, several students find freedom in the ability to create a schedule of their own. Fingerson said, "You can be a very successful student without doing a signature program — it doesn't make you a bad student not to be in one."

Melody Qian may be reached at mqian24@choate.edu

Lowndes: Livin' Large In a Small Dorm



Photo courtesy of Emma Hermacinski

Lowndes, a small dorm behind St. John Chapel, has only five student-residents — and they happen to be best friends.

By Sophia Bruno '23
Reporter

Ever watched "Friends" and envied the close-knit living setup of the show's six main characters? It's hard to imagine that kind of housing situation existing in real life, much less on the Choate campus. But, tucked away behind St. John Chapel is Lowndes, a cozy dorm where five best friends live.

From the fall of their freshman year, Jordan Azzinaro '22, Saijel Burkett '22, Adrienne Chacón '22, Emma Hermacinski '22, and Adriana Rivera '22 instantly clicked. The five only grew closer over the next two years, enduring the trials and tribulations of life at Choate by each other's side. As sophomores, Azzinaro, Burkett, Chacón, and Rivera lived together in Atwater. But that May, it was announced that Atwater would become a boys' dorm for their junior year — meaning the group would need to find a new home. So, along with Hermacinski, who had been living

in McCook, they unanimously decided to try to live together somewhere else: Lowndes.

It's always a shot in the dark when it comes to the Choate housing lottery system. Yet, either by chance or by fate, this year their dreams came true when the five of them secured spots in Lowndes, succeeding in living together once again — this time, in a dorm of their own. Dr. Yaser Robles, the group's form dean and house adviser, said, "In the end, it all comes down to the lottery, and their options matched them with Lowndes. I couldn't have asked for a better group of girls — I sincerely lucked out."

Despite the restrictions Covid-19 has brought, the tight-knit dorm atmosphere has added new dimensions to their friendship and brought them a home within the larger Choate community. Whether it be ordering food together, sitting back and watching Netflix, or just hanging out and talking, Lowndes residents are rarely bored. Burkett said, "It's never lonely. It's never like

we have to plan anything out. It just happens."

With their best friends just a few feet away at any given moment, the Ladies of Lowndes, as they've nicknamed themselves, feel constantly supported and uplifted. "My favorite part about living in Lowndes is that I get to spend every day surrounded by people who just understand me," said Hermacinski.

Whether on the playing fields, in the PMAC, or in the classroom, the five spend much of the daytime apart from each other until they all come back to the dorm. But in Lowndes, the group's varying activities and interests bring them together and make their communal living more lively. "They continue to grow together. What makes this group remarkable is the fact that ... they have different interests. Whenever there is a group conversation, you can see very different perspectives," said Dr. Robles.

Not every friend group may be able to survive stacking a dorm,

but the group's time in Lowndes has only strengthened their dynamic. "At the end of the day, I don't think we've ever gotten into a fight," said Hermacinski. "We're just really good at knowing each other's boundaries, and we're really good at reading each other."

After months of living together, the five can sense when someone needs space. That mutual respect for one another creates an ideal dorm environment for the group. Hermacinski said, "There's just a very specific sense of hominess to the whole dorm."

For the rest of spring term, they have the chance to create new memories and reminisce on old ones, as the line between friends and family blurs even more. And with a little luck, they won't need to worry about the evanescence of their time together. Next year, having chosen as a group not to apply for prefectship, Azzinaro, Burkett, Chacón, Hermacinski, and Rivera are hoping to live together in Lowndes once again.

Sophia Bruno may be reached at sbruno23@choate.edu

Go Behind the Scenes: The Student Council Proposal Process

By Brian Harder '23
Staff Reporter

1. Lightbulb On

The first step to any successful student council proposal is a solid idea. Form forums, platforms for members of each grade to share their input, and sending out Google Forms to the entire school are two formal ways to gather fodder for proposals. But ideas can also spring up when a council member reflects on their experiences or casually discusses proposals with their form-mates.

No matter the topic of the legislation, council members agreed that it's important that proposal ideas express the desires of the broader community.



2. Collaboration Nation

Once they have an idea in mind, a council member must find other representatives to work with on their proposal. Just as any council member except for the student body president can propose legislation, any council members can work together, regardless of form or position.

Additionally, council members must seek out faculty input. Faculty in particular are able to shed light upon how the proposal might be received by the administration.

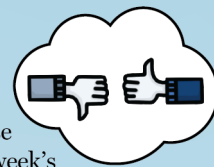
3. Stand and Deliver

Next, the proposal is presented to the entire student council at one of their weekly meetings. A proposal presentation will include background on the issues the proposal aims to fix.

Other representatives, along with faculty advisers Mr. Ian Wollman and Mr. John Connelly, can provide their feedback and suggest changes after the representative finishes presenting.

4. Majority Rules

During the following week, the sponsoring council member edits and updates their proposal based on these suggestions. Then, in the next week's meeting, the final draft of the proposal is voted on by council members. Council members can vote in favor, against, or abstain. If a majority of the council votes in favor of the proposal, it passes.



5. An Executive Decision

Next, the passed proposal is presented to Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez and reviewed by the administration at a dean group meeting. According to student-council members, this final step of the proposal process tends to be ambiguous and hands off, since what the administration is discussing and their voting processes are often opaque to the council.

6. Change Happens!

Once the deans' group has approved the legislation, the deans can implement the proposal themselves — for instance, if the passed proposal creates a new event, Mr. Velez will send out an all-school email. If necessary, deans can also request that Facilities or other staff groups implement the changes.



Brian Harder may be reached at bharder23@choate.edu
Graphics by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

VICTORIA JIANG '22 EXPLORES THE COMPONENTS OF IDENTITY



Images courtesy of Victoria Jiang

Three artworks from Jiang's identity-focused collection were "Sanctuary," "Jenny and Me," and "Blindfolds," above.

By **Elena Zhang '24**

Reporter

Using a combination of abstract patterns and intricate details, Victoria Jiang '22, an Arts Concentration student in Visual Arts, reflected on self-image and contemporary issues in her art collection, "The Different Components of My Identity."

Since she was young, Jiang has always found painting to be a way to express her emotions and interests. Over time, her passion for painting deepened and became a way for her to connect with the world.

Paintings enable her to capture distinct details in reality, while maintaining artistic freedom and interpretation. "There are infinite amounts of possibilities in one painting, and each viewer may obtain something different," Jiang said. "This is why painting is such a powerful and influential media."

"The Different Components of My Identity" is composed of six artworks, each with a distinct theme that represents an aspect of Jiang's identity or an ongoing issue that she observes in her life.

While studying the artworks of Chuck Close, a 1970s American

painter known for his abstract portraits, Jiang recognized the contrast between photorealism and the trend in our current society. That is, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many artists focused on recreating the realistic detail of photos using other media; nowadays, the trend of digital pictures outweighs other artistic media.

Inspired by photorealistic artworks, particularly Chuck Close's pieces, Jiang created a large-scale portrait entitled, "Jenny and Me." The painting is composed of many squares, each saturated with vibrant colors, representing layers of emo-

tion that Jiang hopes to convey. "The small pieces of squares are insignificant by themselves but are profound when contributing to a larger vision," said Jiang.

Reflecting on the "small pieces of squares" that define her, Jiang realized that she is constantly adding new pieces into her life, but rarely subtracting the trivial details that overwhelm her. Eliminating all the supplemental aspects of the human experience, Jiang focused on the fundamental composition of all humans, the body. Her piece, "Sanctuary," depicts x-rays of human

organs bursting with flowers and butterflies. She hopes that the piece emphasizes that our bodies are sanctuaries and our health should be a priority.

Another piece, "Blindfolds," criticizes the concept that luxury goods are the ticket to the fashion world. Jiang expressed that the current fashion trend which promotes the pursuit of luxury brands largely distorts how we perceive and are perceived by the world — our identity is often defined by the way we dress. The subject in the artwork is wrapped by brand tapes, suggesting that

our vision in fashion is often manipulated and limited by brand names and societal standards; the boxes that the subject stacks in their head represent the incorporation of others' judgement into one's own identity.

"The desire toward a sense of belonging and acceptance by society blind us from expressing our true selves. We need to tear the blindfolds that have been blocking us from our inner selves," said Jiang.

Elena Zhang may be reached at ezhang24@choate.edu

WINTER CONCERT MAKES MUSIC THROUGH A SCREEN



Photo courtesy of the Choate Arts Department

Virtual and in-person String and Symphony Orchestra members recorded their parts for the Winter Music Concert.

By **Lauren Kee '24**

Copy Editor

From the playful and lighthearted to the delicate and graceful, the Winter Concert indulged the Choate community with its yearly performance on Friday, March 26. At the end of every winter term, the Winter Concert showcases the hard work of music students and faculty. This year, instead of gathering in Colony Hall, the Winter Concert was virtual, offering recordings of performances made both in-person and virtually.

To kick off the 55-minute program, the Jazz Ensemble performed three pieces under the guidance of Jazz Ensemble Director Mr. Matt McLean. Then, Mr. Gene Wie, the Instrumental Ensembles Director, conducted the combined String and Symphony Orchestras in performing "Carnival of the Animals" by Camille Saint-Saëns and "Adoration" by Florence Price. An array of vocal and instrumental performances by Arts Concentration musicians concluded the performance.

Leading up to the concert, Mr. Wie prepared a computer-generated backing track for orchestra students to practice

with. He used sample libraries of live recordings by professional musicians to put the track together on Logic Pro, an audio-editing software. He plans to continue using these tracks so that musicians are able to listen to a piece before going into rehearsal.

String Orchestra violinist Emeka Nwogugu '23 said that his biggest challenge while preparing for the concert was learning and perfecting the pieces in a short amount of time, especially after a break from in-person rehearsals due to remote learning. "We were having a hard time playing the whole piece at once, so we recorded it section by section for the concert. We would practice a section twice, and Mr. Wie would record our third run-through," Nwogugu said.

During the recording of the concert, string and percussion musicians gathered in Colony Hall to record live. Mr. Wie used two types of microphones for the large group recordings — the cardioid condenser, which captures the overall sound of the orchestra effectively, and the ribbon microphone, which can better record instruments with higher frequencies including flute and violin. He also set up

cameras throughout Colony Hall to record videos of the students.

This videotape was then sent to wind, brass, and remote musicians, who recorded their parts while listening to the recording of their in-person cohort through their headphones. "I set up my phone or iPad about four or five feet away and started playing as I normally would," said Sarah Hudson '21, a trombone player in both the Jazz Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra.

While the Symphony Orchestra performance comprised of a combination of individual and in-person group recordings, students in the Jazz Ensemble recorded their parts individually in the PMAC Recital Hall in December. Their instruments, predominantly wind and brass, prevented them from gathering due to Covid-19 protocols. The wind and brass musicians played along to an audiotape recorded by the rhythm section of the ensemble, including the piano, double bass, and drums.

In post-production, Mr. Wie used Logic Pro to mix the audio from in-person group recordings, remote students who only submitted audio files, and those who submitted both audio and video recordings. "Mix-

ing audio is all about being able to make a good judgement on how a piece would sound best when all the parts are combined," Mr. Wie said.

Mr. Wie made corrections to fix small blemishes in pitch, balance, and timing. However, he refrained from over-engineering the recording. "As advanced as our ensembles are, we are still a high school orchestra. We shouldn't be hiding the fact that there will sometimes be mistakes in a live performance," he said.

The video clips of more than 60 musicians were edited with Final Cut Pro, a video-editing software. "The videos weren't exactly timed with the audio, because my focus was on making the audio sound good, even if the visual experience wasn't exactly perfect," he said. "However, software tools now are better than they've ever been before. I am using tools that can adjust videos frame by frame so they are as in sync as they can be."

"I really hope to be able to perform live in the future," Nwogugu said. "If not, I see us doing a recording again and it being a huge success because we know how to manage it now."

Lauren Kee may be reached at lkee24@choate.edu

THE TRUTH OF THE EARTH

By **Audrey Lim '23**

They stab the earth,
Those cold, metal-souled sticks of iron,
Which hold up our vineyards
And towers but penetrate the ground,
Knife-wound after bullet-wound.
The weeds are signs of despair
And desperation,
Crawling out from shadows and dirt and
Tumbling over each other in an attempt
To cry out, "Stop, stop!"
But with deaf ears and
A blind eye, we rip the weeds
Out of the earth that slips further
Everyday from the sun.
We rip the weeds away so that
They may not "poison" factory flowers
And metal mountains.
No one can be called innocent anymore.
Squirrels burrow under
Yet we dig them up and wave
Eviction notices in their frantic black eyes.
The sea boils, the sun
Mixes with the moon,
But we don't notice.
It's a terrifying thing, the
World is. The machine world, I mean.
Grey and sour and stupid in its ignorance among
The shadow of humaneness, glued to the
Ground but barely, waiting horribly
For a gust of manmade wind to sweep
The beauty and nakedness of a mind down into the
Underworld, with all the other
Monsters made real by imagination.

Magic still exists, in
Birdsong and deer hooves, living next to
The malice of men's metal minds
That dream of unreal and impossible worlds.



Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

COVID-19 UPENDS RECRUITING



Photo courtesy of Vas Konachenkov

Golf prospect Vas Konachenkov '22 demonstrates his swing in a video sent to coaches.

By **Naomi Fleisch '22**
Staff Reporter

The cancellation of sports seasons over the past year has left many high school athletes stressed over the college recruitment process. Dead periods, in which college coaches cannot host or visit prospective athletes, were extended for most sports due to Covid-19 guidelines. This put extra pressure on aspiring collegiate athletes who were unable to make in-person connections with coaches. Additional stress was added when the NCAA announced that collegiate athletes would be given an additional year of athletic eligibility, limiting many roster spots.

Fortunately for Choate students, some of this stress was alleviated when Choate announced that a limited spring sports season would take place this year. This is the first time Choate students will compete in interscholastic competitions since the winter of 2020. Though the season may look different than in years past, athletes are thankful and excited to be able to compete, especially those who are going through the recruiting process.

Dylan Allen '22, Co-Captain of Girls' Varsity Lacrosse, is one of many athletes at Choate navigating through this year's unprecedented recruiting period. When asked about how athletes have been attempting to demonstrate their skills to colleges, Allen said that a lot of schools "care equally as much about academics as they do athletics, so this past year has been the perfect opportunity to focus on grades and other activities outside of your sport. A lot of athletes also took this dead period to work on building their strength, skills, and endurance."

With games now being recorded, this season also gives athletes the chance to create highlight reels. Film has always been an important part of the recruiting process but holds extra weight this year because college coaches cannot watch prospective athletes in person.

Some sports, such as golf, have an untraditional recruiting experience as their film does not necessarily have to come from a game. Co-Captain of Boys' Varsity Golf Vas Konachenkov '22 noted, "I usually send out emails to coaches with information about

myself, impressive results from tournaments or competitions, as well as videos of my swing."

This year's extended dead period also posed challenges to athletes who had offers from multiple schools. Charlie Katarincic '22, an offensive tackle on Varsity Football, recently committed to play football at West Virginia University after receiving offers from The University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, and Eastern Carolina University.

"Even though I could not do normal visits at schools, I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted in college before the process picked up for me," said Katarincic. "The schools also did an awesome job with virtual tours, and since WVU is close to home for me, I was able to drive through campus, which was super nice."

Katarincic's advice to students still going through the process is to "trust your work ethic and know that recruitment will come if you are working as hard as you can, even if this year looks different."

Naomi Fleisch may be reached at nfleisch22@choate.edu

New Guidelines Offer Games to Some

By **Sam Anastasio '23**
Copy Editor

As of March 1, Choate entered into a league with four other Connecticut prep schools — Hotchkiss, Loomis, Westminster, and Taft — to start the spring season. The past year has been a public health nightmare for sports around the world. Last fall, Connecticut public schools competed against one another, but the rise in cases during winter made games challenging. Although there are still no Founders League or New England Championship games, the new agreement gives Choate teams a chance to compete safely.

The compact between the five schools sets forth strict guidelines: masks must be worn throughout competitions, coaches and athletes must be tested bi-weekly, and specific mitigation measures must be employed during games. As a result, teams such as Girls' Varsity

Water Polo will not be allowed to play interscholastic matches. "It is obviously devastating to not be able to compete for the second year in a row, but it just gives us all the more time to get better as a team," said Co-Captain Martha Chessen '22. "It definitely will motivate us even more for next year," added Co-Captain Macie Simmons '22.

Since the other four schools in the league do not have boys' volleyball teams, no volleyball matches will occur. Sailing is also docked for the term. Ultimate Frisbee did not have a match last weekend but does have games scheduled against Hotchkiss. Both Boys' and Girls' Track and Field have virtual meets scheduled against the four other schools in the league. Sports with JV and thirds teams will practice daily and have intrasquad scrimmages throughout the spring.

Practices have also changed significantly. Teams are now able to participate in zero-contact drills and conditioning.

Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont's executive order released on March 19 cleared all sports to play full schedules with loosened restrictions. During the previous two terms, sports weren't allowed to travel off-campus for practice, but this spring Crew will be able to row on Lake Quannipaug, and Boys' and Girls' Golf will practice at the Wallingford Country Club.

Choate has announced that, although after school practices are mandatory for students, interscholastic matches are optional. In order to compete, parents and students must sign a waiver.

Last Saturday, April 3, was the first interscholastic competition since March, 2020. All teams competed against Westminster, with the boys' teams traveling away and girl's teams playing at home.

Sam Anastasio may be reached at sanastasio23@choate.edu



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Despite loosened restrictions, teams such as Boys' Varsity Volleyball remain without games.

Boars Take on Westminster in First Games of the Spring Season

By **Oliver Howard '23**
Reporter

Girls' Varsity Tennis

Girls' Varsity Tennis faced Westminster on the courts in multiple sets. "It was so much fun to be able to hit against another school again after more than a year. As a team, we played really hard and started off the season super well," said Isabella Mandell '21. A combination of individual skill and determination brought Choate the win, 10-2.

Girls' Varsity Lacrosse

For their first game of the season, Girls' Varsity Lacrosse played Westminster on the turf. "It was a great first game.

The goalies played amazingly and the energy was super high because of the fans cheering," said Blake Bertero '22. Boars' scoring was carried by Co-Captain Natalie Schwab '21 and Brooke Edwards '22. Unfortunately, the team's efforts were not enough to secure the win.

Varsity Softball

The Varsity Softball team hosted Westminster for their first scrimmage of the season. The Boars' defense was strong throughout the game — starting pitcher Marie Hamill '23 put up double-digit strikeouts and only one walk; Captain and center fielder Lauren Ben-Ezra '22 tracked down a ball to the warning track; and

catcher Lexington Secreto '21 was a brick wall behind the plate. Throughout the game, the team made solid contact with the ball, but some errors put the Boars behind. Hamill noted, "Hopefully, we carry the energy to the next game and keep the positivity going with support from the coaching staff. I think this team has a lot of potential." Unfortunately, Westminster came away with the win, 4-3.

Girls' Varsity Golf

Girls' Varsity Golf teed up their first match against Westminster this Saturday. Summer Xu '22 said, "In our team we have an awesome dynamic. The girls always support each other, compliment-

ing each other's shots and providing each other with helpful advice." Team cohesion and skillful play earned the Boars a win, 5-0.

Boys' Varsity Tennis

Boys' Varsity Tennis beat Westminster on the road in their first outing of the season. Choate won four of its six doubles matches, with strong performances from top ladder players John Henderson '23 and William Ji '23, who were able to navigate their way to an 8-1 victory. In singles, Choate dominated, winning all 13 of their matches. Julian Schirnding-Yach '21, Ryan Feldman '21, Jack Benavides '22, and Ian Detoc '22 all had particularly impressive individual showings.

Boys' Varsity Lacrosse

Boys' Varsity Lacrosse was the first to compete last Saturday, taking on Westminster on the road in the early afternoon. Despite goals from Braydon Ellis '22, Nick Sokolosky '22, Benjamin Wable '23, and Owen Tunney '24, the Boars couldn't keep up with the transitional play from Westminster, and lost, 17-4.

Varsity Baseball

Boys' Baseball went to Westminster for its opening game. The Boars came out with a hot start, putting up five runs in the first three innings. Grant Collins '21 consistently found the gap, putting up two hits and an RBI. John Rhodes '21 hit a bomb to left-center in the first for an RBI triple. How-

ever, Westminster scored consistently, and the Boars fell, 12-5.

Boys' Varsity Golf

Boys' Varsity Golf traveled to compete at Westminster's sunny course. The greens were faster than those at Choate's home course on the Wallingford Country Club, which rattled the team. Winds of 10-15 mph made consistent shots a challenge. Co-Captains Vas Konachenkov '22 and Sean Kish '21, along with newcomer Reece Montrone '23 led the team with strong shots. Unfortunately, the golfers were ultimately outmatched by Westminster's team, losing 6-0.

Oliver Howard may be reached at ohoward23@choate.edu



Photo courtesy of Niki Gummadi

Girls' Varsity Tennis player Celine Pirard '21 serves against Westminster.



Photo courtesy of Westminster Youtube

Boys' Varsity Baseball pitcher Bo Georgen '22 warms up at the top of an inning.