



## STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS BRING NEW INITIATIVES

By **Fiona Fu '25**  
Associate Editor

The 2023-2024 Student Council has been hard at work over the past three terms, bringing up student concerns and initiatives in their weekly meetings and to the Administration's attention. So far, the Student Council has focused on improving transparency through being more active on their Instagram account, launching a website, and giving more frequent updates during School and Form Meetings. With student wellness as a central focus, their proposals have spanned from academic to quality-of-life improvements. Here is a rundown of what the Student Council has worked on throughout the past term.

### Visitation Policy Revision:

Problems with the existing Visitation Policy have been discussed for a while now, and the Student Council has been actively working with the Administration on ways it could be reformed.

"We hope to have a revised Visitation Policy that will allow for more fluency with how House Mentors give visitation and how we can maybe use things like Reach and [Microsoft] Teams to get visitation, which will make it easier for a lot of students," Student Body President Amanda Benneh '24 said.



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

Although the initiative is still in the early conversational stage, Fifth-form Representatives Robert Haik '25 and Jeremiah Olubowale '25 have met with Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 and Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residential Life Mr. Pat Dennehy, and more senior officers are expected to get involved soon.

### Standardized Test

#### Corrections:

Test correction policies across different classes and academic departments can be vastly different, causing discrepancies and confu-

sion for students. Sixth-form Representative Tariq El Mammann '24 and Upperclassmen Day Student Representative Andra Ionescu '24 have been working on a proposal to make test correction policies more standardized between departments. The two have met with Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine to discuss this initiative further.

### Grade Transparency:

Another issue students have brought up in regards to the academic experience at Choate has been how teachers are currently not allowed to reveal a student's

overall grade percentage. The Administration reasoned that having the grade readily available may cause stress. However, a proposal for students to be able to view their average grade on Canvas, initiated by Lowerclassmen Day Student Representative Zaki Shamsi '26, has been in progress throughout the year. The new proposal aims to increase grade transparency and allow students to track their progress throughout the year.

"We've been going back and forth with academic department heads, the deans, Ms. Devine, and

[Head of Student and Academic Life] Ms. Jenny Elliott," Shamsi said. "Currently, they're looking for a pivot. So they're very much for the rationale behind the proposal to improve students' mental health, to allow more transparency, and things like that. What they've said is that they want to maybe find possible counter solutions."

While the School will not reveal overall grade percentages on Canvas, Shamsi noted that both the Administration and the Student Council are determined to find other solutions.

### Convenience in St. John Hall:

Sometimes, it's the little things that make student life a lot easier. Fifth-form President Adam Fleischman '25 has reached out to relevant faculty about the possibility of adding more charging stations to the Student Activities Center (SAC) in St. John Hall and replacing the many advertising flyers for club and SAC events with televisions. These proposals are still in the early stages of development.

### Water Fountains in Dorms:

When it comes to water fountains, not all dorms are created equal. "A lot of dorms don't have water fountains," Fourth-form President Thandiwe Taylor '26 said. "Some of them have water fountains, but they're not filtered, so people don't use them."

To remedy this issue, Taylor is working on an initiative to have water fountains installed in every dorm. "We've been in conversation with people like Mr. Dennehy, and he's behind it, but there's a sustainability piece," she said. As such, she has been talking to Kohler Environmental Center Program Director Mr. Joe Scanio to ensure that the proposal aligns with Choate's sustainability goals.

### Athletic Uniforms:

Student Council has also received a myriad of complaints

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## ETHICS BOWL WINS BIG AT RECENT COMPETITIONS



Photo Courtesy of Racquel Welcome '24

Choate Ethics Bowl competes at the Connecticut Regional Competition on January 27.

By **Anya Shah '25**  
Associate Editor

Choate Ethics Bowl has hit its stride this year, winning both the National High School Ethics Bowl Connecticut Regional Competition on January 27 and the Divisional Competition on February 7.

Led by President Ava McClatchie '24, Ethics Bowl spends its club meetings discussing ethical dilemmas and preparing for cases to be presented in competition. There, teams deliver a five-minute presentation on a dilemma before engaging in a debate-style crossfire that allows the judge and opposing team to ask questions. Each team participates in six rounds of ethical debate, and the judges grant points to teams based on the merit of their arguments. The top two teams then proceed to the final round of competition.

"The point is having the most thorough argument rather than picking one side and dying on that hill [since] a lot of times with moral stances, ... they all have their own flaws," McClatchie said. "So, the point of Ethics Bowl is to entertain and describe how you would apply these different frameworks, which one takes precedence, and how you apply it in the modern context."

In preparation for the regional competition, where a total of 18 teams competed, Choate students prepared 16 ethics cases on topics such as serial killer shows and nuclear weapons. "All of the cases are extraordinarily relevant. They're talking about artificial intelligence; they're talking about true crime; they're talking about books and arguments that people actually think about daily," McClatchie said. "So to be able to actually articulate these really interesting ideas I find fascinating."

After the 12 Choate students arrived at the regional competition at the University of Connecticut and previewed the day's events, they competed in five rounds of ethical debate, winning consistently until they reached the finals, where they won against Hotchkiss for the first time in three years. "Facing them again, all of us laughed and shook hands because we've seen each other before," McClatchie said. "After winning, it was especially momentous for me and Racquel [Welcome '24] because we've done this three times before."

Ethics Bowl Junior Officer Mira Gilchrist '25 shared, "We all put in a lot of work, dedicating about four hours a week before the competition. Having the whole team being really dedicated really helped us perform well this time."

The divisional competition was held on Zoom, where the Choate team won against a team from Rhode Island. They discussed a case about the property rights of artificial intelligence models. "We prepared for in-person competitions, so we had a week to adapt to the Zoom format, which was definitely a learning curve," McClatchie said. "But, my Ethics Bowl career started on Zoom during the pandemic, so this was a full circle moment."

Ethics Bowl's winning streak in recent competitions results from the time and effort they have put into competitions over the past few years. Next up, a team of six Choate students is headed to the National High School Ethics Bowl Championship at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in April 2024.

"I just love the people that I do Ethics Bowl with ... I think everyone should do Ethics Bowl," Welcome said. "The cases we get are super, super interesting; we get to talk about stuff that doesn't normally come up in casual conversations you're having with your friends."

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## Dr. Ethan Kross Helps Students Harness Their "Chatter"

By **Adrian Torres '25**  
Associate Editor

At School Meeting on January 30, Choate welcomed this year's E. Phillips Speaker and acclaimed psychologist, Dr. Ethan Kross, to teach the community about "chatter"—the inner voice inside a person's head. Dr. Kross, a professor at the University of Michigan and expert on emotion regulation, specializes in the study of how individuals can channel their inner voice to improve their lives. He is also the author of the best-selling book, *Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It*, which students had the opportunity to receive a signed copy of after the meeting.

In the spring of 2023, Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine began working on inviting Dr. Kross to inform the community of strategies to help combat mental health challenges. "One priority that the School has had is to think a lot about mental health and wellbeing on a lot of fronts," Ms. Devine said. "One of the ways that we've done that is bringing

major psychologists who are also researchers and who are really effective speakers to campus to talk about different ways of maintaining mental health."

After an introduction by Zainab Khokha '24, Dr. Kross began his speech by introducing the concept of "chatter," describing it as a "remarkable tool of the mind" that keeps our mind active and makes meaning out of life. However, he later explained that chatter can also create problems: chatter can make it difficult to think and perform, absorb one's attention and energy, induce chronic stress, and cause them to push others away.

Instead of silencing chatter, Dr. Kross advocated for harnessing it through mental tools. The first tool he suggested was distanced self-talk, which entails speaking to yourself in the third person. Since humans tend to take others' advice more often than their own, he argued that tricking the mind into believing it was taking someone else's advice would help solve problems more effectively.

Next, he recommended the "mental time travel" tool, which

involves viewing a current problems from the perspective of your younger or older self. For example, if you wake up hysterical in the middle of the night, Dr. Kross recommended time travel to the morning. Remembering yourself with a cup of coffee in hand and the sun shining, your worries shouldn't seem as overwhelming.

Dr. Kross shared relationship tools that students can employ to assist those around them with controlling their chatter, such as expressing empathy and validation while offering constructive advice. He also gave students environmental tools to quiet down their inner voice, such as organizing your personal spaces, creating daily rituals, or taking a moment to appreciate the outdoors.

Students benefited from Dr. Kross's strategies for managing chatter. "I personally took away that small things help a lot. Even if they're not very big, they can create a meaningful change," Nicholas Huber '25 said.

Khokha also left the meeting feeling inspired. "I really took away the fact that venting doesn't really help. I'm someone who likes to use venting as my outlet if I'm really upset about something or there's a lot of chatter that I should get out." She will try to apply Dr. Kross's strategies to help her better manage her own chatter.

To conclude his speech, Dr. Kross explained the importance of finding the tools that work best for each individual when managing their unique chatter, with which students resonated.

"I also really appreciated how he emphasized that the practices he gave us to manage chatter were not supposed



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Dr. Ethan Kross, this year's E. Phillips Speaker, speaks in Colony Hall.

### With Love, 117

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Evelyn Kim '25,  
Joe Yan '26, and  
Emma Schwerin '26



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

**GOODBYE FROM**  
**THE 117TH MASTHEAD**



## SPANISH TABLE OFFERS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOR STUDENTS

By **Ellie Porter '25**  
*Staff Reporter*

Learning a language can be a long and difficult process. However, immersing oneself into the language can be an effective way to boost practice. During lunch and G block every Tuesday, students can practice their Spanish at a designated table in the dining hall.

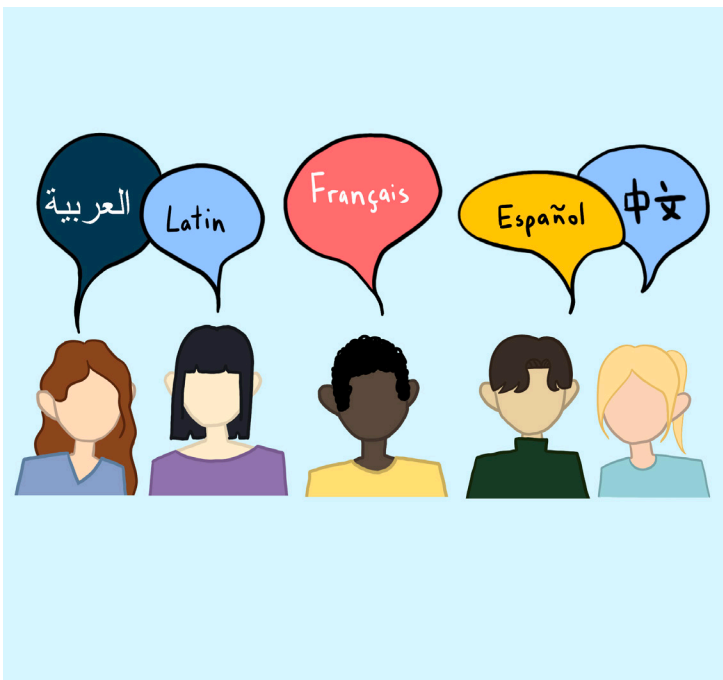
The Spanish table, hosted by Language Media Lab Supervisor Mrs. Gloria Baldelli, Language Department Head Mr. Charlie Fuentes, Nev Rathburn '26, and Majo Soria '26, is located at one table in the sophomore and junior section of the dining hall. Rathbun believes that studying a language in a classroom alone cannot prepare learners for the everyday use of the language. Instead of a regular Spanish class environment or tutoring session, the experience guided by conversation leaders is more interactive and better resembles real-life exchanges.

“Learning a language within the classroom is very different from getting a more holistic experience,” Rathbun said. She hopes that the Spanish table will help solve this issue.

Mrs. Baldelli said, “In a tutoring situation, you feel maybe a little uncomfortable, but this is just fun. You have lunch and learn.”

Similarly, Soria seeks to create more opportunities for students to practice their language abilities. As a native Spanish speaker, she hopes to promote her culture and instill more natural, fluid speaking skills in her peers at the Spanish table. “I feel helpful to other students’ understanding, and that makes me happy,” Soria said.

At the language table, the conversation leaders adapt to the students’ level and topics of interest. Spanish Teacher Ms. Azucena Alvarez Alonso, who has participated in many of the lunches, explained, “Anything can happen, but the program is for everyone.”



Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

In the future, French and Spanish Teacher Dr. Donna Canada-Smith and the rest of the Language Department hope to expand the program to include French, Chinese, and Arabic.

Spanish student Kristie Lu '26, who sat at the Spanish language table during lunch, said, “It was defi-

nately different from a traditional classroom experience. I felt more comfortable sharing and talking to them ... it helped me learn how to talk in Spanish and it pushed me out of my comfort zone.”

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## Wellness Committee Hosts Notion Workshop

By **Grace LaPlaca '25**  
*Associate Editor*

On February 7, the Wellness Committee hosted a workshop to teach students how to use Notion, an online organization app, in the Andrew Mellon Library. The program, which took place during an all-school break, was advertised on posters throughout campus and open to all members of the Choate community. The theme of the event, “Organize Your Life,” was relevant to not only the attendees, but also to the committee members hosting the event.

The program was led by Racquel Welcome '24, one of the leaders of the committee and an avid Notion user who keeps track of her assignments and personal life on her page. “I love it — especially as a senior with a lot of organizational skills that I wish I had when I was younger,” Welcome said. “I wanted to give people an opportunity to learn it.”

After sharing why she uses Notion, Welcome showed attendees her Notion setup and walked through the process of building it.

Welcome hoped students could understand that organization should not be boring. Notion allows users to fully customize their page to fit their style and needs, making the process more enjoyable. “Organizing on my planner helps me relax,” she said. “It’s a way for me to be productive without having to do schoolwork, and it keeps me from just scrolling on my phone.”

The event was part of a larger collaboration between the Library and the Wellness Committee to create programming inspired by the theme, “Organize Your Life.” In light of Mental Health Awareness Month in January, the Library’s book displays were centered around wellness. The displays also featured books, films, TV series, podcasts, and apps the committee recommended to aid student wellness.

“Winter term often feels crunched for students,” Assistant Director of the Library Ms. Sam Nelson said. “So, highlighting wellbeing and tools to make their lives easier can be helpful.”

Ms. Nelson reflected on the significance of the event and its theme of organization. “We settled on that concept because we all recognize that being unorganized is a significant cause of stress,” she said. “The best way to alleviate that stress is to offer ways for students to get organized.”

For students feeling overwhelmed and disorganized, Welcome emphasized the impact Notion has had on her life. “You have everything in one place,” she said. “It’s accessible on your phone, laptop, and iPad, and every widget and feature makes you feel so productive — and so cool.”

Attendee Jai Midha '27 took away the importance of time management and how Notion can help facilitate that. “I learned how to organize all my resources into one application to make starting work and knowing what to work on very easy and simple,” he said.

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Photo courtesy of Ms. Sam Nelson

Students learn about organization from the Wellness Committee.

## RECAPPING THE 23-24 STUDENT COUNCIL’S PROPOSALS

Continued from Page 1

about athletic uniforms, from issues in sizing, to style, to quality. As a result, Fourth Form Representative Dominique Welcome '26 and Taylor presented a proposal targeting this issue.

“We talked to [Assistant Coordinator of Athletic Operations and Head Equipment Manager] Mr. Justin Whittaker and some staff at the Athletic Center, and now there’s an initiative to get some new uniforms and equipment over the summer,” Taylor said.

### Satellite Sandwich Stations:

Another initiative geared towards athletes is easier access to food on game days. Haik, who is behind the proposal, said he wants to implement satellite sandwich stations at the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center before Wednesday games, which would “ensure sustainability and make sure people eat what they want to eat” instead of what SAGE Dining Services provides.

“This will most likely happen next year. I’ve been talking to [Director of Athletics] Mr. Roney Eford a lot about this initiative and Mr. Gilyard,” Haik said. We are getting it sorted out, but it’s just simply logistics.”

### Q&A Format for the Student Council Presidential Debate:

The current structure for electing Student Council Presidents, where candidates give a short speech at School Meeting and have a Q&A session in the dining hall the night prior, makes it difficult for students to directly compare each candidate, Haik said. His proposal to combine the two and have a live debate during School Meeting would allow students to get a better idea of what exactly each candidate stands for. The proposal has been passed and will occur in the next election cycle.

### Speaker Feedback Form:

Choate students hear from a wide variety of speakers throughout their time at the School. Al-

though each speaker brings their own experience and unique insight, some resonate better with the student body than others. In order to hear directly from the students on the effectiveness of each speaker, Student Body Vice-President Cassatt Boatwright '24 and Adam Fleischman '25 passed a proposal for students to receive a feedback form after each talk. The results of the feedback forms will be evaluated by the Director of Institutional Research Ms. Carissa Casey.

Boatwright added, “We’re hoping to connect it with other schools so that we can share our data in terms of feedback from different speakers, so we can bring in speakers that we know are going to do well and can speak well to high school audiences.”

### Miscellaneous tasks:

Aside from these initiatives, the Student Council was also involved in the process of deciding on the new weekly schedule for the 2023-2024 school year and the ongoing dining hall renovations.

In addition, they are working on establishing connections with student councils at peer schools to facilitate the exchange of ideas.

“I think we had a lot of progress, more than we have in the past few years,” Benneh said, reflecting on her tenure as Student Body President. “We [wanted to] make sure that we could leave a good starting point for the next council to go off of and continue what we’ve been doing.”

“The previous [council] has gained some incredible momentum for us to capitalize on,” Haik, the Student Body President-elect, said. “I’m excited to continue implementing impactful policies that will benefit all students.” Haik recommended that students visit the Student Council website — which can be found on the Choate portal — to stay up-to-date with progress on proposals, as well as submit their own ideas.

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## 2024 E. Phillips Speaker Addresses Choate



Photo courtesy of Ms. Tiffany Rivera

Dr. Ethan Kross dines with students in the Abnormal Psychology and Advanced Topics in Psychology classes following his presentation.

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to be universal,” Khokha said. Dana Tan '25 agreed, saying, “I think that everyone has their own habits and personalities so managing your chatter really comes down to what fits best into your lifestyle.”

Reflecting on Dr. Kross’s visit, Ms. Devine hopes students found the talk helpful and relevant. “My primary hope is that students had takeaways that felt lasting, applicable, and meaningful ... that people felt it was a meaningful and worthy way to spend their time during a School Meeting,” she said.

Following the lecture, students in the Abnormal Psychology and Advanced Topics in Psychology classes attended a

luncheon with Dr. Kross in Sally Hart Lodge. They discussed overpathologizing abnormal behavior and extended their conversation about chatter. “It was a good opportunity to ask him follow-up questions,” Abnormal Psychology student Lindsay Hong '25 said. “Someone asked a question about his book being used as an intervention for managing stress.”

Dr. Kross’s presentation opened doors to more discussions around mental health at the School. “I think his presence inspired a lot of curiosity and eagerness to talk more about a lot of different topics,” Ms. Devine said.

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## STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN ANNUAL WASHINGTON, D.C., TRIP

By **Eliana Li '26**  
and **Elle Hardy '26**  
*Staff Reporter and Reporter*

Twenty-six students traveled from Wallingford to Washington, D.C., on the annual U.S. Government and Politics II trip (Gov. II). From January 28-30, trip attendees met members of Congress, other government officials, and Choate alumni. They also received a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Gov. II is a single-term course that examines the form and function of the American government. Students learn about the effects of political culture and opinion in society and explore the media’s role in shaping and implementing policy. Near the end of the course, students have the opportunity to see what they have learned in real-life in the field trip to Washington, D.C..

“Meeting the people who do the work of the nation in the place where the work gets done is so different than reading a tweet, or scanning a video, or even simulating a branch of the government,” Gov. II teacher Mr. Jonas Akins said.

In Gov. II, students analyzed Gautam Mukunda’s *Picking Presidents* and discussed how to best make an

informed vote for President, which served as a reference on the trip. “In D.C., we met with several government officials who held opposing viewpoints on the likely candidates for the 2024 presidential election,” Emily Levin '25 said. “It was interesting to hear these conflicting perspectives in the context of Mukunda’s book and then fun to debate them afterwards with other students on the bus.”

Additionally, students met and conversed with several Choate alumni, including the Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of State Mr. Chris Wendell '96, Congresswoman Ms. Stacey Plaskett '84, Foreign Service Officer Mr. Stewart Wight '98, and Political Analyst Ms. Raven Gaddy '11. They also watched the House of Representatives in session, toured the Library of Congress, and listened in on a panel with counter-terrorism and intelligence officials. “The fact that the panelists and guests were speaking off-the-record allowed for much more vibrant discussion,” Zoe Dieringer '25 said.

Students appreciated the expertise of the congressmen and senators they met. “We had so many incredible meetings, but our conversation with

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro was by far my favorite,” Elia Ahmadi '24 said. “Rep. DeLauro was passionate, inspiring, and really challenged us to think about the changes we want to see in government.”

Celeste Shattuck '25 particularly enjoyed the discussions surrounding legislation and appreciated the questions her peers asked the government officials. “It was interesting to hear what kinds of issues and pieces of legislation were important to them, and I gained a lot of insight into what it is like to sit on committees and work to pass bills. Everyone in our

group asked really great questions to all the speakers, which I think made the experience even more valuable,” she said.

The trip provided the chance for students to envision what the future may have in store for them. “Seeing the halls of power in-person lets students imagine that they might, themselves, someday be walking down them again,” Mr. Akins said. “This was a great trip, as good as any of the other five I’ve been on.”

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Photo courtesy of Anya Shah '25

Students explore Washington, D.C., during a class field trip.



Brewing Innovation at Green Kettle Coffee



Photo by Rachel Fan '27/The Choate News

Green Kettle Coffee decorates their interior for Valentine's Day.

By Rachel Fan '27  
Staff Reporter

Green Kettle Coffee is a cozy coffee shop located in downtown Wallingford. Entering its second year of operation, the cafe is introducing a new mobile espresso cart, a latte art printer, and a Valentine's Day menu special.

The mobile espresso cart, which will make its debut this March, is equipped with an espresso machine, grinder, and other essential tools that will enable Green Kettle to sell coffee outside and at various spots throughout town. "We're excited to embark on this journey to bring our love of coffee even closer to the community in all-new and exciting ways," owner Ms. Kristen Gilbride said.

Another one of the cafe's new attractions is a latte art printer, already impressing customers with latte art to top off their favorite foamy beverages. "Our new latte art printer adds a personal touch to every cup, whether it's a portrait of your pet or a special message," Ms. Gilbride explained.

Green Kettle Coffee also creates seasonal menus to match the time of year. This Valentine's Day, Green Kettle offered six special drinks, such as the "Ride or Chai" and the "Cupid's Bow Latte." The "My Honey Bun Cold Brew" is one of four new concoctions, complete with a cinnamon bun cold foam and topped with a personalized printed picture.

"We really wanted to create a menu that celebrated love but was also great for us in getting the word out on our passion towards innovating coffee," Ms. Gilbride said.

Moreover, Green Kettle Coffee offered a coffee and chocolate special in conjunction with Donovan's Family Confections. "Working with Ms. Katie Donovan allowed us to tailor-make the perfect flavors to marry with each drink from our Valentine's Day menu," Ms. Gilbride said.

Due to the snowstorm on February 13, Green Kettle's eagerly awaited Queens and Cake event, where customers can decorate cakes with their Valentine's message, was moved to the following Tuesday, February 20.

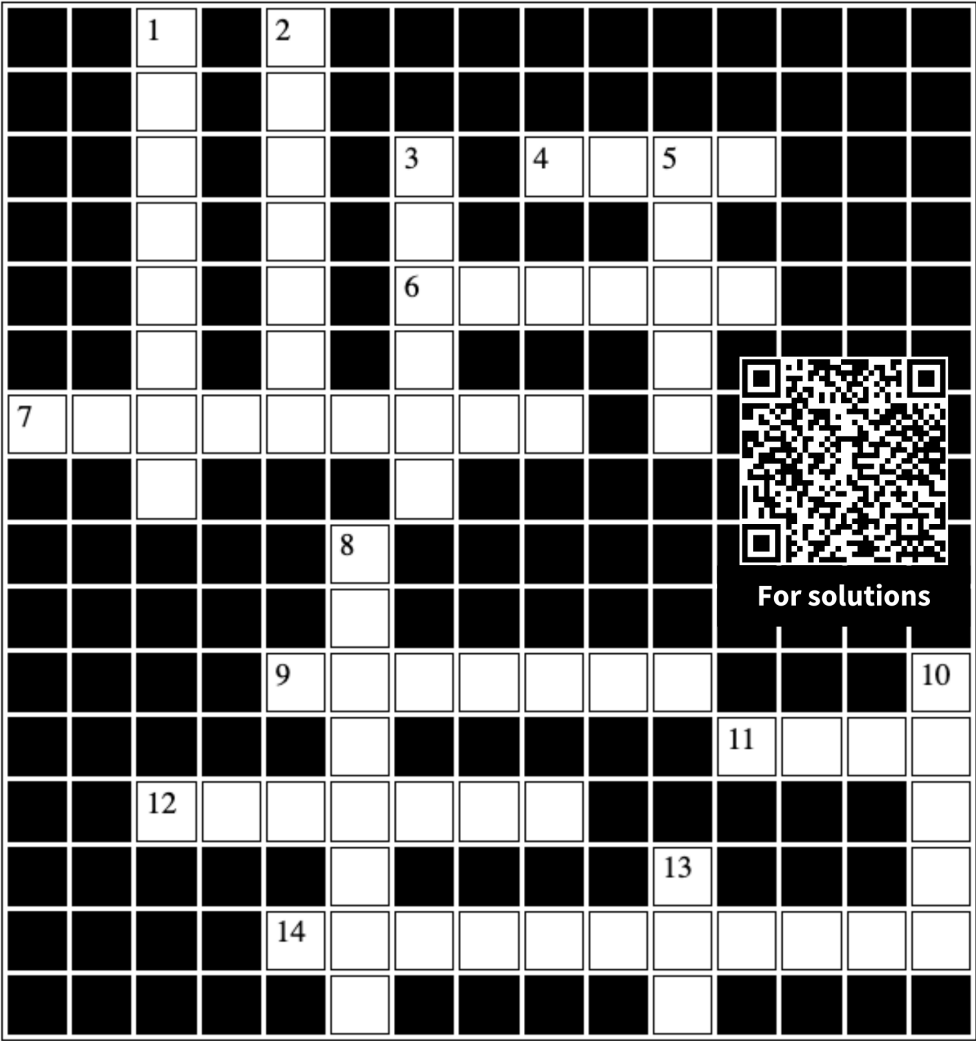
"While we've had to push Queens and Cake to next week, our excitement hasn't waned," Gilbride shared. "We're all looking forward to showcasing local talent and bringing people together over great coffee and cake."

The charm of Green Kettle Coffee lies in its vibrant atmosphere and unique offerings. Rebecca Huang '27, a regular Green Kettle customer, said, "The green color scheme and flower decor, with some relaxing background music, bring a nice cool vibe into the shop."

Green Kettle Coffee's new mobile espresso cart, latte art printer, and Valentine's Day menu highlight their passion for innovation and collaboration. With a diverse menu, charming atmosphere, and new offerings, this cafe is a must-visit in downtown Wallingford, and there is much more on the way.

"We are waiting for a lot of things, but we are buzzing about what will be coming," Ms. Gilbride said.

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Across

4. Faculty employ for speedy transport (wear helmet)  
6. Swift singer songwriter  
7. Asks where home is with poetry and stage lighting  
9. Gov students visit here where the work gets done  
11. She's on track to conquer the Seven Summits  
12. What we say to 117  
14. Innovative local cafe

Down

1. Maguire substitute  
2. Playing by ear pianist  
3. Digital planner, but make it fun  
5. Chatter expert  
8. From the balance beam to the diving board  
10. Spontaneous senior swimmer  
13. Football star but loyal to hockey

By Zainab Khokha '24

Clues from the crossword are related to articles published in this issue.

CHOATE PARTNERS WITH WALLINGFORD'S ROCK SPOT



Photo courtesy of Ernie Mok '25

Choate students visit Rock Spot Climbing for their winter afternoon activity.

By Constanza Aportela '24  
Reporter

In the heart of Wallingford is Rock Spot Climbing, where the walls are filled with colorful handholds that stretch to the ceiling. Located on 340 Quinnipiac Street, the gym is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.

According to Rock Spot Climbing's website, they offer "35 top rope stations, 14,000 square feet of climbing walls, and more than 60 boulder problems." The gym also provides a variety of programming, from youth climbing classes to various community events and competitions.

The Program Manager at Rock Spot Climbing Ms. Chloe Kirk said, "We're going to be doing a crate stacking competition in March. Any kind of programming that happens at the gym, I just make sure it's organized, staffed, and that everyone has a fun time climbing."

Rock Spot Climbing also hosts Choate students for their afternoon activity during the winter and spring terms. According to Rock Climbing Coach and Math teacher Mr. Jeremy Oliver, the sport started at Choate because of a "very generous donor who was really into rock climbing and the

collaborative community and culture surrounding it." Mr. Oliver continued, "He donated a whole bunch of money for Choate to build a climbing wall in the Maguire Gym."

Although the donated walls remain today, they were too time-consuming to maintain, so Choate partnered with Rock Spot Climbing. For two hours every Monday and Wednesday, students are given a gym membership and unlimited access to climbing to their hearts' content.

Rock climber Ernie Mok '25 appreciated the flexibility in climbing activities and options. "We don't really have a program or a guide, so we get to do whatever climbs we want and challenge ourselves in the best way possible," he said. "If I don't want to climb, there's a weights area there so I can do a gym workout."

Rock Spot Climbing is known among Choate students for its welcoming ambiance. Climber David Wang '24 noted, "The people that go there are really friendly and are always open to talking about boulders or problems with Choate kids." Additionally, he praised the gym's staff, especially the route setters — the people who design the walls — as they will occasionally walk around "ready to help"

anyone pondering the best way to tackle a tough wall.

Likewise, Mr. Oliver applauded the route setters. He said the setting style of the gym "lends itself to different people's styles" and is "easy so people can get into rock climbing and feel like they're making progress when they're new."

Mr. Oliver also values the collaborative nature of rock climbing and bouldering. "People become friends with people they would not have hung out with had it not been for rock climbing," he said. "You have to trust each other because sometimes a person is like 1,020 feet in the air, and then there's someone else sustaining their life with just a rope."

For those looking to visit Rock Spot Climbing, day pass rates are \$32, and the gym is open to walk-in customers at any experience level. "Anyone can rock climb. You don't necessarily need to have upper body strength," Ms. Kirk said. "Rock climbing is a really great way to both work your brain and your body because you have to figure out how to get from the bottom to the top."

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TEACH WALLINGFORD SPREADS THE LOVE

By Anthony Andrade '27  
Reporter

In the week leading up to Valentine's Day, members of the Teach Wallingford Club at Choate decided to spread love throughout town. On February 9, Choate students volunteered at Moses Y. Beach Elementary School's Valentine's Day dance.

Teach Wallingford President Ava Sklar '24 spoke to the coordinator of the school dance, reached out to club members, and recruited volunteers to assist with the festivities. She instructed the volunteers to help decorate, manage activities, and make the event lively.

The volunteers' specific tasks included taking pictures,

holding doors, creating heart decorations, and dancing with the children. Their efforts elicited positive reactions from volunteers, parents, and children alike.

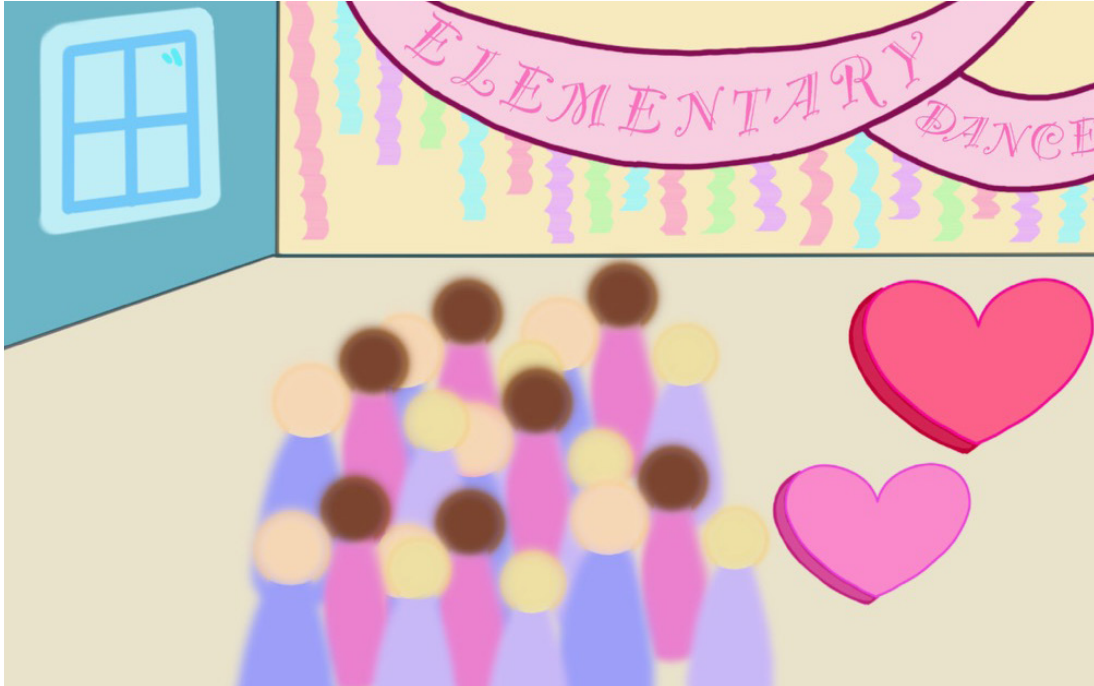
Volunteer Ray Wang '27, who was in charge of upkeeping the limbo station and assisting with additional tasks, said, "I'm happy for just helping out. I'm happy that I could contribute to the overall experience in some way."

Another volunteer, Nina Schaffer '26, applauded the final outcome. "It was really well put-together and run. The event ended up looking super nice, and I could tell the kids had a blast."

Volunteer Joy Gao '24 said the event made her appreciate event organizers and volunteers more. "The whole time, I was just thinking about moments in my life where I was having fun and not taking a moment to recognize all the hard work and time and effort that other people put in behind the scenes."

The Choate students who participated were also inspired to continue service work after the event. Wang said, "I took away the fact that I like to help out. And I should probably do this more."

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Graphic by Grace Ju '27/The Choate News







DON'T HAVE "BAD BLOOD" WITH TAYLOR SWIFT!

By **Steven Kee '27**  
*Opinions Staff Writer*

Recently, memes about Taylor Swift's use of eco-unfriendly transport, such as helicopters and private jets, have infiltrated many social media feeds. In a video I came across, a comedian said he was waiting for Swift to leave a bodega in New York City, then showed a video of a rocket taking off. Critics often denounce Taylor Swift for her use of private jets.

However, the reality of her environmental impact may not be as severe as some may think. Though not everyone may be a fan of her music, she has undoubtedly brought some positive change through her use of private air transport.

Many may believe that Taylor Swift's use of private jets has exacerbated climate change, but that is not entirely true. While the Carbon Watch Market's research shows that Swift's private jet emissions produced 576 times the average American's, to put it in perspective, there are 330 million Americans and 7.8 billion people worldwide. The carbon emissions of an extra 576 people will not send global temperatures spiking, never mind make the world fall apart. In the grand scheme of things, the impact of her private jet usage is relatively minuscule.

Moreover, in a report by Forbes, Swift has purchased



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

double the carbon credits necessary to offset her carbon emissions. The funds from the credits are used to fund efforts that combat deforestation. That means in addition to offsetting her carbon emissions, she offsets the emissions of 576 other Americans, which is a larger impact than what most people who are complaining about her habits can create.

Her actions do not have the consequences that social media portrays. Her contributions to combat climate change balance out the carbon she produces, and she has done more than needed to cover her carbon footprint and positively impact the environment.

Furthermore, Taylor Swift's impact on the environment is

slight compared to what she has done for state and local economies both within the U.S. and abroad. The term "Taylor-nomics," coined by *The Wall Street Journal*, describes the spending sprees brought forth by Swifties wherever Swift goes.

*The Washington Post* found that Swift generated \$5.7 billion in economic activity through the U.S. phase of her Eras Tour alone. This number considers hotels, tickets, and merchandise, among other expenses. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia reported a notable boost in hotel revenue from her concerts.

The Common Sense Institute estimated that Swift's tour brought \$140 million to

Colorado. The California Center for Jobs and the Economy estimated a \$320 million boost and the addition of 3,300 new jobs to the Los Angeles area from her tour. Mike Cahoe, the Chief Economist of the California Center, stated that the tour "was shot in the arm to a part of the regional economy that's really been lagging."

Swift's impact has extended to global economies. Sally Capp, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Australia, estimated that Swift's concerts in the city this month added \$780 million in economic value to the area. Air New Zealand reportedly had to add 14 more flights to accommodate the significant increase in demand for plane

tickets — 3,000 Swifties were rushing to book flights to Australia, where Swift will perform in February.

Swift's economic boost is so large that some governments have warned of temporary inflation — because hotels and other services do not keep the inflated prices year-round, prices eventually drop and the shock is temporary. Chan Chun Sing, the Minister of Education of Singapore, refused to grant a holiday to students to allow them to attend the concert out of concern that it may further fuel inflation.

Swift has helped revive the tourism industry after Covid-19 and continues to drive global economies on all levels, gen-

erating much-needed spending. Through ticket sales, hotel bookings, food and beverage consumption, and other purchases, the Eras Tour has significantly boosted economic activity across the board.

All this economic activity is only possible through her use of private air transport. With over 281 million followers on Instagram, over 104 million listeners on Spotify every month, and 53% of Americans identifying as Taylor Swift fans, she is one of the most popular musicians in the world. Flying on commercial flights is not an option due to security concerns, so the only way that Swift can efficiently and safely get to her concert venues is by private jet.

Moreover, Swift is able to hold concerts that generate hundreds of millions of dollars due to private air transportation. Her efforts to offset her carbon footprint and the significant boost she has provided to economies worldwide only further justify her use of private jets. Many often jump to conclusions to criticize her based on her use of private jets but fail to realize that she has done more than necessary to compensate for her negligible environmental pollution, while they ignore the economic benefits she has brought from flying on private transport.

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WHY POLITICAL CANDIDATES SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO "SUSPEND" CAMPAIGNS



Graphic by Kate Park '27/The Choate News

By **Nilan Kathir '25**  
*Associate Editor*

On January 21, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, seen as former President Donald Trump P'oo's closest competitor for the Republican Party's presidential nominee, suspended his campaign, thereby dropping out of the 2024 election.

Campaigns, their subsequent need for fundraising, and the usage of those funds have evolved into a controversial topic in recent years. Cases of corruption and misuse, such as New York Mayor Eric Adams's use of straw donors and Missouri House Speaker Dean Plocher's falsification of expense reports, mark a clear need for substantive change.

Despite regulations on how campaign contributions can be spent, a candidate who has dropped out of an election does not lose their fiscal ability to raise money, spend it, or give it to another candidate; it only means that they are no longer on the ballot. Candidates who have exited campaigns often use the funds that their campaigns raised to support other candidates or political action committees (PAC) as a means of advancing the wants of their party.

This practice is a clear violation of the trust the American people have placed in the electoral system. When a candidate drops out of a race, the public expects that the candidate is inactive — both in raising funds and in spending them.

In past years, events such as the recount controversy in Florida during the 2000 presidential election and Trump's claims of election fraud in 2020 have resulted in the significant waning of the trust of American voters in the electoral process. The misuse of donors' money only serves to exacerbate the problem and contribute to the loss of voter confidence.

The common practice of "former" candidates giving donations to candidates who are still running means that those funds are not going to the cause chosen by their donors — representation of the original candidate. Voters invest in the democratic process and donate to candidates in hopes of seeing their values represented. This act of faith is violated when candidates with suspended campaigns send their money to another candidate or organization.

After a candidate suspends their campaign, the media largely refrains from reporting on them or tracking their expenditures. Due to this lack of coverage, people are unable to adequately track how their donation money is being used, thereby eliminating the transparency between voters and those they are voting for. Not only do they no longer have a say in how their donations will be used, but they also have no idea where that money is going. For these reasons, candidates should not be able to drop out of elections until their campaign funds are fully exhausted.

Of course, there may be arguments against setting restrictions

on candidates' right to suspend campaigns. For instance, this rule could lead to the unnecessary expenditure of voters' funds as candidates are unable to make the decision to drop out of elections. Moreover, candidates sometimes use the funds saved from suspended campaigns to fund future endeavors. Implementing this rule will not impede this and will simply force candidates to create a separate fund if they hope to use the money for future elections instead.

However, alternatively, candidates can donate their funds before dropping out of elections. This way, transparency regarding how candidates spend their funds post-suspension is ensured. Should concerning behaviors arise with such spending, the media would instantly flicker with headlines about the latest candidate donating to another candidate or a Super PAC.

Through this rule, candidates would finally be able to fulfill their political commitment and responsibility to voters without being encumbered by minuscule funding details. By ensuring that all candidates will remain on the ballot, voters will be able to choose who they want to vote for instead of being forced to choose the "next best option." This would not only strengthen the platform on which they run but also ensure that whoever the people elect has legitimate solutions and policies for the betterment of the United States.

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Drawing A Line Between Hateful and Free Speech

By **Jai Midha '27**  
*Opinions Writer*

In the dramatic 1942 case of *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that fighting words are not protected by the First Amendment. Yet, even after this monumental ruling, people still turn to the First Amendment for protection and justification for hateful remarks. Naturally, one question comes to mind: where do we draw the line between free and hateful speech? One can easily argue that criticizing a celebrity or music album can be considered malicious, but how should we define hate speech to ensure that we understand when free speech becomes hate speech?

One way to limit this broad term is by defining it as speech that intends to humiliate, vilify, or incite hatred against a group of people. Hate speech is often fueled by discrimination against traits such as but not limited to race, religion, or sexual orientation. The critical identifier of hate speech is the intention to incite violence among select groups of people, which is not protected under the First Amendment.

Some also argue that addressing hate speech limits free speech, which, in turn, severs the promise of the First Amendment. However, as United Na-

tions Secretary-General António Guterres said, "Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence, which is prohibited under international law." This means that, most frequently, the root of violence, discrimination, and oppression is rooted in hate speech. Thus, why should we allow it or continue to pretend that it is protected by the First Amendment?

Yehuda Berg, a teacher of Kabbalah, said, "Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity." In one clear example, the Brookings Institution noted that anti-Muslim discourse in the United States was prompted by the remarks of both former President Donald Trump P'oo and his followers on social media during his 2016 presidential campaign. The same article refers to studies that demonstrated negative emotions amongst listeners of hate speech towards target communities, as well as increased support for political violence amongst audiences of hate speech. As such, hate speech would invite and normalize violent sentiment, which is a risk that democratic states with an emphasis on civil discourse must not permit.

But how can words be magnified by the identity and reach of the speaker? Are Kanye West's insensitive remarks equivalent to a rude comment found in a random Reddit thread? In my opinion, it doesn't matter who's saying hateful words; what matters is what the potential reach of that hate speech is.

Even if hate speech were to be protected by First Amendment rights, it is not right to pursue the ideologies that come with it. We don't see the lives and families harmed by our words and social media posts. As a student who is actively on the internet, like many teenagers today are, I've been able to identify many instances where, even if it's implicit, people share hateful words thinking they are protected by the First Amendment. However, it is our job to ignore and report these types of posts to ensure we continue to uphold our responsibility to inclusivity and kindness. We all have the privilege of expressing ourselves, usually with minimal consequence; let us make sure that we use this privilege for good, not to spread hate or misinformation.

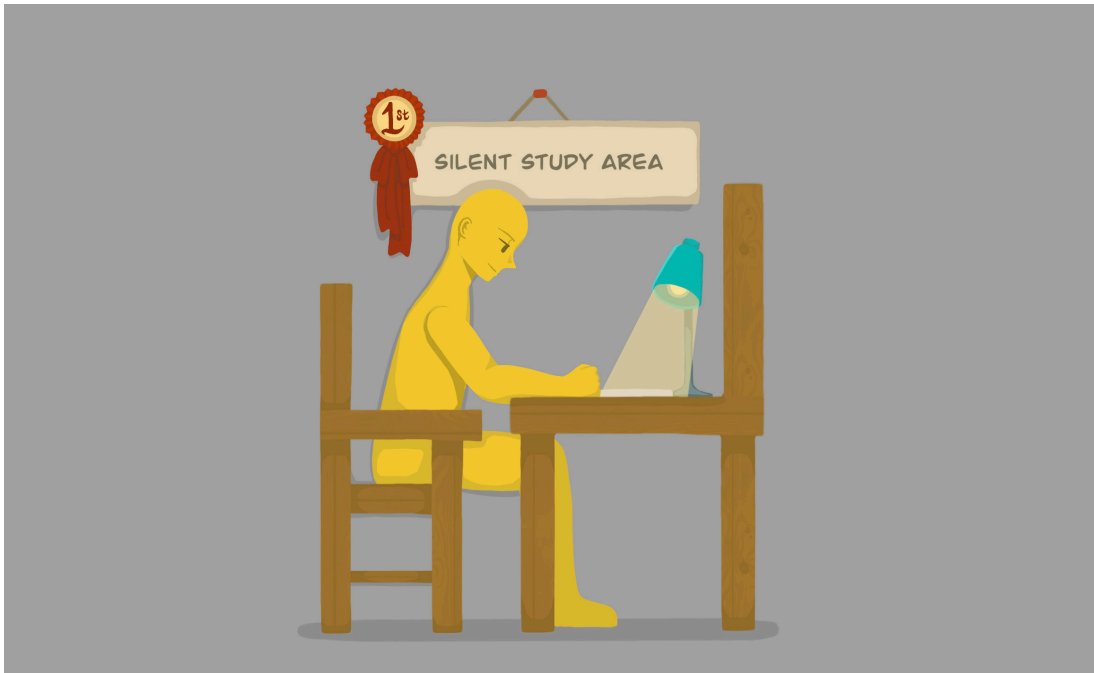
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Graphic by Xyla Kiang '26/The Choate News



## A “LibGuide” to the Best Library Spots



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

By **Hannah Quan '26**  
Staff Reporter

Whether you are looking to cram for a math test or talk through an English project with your classmates, the Andrew Mellon Library’s selection of study spots has you covered. The most important part of doing work is finding a productive environment to work in, so here’s a quick guide to finding the best Library spot for you!

For big group projects, the ideal environment is a large space that allows people to collaborate and talk without needing to whisper. The large oval table in the basement is perfect for that. Grace Yoon '26 said, “It’s a great area to get work done without distractions while being able to communicate with others.”

For smaller groups, one of the four basement study rooms is ideal. As you can reserve the rooms ahead of time, planning and staying on track is much easier. Study rooms allow for more privacy, which enables students to talk to one another without disrupting those near-

by. These rooms are a go-to spot for Ryan Liu '26 because of their comfortable chairs and quiet.

The small tables in the open basement area offer a more casual option. According to Lois Kahu '26, “It’s a quiet space, but there’s still things going on,” which allows one to stay in tune with what’s going on in their surroundings.

As part of the main library area, the Reference Room is a bit louder, perfect for those who enjoy some background noise or would be happy bumping into a friend or two as they do their homework.

“You can see what’s going on around [you], while having your personal space,” Norah Wang '27 said. Additionally, the Math Center, Writing Center, and librarians’ help desk are nearby for assistance.

If you work best in complete silence, the Quiet Section is for you. Near the charging station, the help desk, the bathroom, and the water fountain, these spots are almost completely silent and close to everything you might need while studying. Lor-

raine Hillgen-Santa '24 said, “I always have so much work to do, and I love being able to sit in the quiet section and just lock in.”

While Sofia Schmidt '25 generally sticks to the basement study rooms and the Quiet Section, she also loves “to sit in the comfy chairs in the Reading Room if [she’s] doing light work.” But, be warned: those chairs are dangerously comfortable.

“Sometimes, I even fall asleep in them mid-assignment,” she said. “I would highly recommend [them]!”

“I’m in the Library almost every day, and it’s been interesting getting to know the other people who are there at the same time as me,” Schmidt said. “Studying with friends is such a nice way to spend time together while also staying on top of your work, and I maintain that friends who study together stay together.”

So, next time you need to do some work, visit one of these spots and maybe find your next best friend!

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## CAMPUS CRUISERS: FACULTY BIKERS AROUND CAMPUS

By **Ada Tiewnorn '26**  
Staff Reporter

Amidst the morning frenzy of people making their way to classes, some get around more easily than others: faculty cyclists. With buildings spread out around campus, it makes sense for some to choose a fast yet eco-friendly mode of transportation. Adults with bicycles navigate the campus with speed and joy as they whizz past roads and walkways, and some such cyclists include Science teacher Dr. Chris Hogue, Science teacher Mr. Will Morris, and English teacher Mr. Joe Lampe.

### Dr. Chris Hogue

Dr. Hogue first discovered the value of biking in graduate school. “I was working late at night, and I wanted to get home quickly,” he said. “It was all downhill on the way home, which was sort of a nice way to decompress and breathe in night air.”

Living on top of the hill in Hill House makes biking at Choate a particular advantage for Dr. Hogue. “If I’m going to the Science Center, I can get there literally in 40 seconds. If I need to get to the gym for soccer or ultimate frisbee practice, I can get there in 90 seconds,” he said. “It really does tremendously increase the speed with getting around campus, particularly if you’re going downhill.”

### Mr. Will Morris

Mr. Morris has been a biker his whole life. From getting around town as a kid to navigating campus as a college student, he has always appreciated the convenience that comes with biking. “When I came to Choate, it was just sort of a continuation of something that had really always been part of my life,” he said.

However, Mr. Morris also acknowledged some of the challenges that come with biking on cam-

pus. “You have to be careful about pedestrians, and you have to be careful about traffic and crossing streets,” he said. “You would want to be pretty comfortable on a bike to be able to do that.”

Beyond commuting between classes, Mr. Morris also likes to bike around campus and in nearby parks as a leisure activity, sometimes with his friends or his son.

Whether for convenience or for fun, safety is always a priority. “I always wear a helmet when I’m riding my bike around campus,” he said. “I take my time. It’s not a race.”

### Mr. Joe Lampe

Living in Cheshire, Connecticut, Mr. Lampe tends to bike longer distances rather than quick commutes between classes. While he has always been, as he described, “an endurance athlete kind of person,” his appreciation of cycling began after he moved to New York City and wanted a way to avoid subway delays and traffic.

“You could just strap on the helmet and go — [it] was really liberating and really made the city a lot more fun,” Mr. Lampe said.

In 2021, Mr. Lampe joined Mr. Morris and Science teacher Mr. Pat Guelakis to bike to Deerfield Academy on Deerfield Day. Having now

completed the five-hour, 80-mile trip twice, Mr. Lampe finds the trip arduous but enjoyable.

Mr. Morris, who began this bi-annual tradition in 2001, noted the community-building aspect of the trip. “More recently, I’ve been doing it with Mr. Guelakis, which has been fun, because it’s nice to have a buddy along the way for it,” he said.

When Mr. Lampe has found the time to bike from Cheshire to Wallingford before school, he has made many serendipitous discoveries around campus. “Biking is a really fun way to get to know the neighborhood in a way that I wouldn’t if I was just driving all the time,” he said. “There are some cool things to see from the back of a bike that you might not otherwise know about this part of the state.”

“I would definitely recommend it, if not as a mode of transportation, certainly as a fun way to get a workout,” he said.

Dr. Hogue encouraged all faculty to pick up biking as a de-stressing activity, especially because of their demanding schedules. “I’m surprised that more don’t [bike] because it really is a super, super convenient thing to do,” he said.

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Photo by Joe Yan '26/The Choate News

Science teacher Dr. Chris Hogue bikes to navigate the Choate campus.

## A GUIDE TO CHOATE’S STUDENT PUBLICATIONS: PART TWO OF TWO

By **Sophia Liao '25** and **Reinah Lee '26**  
Associate Editors

With 12 active student publications, Choate has a newspaper or magazine for everyone; whether you’re a science whiz or an aspiring poet. This is part 2 of the ultimate guide to all 12.

### GirlTech Magazine

With the motto, “Together, we empower, encourage, and educate,” *GirlTech Magazine* aims to do just that. Beginning as a branch of the GirlTech Club, current Editor-in-Chief Yoyo Zhang '24 had the idea to start a magazine in the spring of 2022 after noticing a lack of representation for women in STEM in school publications.

Flipping through the pages of *GirlTech Magazine*, you will find a diverse array of spotlights on female figures and leaders, whether it be a scientist doing revolutionary work in her field or a faculty member on campus.

*GirlTech Magazine* also sheds light on current events in the STEM field and raises awareness for student initiatives around campus. “[The magazine] contributes to the campus [by] creating that engagement with topics and issues and stuff that you don’t really get otherwise unless you’re in a class centered around that,” Copy Editor Claire Liu '24 said.

*GirlTech Magazine* aims to establish a unique visual identity by creating aesthetically appealing content that will seize readers’ attention and help them digest content.

*GirlTech* is looking for dedicated writers and artists of all genders. If you want to uplift the voices of underrepresented groups in STEM, join *GirlTech*!



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

The active student publications on campus showcase the diversity of interests and perspectives within the Choate community.

### Choate Public Health

Established in the winter of 2018, *Choate Public Health* (CPH) was founded by Ariel Kim '20 and Khushi Tyagi '20 to educate the Choate community on significant health-related topics and create a more mindful and healthy environment.

The termly publishing schedule comprises one main issue of eight to ten articles and occasionally features mini-issues of four to five articles. Now led by Editor-in-Chief Erin Li '24 and Managing Editor Yoyo Zhang '24, *Choate Public Health* continues to live its mission of promoting health education to the student body.

Copy Editor Kay Lee '25 appreciates the outspoken nature of the publication and its values. “We touch on a lot of taboo and not really-talked about topics, things that are thrown under the rug,” Lee said.

CPH has its audience in mind when coming up with article ideas. In a recent issue, CPH brought the issue of teenage vaping to light. “Anyone can learn about public health through the National Institute of Health. However, when it boils down to

what’s important to students, it’s topics relating to teenagers. That’s something that I want to focus on,” Lee said.

### The Currency

Focusing on economics, business, finance, and politics, *The Currency* is an opinions-based magazine representing voices from aspiring politicians to budding stock brokers. Co-Editors-in-Chief Carter Linardos '24 and Helen Ryan '24 run the publication, which publishes once every term.

Established by Jack Berantino '18, Jonah Berman '18, and Imad Rizvi '18, the first issue was released on May 20, 2016. Though staying consistent with the original masthead’s vision in most respects, the new leadership has brought forth some changes, including switching out the business section for a features section. The masthead also plans to launch social media accounts for news coverage.

Apart from articles and opinion pieces, *The Currency* excels with its ability to visually portray the issues addressed in the magazine. “I really like seeing the cover designs, especially

by John Jannotta [’25], because he’s done some really cool designs,” Linardos said.

Whether you’re a finance bro or just a curious Choate student, pick up the new winter issue of *The Currency*. In the words of the inaugural Editors-in-Chief, “As an educated individual, it is your responsibility to know what’s happening in the world around you; this is your chance to escape the so-called ‘Choate Bubble.’”

### The Brief

Beginning in 1900 as the School’s oldest continuously running publication, *The Brief* serves as the School’s official yearbook. Starting in 1970, *The Brief* was issued in two separate volumes: “The Directory” and “The Year.”

Despite its changes, *The Brief* has always captured the vibrancy of each year’s student body and campus life. *The Brief* is “a central part to the community because it’s a culmination of everything that’s happened in the year,” Assistant Editor-in-Chief Cait Ahn '25 said. “So, when you graduate ... you can re-experience your favorite and most memorable moments.”

### The Choate News

You found us! Proudly the official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907, our bi-weekly newspaper highlights seven sections — School News, Local News, Opinions (Campus), Opinions (Nation/World), Features, Arts and Leisure, and Sports.

Extending beyond the on-campus community, *The Choate News* works to keep alumni and parents informed on the latest happenings through new virtual access on our website. In addition, our social media page on Instagram spotlights articles in each section of every issue. The new video series on the platform, *What’s Shakin’, Bacon?*, consists of questionnaires and student cameos and pulls back the curtain on campus life.

Since its inception in 1907, *The Choate News* has undergone nine name changes, including *The Chronicle*, *The NEWS*, and *The Choate Rosemary Hall NEWS*. Older issues of *The Choate News* were distinctly divided into long, narrow columns, with articles interspersed with advertisements from local businesses, from barber shops to new restaurants to shoe stores.

While *The Choate News* is always looking for new ideas to improve the paper, long-standing traditions have also remained in place. Whenever Valentine’s Day rolls around, the Features page runs the “Lonely Hearts Club” segment, where masthead members write fun dating profiles for each other.

*The Choate News* welcomes dedication, organization, and a love for storytelling. Whether you’re a writer, artist, photographer, or master at Adobe InDesign, *The Choate News* has a place for you and your talents!

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## ANON(YMOUS) COMES ALIVE IN THE PMAC

By **Rose Lightfoot '26**  
Reporter

Throughout the term, student actors, costumers, and tech crew members gathered in the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) every afternoon to bring the winter production, *Anon(ymous)*, to life. Directed by Acting Teacher Mr. Bari Robinson, *Anon(ymous)* is a play inspired by Homer's *The Odyssey*. The adaption tells the story of a young refugee as she embarks on a journey across the United States to find her mother.

“It’s about the experience of someone coming from a war-torn area, which is exactly what happens in *The Odyssey*, right? Odysseus is a soldier who, now that the war is over, is trying to go home. It’s essentially the same kind of story,” Mr. Robinson said. “When you put the immigrant refugee bend on it, it becomes about: what is home? What is home for someone who doesn’t have a home anymore?”

Matthew Choi '26 portrayed Mr. Yuri Makus, whose name is a play on words of the suitor Eurymachus in *The Odyssey*. Being in this production helped Choi grow as



Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Suleika Sandi '26 (left), Kadija Benzinane '27 (left), Elia Ahmadi '24 (right), and Amelia Sipkin '25 (right) share the stage.

an actor and step out of his comfort zone. “That’s the same case with a lot of other actors who have really pushed themselves to their limits,” Choi said. “They discover all kinds of ways to embrace their characters and make it the most enjoyable to watch.”

Jinx Hartong '27 portrayed Calista, the equivalent to the

character Calypso in *The Odyssey*. For Hartong, the most rewarding part of the production process was being a part of the theater community. “The entire cast, they’re all amazing people and actors,” she said. “They’ve made me feel so welcome, too. They just immediately started talking to me and inviting me in.”

While the spotlight often falls on the actors, the technical crew’s work was essential to produce *Anon(ymous)*. The crew consisted of around 15 students and faculty who worked on costuming, stage management, sound design, lighting design, and moving set pieces during the show. Andra Ionescu '24 was the stage

manager for the play. Having starred in numerous plays throughout her Choate career, Ionescu felt very prepared to stage manage this production. “As an actor, I knew what to look for while being a stage manager,” she said. Ionescu’s main responsibility was to call all the lighting and sound cues during the performance.

Her experience with acting has also taught her how actors think, what they need to be reminded of, and how to keep them on track. Ionescu added that being a stage manager also helped her grow as an actor herself. For example, she was able to watch students’ auditions and learn from their mistakes.

The work of students like Choi, Hartong, and Ionescu culminated in three performances on February 15-17 in the Little Theater. The show was centered on themes of identity, family, and belonging. Mr. Robinson hoped that as audiences watched the show, they pondered its core questions: “What is family? What is our obligation to the people that need our help?” Mr. Robinson said.

He believes that part of what makes the play powerful is that it doesn’t answer these questions directly. “An interesting play is a play that does not tell you what an answer is,” he said. “It just asks questions of you and lets you, as an audience, come up with whatever you think is right.” Mr. Robinson hopes audiences appreciated the humanity of the characters in the play’s poetry and see a little bit of themselves reflected on stage.

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## Choate Musicians Grow with Chamber Music

By **Grace Yoon '26**  
Reporter

Choate musicians typically play in large ensembles consisting of up to 70 musicians that rehearse two to three times per week. However, the chamber music program allows students to hone their technique and musicianship in smaller groups of three, four, five or eight.

Chamber music, characterized by its intimate setting, usually takes place in the spring term. However, Orchestra Director Mr. Gene Wie is working on integrating chamber music into the rest of the school year.

Mr. Wie explained that striking a balance between categorizing chamber music as an extracurricular activity and an element of the academic curriculum is difficult, but crucial, as Choate is not a conservatory but a college preparatory school. Thus, chamber music is a requirement for musicians in the Arts Concentration Signature Program but entirely optional for all other students.

A student either requests to be a part of a group with their friends or is assigned to a chamber group by Mr. Wie. Then, the group decides on the works they wish to play, receive coaching from the music faculty, and per-

form for the School at School Meetings and recitals.

Some of the groups this year include a woodwind quintet, string quartet, and a metals and string octet. The woodwind quintet features the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and french horn. The cello, violin, double bass, and viola are instruments that make up a string chamber group. The upcoming spring recital will feature some of these chamber music ensembles, whose repertoire ranges from classical to contemporary arrangements.

Chamber music has been met with enthusiasm from students. Jayden Dai '25, a saxophonist in both the Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble since his third-form year, said he “wanted to take part in chamber music because it allows [him] to become exposed to different types of music.” He will play in a saxophone quartet, which consists of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones.

James Stuber '24, a student in the Arts Concentration program, agreed with Dai’s sentiment. “Some of my most valuable memories playing music at Choate have come from collaborating with fellow instrumentalists on compositions created by Choate students,” he said.

Mr. Wie believes that chamber music teaches students valuable lessons that can be applied to other aspects of musicianship and beyond. “Traditional ensemble education comes in two forms in schools,” he said. “There is a large ensemble... Then there is solo instruction.” He continued, explaining that what’s missing is the in-between: small ensemble music-making through chamber music. Playing without a conductor requires “mak[ing] decisions together with other people and achieving consensus,” he said, which mirrors situations students may face in life.

For violonist Shawn Yang '24, the chamber music program has been instrumental to his growth as a musician. “[Chamber music] encourages each individual player to find their own voice within a small, tight-knit group, while being incredibly demanding in terms of ensemble cohesion and communication skills,” he said. “My time spent working on chamber music has made me a far more sensitive and intuitive violinist, and a stronger ensemble player overall.”

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Graphic by Kate Park '27/The Choate News

## PASSION AND PRACTICE: THE JOURNEYS OF JAZZ PIANISTS



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Bill Shen '24, a jazz pianist in the Jazz Ensemble, improvises on the piano.

By **Ethan Zhang '26**  
Reporter

Whether on the Colony Hall stage for music ensemble concerts or amid the bustling crowds of prospective families during Spring Visits, Choate’s jazz pianists’ performances require both precision and freedom. To pianists Mwendawangai Daisley '24 and Bill Shen '24, their commitment to music extends far beyond extracurricular involvement.

Daisley’s piano journey started with classical training, but his first encounters with jazz began at his church. “I grew up in the church, a Black church, which was very influential and intertwined with jazz music,” he said. “That’s the music that I heard around the house and wanted to play.”

Despite having no formal jazz piano training before Choate, Daisley has developed a remarkable aptitude for playing by ear — an ability sharpened by his upbringing. “Even though I can’t identify that this is, for exam-

ple, a major seventh chord, I can hear it. And if I can hear it, I can reproduce it on the keyboard,” Daisley explained.

Upon matriculating at Choate and joining the Jazz Ensemble, his piano instructor Mr. Nathaniel Baker was instrumental in shaping his musical journey. “He’s been somebody who has helped me bridge the gap between the spheres of classical and jazz in the piano realm,” he said.

Daisley plans to continue playing piano throughout college and beyond. However, he doesn’t see himself pursuing a career as a pianist. “I used to play in many competitions classically, and for me, it loses the aspect of actual expression. Since you’re looking for a grade or someone to tell you whether your playing is good or bad, I don’t think I would want to do it professionally,”

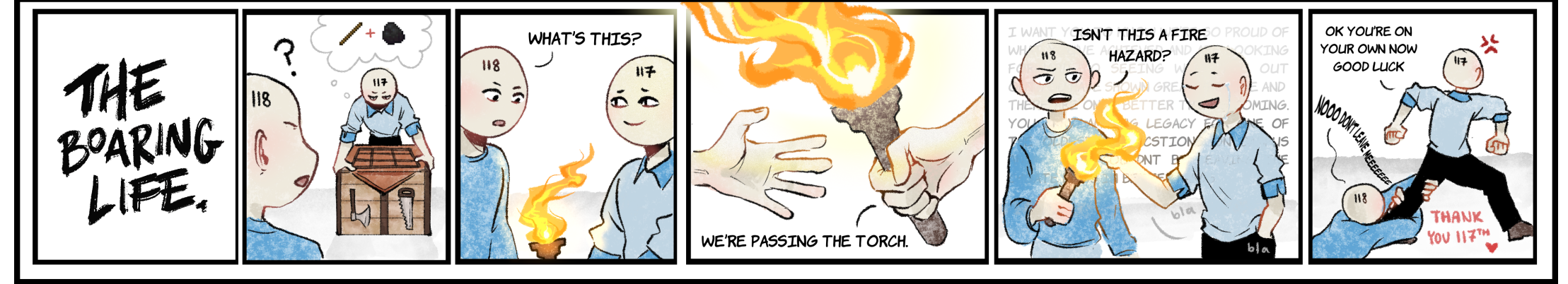
Shen started playing classical piano at around age four or five, but he didn’t become invested in jazz until he arrived at Choate.

Guided by Arts Department Head and Jazz Ensemble Director Mr. Matthew McLean, Shen discovered a different dimension of piano through the lens of jazz. “When I first got into jazz, the improv was intriguing — something that I didn’t get from practicing those classical pieces.”

Jazz Ensemble was also a way for Shen to get to know fellow students, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. He said, “My freshman year was remote, and the way I met people was from ensembles,” he said. “Jamming with people and experiencing music in a new way, I felt like that was a way to connect with other people.”

Both Daisley and Shen’s journeys to jazz piano demonstrate how Choate can be a place of artistic exploration and discovery for students. As seniors, their final performance with the Jazz Ensemble will be at the Spring Instrumental Ensembles Concert on May 10.

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Graphic by Melody Qian '24/The Choate News



FIELD  
REPORT

Choate Winter Record  
136 - 59 - 6

Varsity Games

Boys' Basketball (17-6)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 76-58

Girls' Basketball (53-33)  
vs. Lawrenceville, 10-12

Boys' Squash (12-4)  
vs. Tabor Academy, 5-3

Girls' Ice Hockey (15-6)  
vs. Berkshire, 2-1

Boys' Ice Hockey (3-19)  
vs. NMH, 3-6

Girls' Swimming (4-5)  
vs. Loomis Chaffee, 80-101

Girls' Squash (12-3)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 0-7

J.V. Games

Boys' Basketball (11-3)  
vs. Salisbury, 58-56

Girls' Ice Hockey (11-0-3)  
vs. Taft, 3-0

Boys' Squash (11-2-1)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 6-6

Girls' Basketball (12-1)  
vs. Hotchkiss, 18-28

Boys' Ice Hockey (5-8-1)  
vs. Trinity-Pawling, 1-4

EMMA SCHWERIN '26  
SUMMITS KILIMANJARO



Emma Schwerin '26 and her team at the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

By **Reinah Lee '26**  
*Associate Editor*

While many Choate students spent winter break at home or traveling abroad, Emma Schwerin '26 climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. At 15 years old, Schwerin is on track to reach new heights in the mountaineering world by becoming the youngest girl to climb all of the Seven Summits, the tallest mountains on each of the seven continents.

From December 31–January 6, Schwerin ascended Mount Kilimanjaro, the 19,300-foot volcano in Tanzania. Each day entailed five to eight-hour hikes. On summit day, she awoke an hour before climbing at 11 p.m., reaching the summit at 7:30 a.m. the next morning. In contrast, descending from the summit took only two hours.

Schwerin's Kilimanjaro team consisted of seven people, including her father and their guide, Mr. Tendi Sherpa, an expert mountaineer with 14 Mount Everest summits under his belt. With a limit of one 15-kilogram bag, climbers had to prioritize essential items, which included sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and hiking gear.

Although Schwerin was physically prepared for the climb, it was still taxing. While summiting, she experienced altitude sickness, which occurs at high altitudes where oxygen availability is lower.

Schwerin's main symptoms of altitude sickness were loss of appetite and nausea. As a result, she did not follow her carefully laid-out nutrition plan, making the hours-long stretch of hiking even more challenging.

That same night, Schwerin accidentally mixed two electrolyte drinks together, throwing off her hydration plan, leading to dehydration, fatigue, and nausea.

Schwerin's passion for mountaineering began in eighth grade when her family traveled to the Mount Everest Base Camp in Nepal. Hailing from Montana, Schwerin was raised in a culture of outdoor enthusiasts, with her parents having already tackled Kilimanjaro around eight years ago.

At school, Schwerin trains six days a week under the guidance of trainer and accomplished mountaineer Ms. Lisa Thompson, who has climbed all of the Seven Summits and is the second American woman to climb K2, the second tallest mountain on Earth. Schwerin's training program includes muscular endurance training, strength training, and cardio.

To prepare for lower oxygen availability, Schwerin covers the head of her bed with a tent-like structure that is attached to a device outside her room. Schwerin sets the device to gradually remove oxygen from the air, simulating oxygen levels at varying altitudes.

Now with both Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kosciuszko, which she summited in November 2023, under her belt, Schwerin aims to finish climbing the remaining five of the Seven Summits before the summer of 2025. She would be 17 years and two months old, breaking the current record of 17 years and eight months old. In order to achieve this, Schwerin spends all of her breaks climbing.

Schwerin will take time off of school during her junior spring to climb Mount Everest in 2025, which will take two months.

As Schwerin inches closer to her goal, she has had to make adjustments due to geopolitical constraints on Russia's Mount Elbrus. Instead, she will summit Mont Blanc, a formidable but shorter mountain than Mount Elbrus. "It is a bit tricky because I'm trying to set a record, and some people might not really think that I did," she said.

The greatest reward for Schwerin is seeing improvement. "My favorite part is seeing the progress I've made. I could probably just run a mile when I first started, and now I do seven miles, twice a week," Schwerin said. "It's crazy to see how far I've come."

Schwerin is documenting her historic journey on her website and Instagram account, @schwerisshegoing.

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SENIORS SEIZE NEW  
SPORTS OPPORTUNITIES

By **Eshana Hora '27**  
*Reporter*

While most senior athletes are veteran players, some choose to dive into uncharted waters, exploring new sports in their last year at Choate.

**Lily Hrazdira '24**

One such sixth-former is Lily Hrazdira '24, who joined Girls' Varsity Diving for the first time in her Choate career this year. Since then, she has made remarkable progress. On January 31, Hrazdira placed first amongst Choate's divers and second overall in a dual meet against Miss Porter's School.

Hrazdira had played defense on Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey since her freshman year. In her junior year, however, Hrazdira suffered two concussions, one of which was a result of hitting her head on the ice. "I had a really bad mental block with playing hockey because of that," she said. "I knew that coming into senior year, I needed to make some sort of switch so I could get through the year."

Hrazdira initially planned on joining swimming, but a strained rotator cuff on the first day of practice led to her decision to try diving instead. While the transition from hockey to diving may seem drastic, Hrazdira was an avid gymnast as a child, giving her the foundational skills to succeed in diving. Fellow diver John Jannotta '25's love for the sport also helped convince her to make the switch. "One of my prefectees is John Jannotta, who talks about it a lot and was super influential on me making that decision," she said.

Although Hrazdira went into the sport for fun, she pushed herself in practice and at meets. "From the first meet, I realized this is something I want to take super serious-

ly, and it's become something I put my all into," she said. "[Head Diving Coach] Mr. Ben Small has helped to push my limits and see how much I can do in a year, or just in a couple of months." Hrazdira now competes in some of the hardest dives amongst the team.

**Lahee Lee '24**

Another senior who pursued an aquatic sport this season for the first time is Lahee Lee '24, a new member of Junior Varsity [JV] Swimming. Lee previously managed Girls' Varsity Hockey in the winter term, but former Boys' Varsity Swimming member James Frushone '24 convinced her to try swimming.

New to competitive swimming, Lee's experience at try-outs was challenging but memorable. "It was probably the hardest, athletically most challenging moment of my life. I had never swam like that before; it was so intense," Lee said.

Nevertheless, Lee has experienced improvement since the beginning of the season. "My technique is probably awful, but I do feel I have built stamina, and I can swim faster for longer."

**Ben Yedid '24**

Ben Yedid '24 is a new member of Boys' Junior Varsity (JV) Hockey. Growing up, Yedid played ice hockey in Canada, but decided instead to focus on football. Yedid was previously part of Wrestling; this year, however, Yedid's friends, who are also seniors on JV Ice Hockey, convinced him that it would be fun to join the team.

Although it took some time to readjust to being on the ice, Yedid has enjoyed being a part of the team. One highlight was their 8-4 victory over Westminster School on February 10, during which he scored his first goal of the season. "My teammate on my line, who's also a

senior, scored two goals, and it's just so fun when that happens because we are not the most talented on the team, but we like to work hard," Yedid said.

Most of all, Yedid cherishes the people on the team. "The best part is the people on the team and the friends that I have, like those seniors — they were the ones who convinced me and pushed me into [JV Ice Hockey], and it's been great being with them." Yedid also appreciates getting to know more of his peers, especially the underclassmen.

This fall, Yedid will play college football but hopes to keep ties to ice hockey. "I'm from Canada, so I'll always be connected to hockey ... I'll always want to play, whether it's just for fun or [because] someone organizes a game."

By trying out new sports, these seniors have found new friends and additional close-knit communities. "The JV Swimming team is very small," Lee said. "We have only two lanes, and we share the lanes between 10 of us, but I've become close with so many sophomores and freshmen, and it's a nice bond to have."

Hrazdira was initially concerned that there would be a weaker team bond in an individual sport like diving compared to ice hockey. "I was so wrong," Hrazdira reflected. "It feels like they are my family ... they were so accepting of me coming into the team as a senior."

Beyond discovering new communities, trying a new sport as a senior also inspires self-confidence. "The fact that I've been able to pick this up and do it well, too, has given me a lot of confidence within myself and within the sport," Hrazdira said.

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Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

CONGRATULATIONS ON SIGNING DAY!



Photo courtesy of Mr. Joey Evans

Class of 2024 athletes celebrate their achievements at Winter Signing Day on February 7.