The Choate News

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Choate Robotics Win at F.I.R.S.T. Competition

By **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Copy Editor

From March 4 to March 5, the Choate Robotics team traveled to Salem, New Hampshire to compete in the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition, where they won first place in the New England division.

The team began working on their robot in early January. They started off with an extensive brainstorming process, during which they discussed tasks the robot needed to perform and decided on which ones to prioritize. Co-captain Kenadi Waymire '22 explained, "We asked ourselves: what tasks would be most important to score the most points? Is it more important to climb? Is it more important to shoot in the low hub or the high hub?"

The next step entailed modeling the robot on a computer. Sebastian Plunkett '24, who was largely involved in the computer-aided design (CAD) of the robot, said, "I basically modeled the entire robot on a computer first before we actually built it in real life just to avoid mistakes." After the team completed a full assembly of their robot on CAD, they began hands-on manufacturing and construction. One guideline of the competition that proved challenging was the requirement that all parts and mechanisms be built solely by the team. Waymire noted, "If you want your robot to have a parametric climber or if you want your robot to have a turret, you have to build that yourself."

Photo courtesy of Zoe Plunkett '24

Robotics team at the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Competition.

The unique design and skillset of the Choate robot were at the heart of its success. It could orient itself in any direction, climb in a pull-up motion, and intake two balls at once. "Our robot can move left, move right, move backward, move forward, and turn left and turn right, which makes it very easy to maneuver. The way it climbs is also very consistent to the point where we know that once it's on there, it won't fall," Plunkett explained.

After nearly two months of hard work, the Robotics team arrived at the tournament, or as Plunkett and Waymire referred to it, "the game." There were a total of 40 teams present, and in the end, Choate defeated each one. The competition consisted of three rounds: the qualification rounds, the elimination rounds, and lastly, the finals. The team played 12 qualification rounds, scoring points for each event and task the robot completed. At one point, the robot lost its balance on a high monkey bar and fell to the ground. "It was terrifying," said Waymire. "That is a 100-pound piece of metal falling on asphalt."

The next round, named the elminations or the "playoffs," consisted of alliances between teams and matches against other robots. Each time the Choate robot won a round, it moved closer and closer to the final round and the first-place trophy. "I'd never been so close to fainting in my life," said Waymire. Ultimately, the Choate Robotics team won the entire competition with an undefeated record of 18-0. Valerie Gaudian '23, along with Plunkett, won the Deans' Finalist Award because of their dedication, leadership skills, and commitment to helping others. The team is now preparing for their next competition on April 8-10 in the Connecticut New England District Hartford event; even though they have already qualified for the New England District Championships, the Robotics team aspires to attend First Championship, a four-day event in Houston, Texas where teams from 30 nations will be competing.

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Students Propose New Clubs on Campus

By ***The Choate News* 116th Masthead Copy Editors**

SYNK is a dance and performance-based club that will work on producing dance covers of K-pop through the wide range of dance styles, stagecraft, and costumes. SYNK aims to produce a final on-stage and cinematography performance by the end of the year and hopes to perform at both the Deerfield Day Pep Rally and Spring Concert. Everyone – ranging from experienced dancers and K-pop fans to beginners and those new to K-pop culture – is welcome to join meetings and learn more about the extraordinary world of K-pop. Vice President, Cathy Liu '24, said, "There has always been a stigma around K-pop, but it is something that I have always been very passionate about. Once, I met up with a few friends, including President Ernie Mok '25, and we danced together to our favorite K-pop songs all afternoon. That's when we decided to create a club for people to express their shared love for this genre of music."

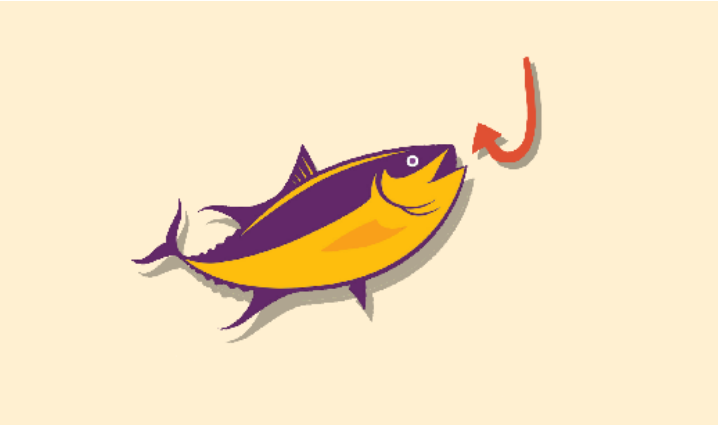
Armonia is a contemporary music ensemble club that will give students an opportunity to connect with one another through music. Unlike choir and acapella, the ensemble will work on R&B and pop music from the 1970s to the present day and involve instrumentalists to accompany the singers. All music rehearsed and performed will surround a theme of empowerment and unity. Over the course of the year, the group will rehearse each week to build a repertoire of music to be performed as an ensemble. Some of the major song ideas are: "Easy on Me," "Respect," and "You Believe." President Josh Durrant '25 is thrilled to be introducing this new enterprise to the school. "This is something Choate has never had before, and I am really excited I get to bring something like this to Choate and the student body," he said.If you are a singer, an instrumentalist, or just a lover of music, this is a club for you.

All Graphics by Yujin Kim '23/*The Choate News*

The Chinese Martial Arts Club is dedicated to preserving and introducing Traditional Chinese Kungfu as well as promoting physical development through the form of Quan (Taolu). Students will learn the standard sets of traditional Quan and choreograph their own sets of movements. The club will practice various Kung Fu techniques composed in standard sets and trained to perfect their motions. In addition, students will be empowered with crucial values of Martial Morality, including respect, humility, endurance, perseverance, patience, and courage. Chinese Martial Arts club is committed to continually educating, motivating, and adding diversity to the Choate community through the art of practicing Kungfu and its intersection with Chinese culture. President Wendy Huo '23 is excited to launch the Chinese Martial Arts Club. She said, "I hope to share my passions and want to teach people something that I love."

Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) may seem like a daunting hobby due to a lengthy list of rules, but this could not be further from the truth! Managed by Prime Chancellor Aidan Geaney '24, Deputy Chancellor Qin Caldwell '24, and Secretary Scribe Connor Zeitlin '25, the club aims to introduce D&D to all students, no matter their experience with the role-playing game. "D&D's myriad rules may give it the appearance of having a high barrier of entry, but this could not be further from the truth. At its core, D&D is a role-playing game, and as such much of the time in a session is spent acting," said Geaney. The club will host a multitude of events, ranging from a series of beginner games to introduce new players to the expansive world of D&D to Dungeon Master workshops for experienced players. Geaney, Caldwell, and Zeitlin are excited to get the club up and running and build a community of D&D fanatics.

The Fishing Club, founded by Hamilton Tevis '23 and Rafferty Callahan '24, is dedicated to creating an avenue for students to alleviate stress through fishing. Whether it is through group fishing trips or community service projects, the club hopes to create common ground amongst the Choate community to unite those who share a common interest in fishing, allowing them to meet like-minded people they otherwise wouldn't. Catching big fish would also be a bonus! "If it can help improve someone's day or introduce someone to a new hobby and help people make connections or have them embrace the outdoors, I would be really proud to have inspired that change," said Tevis He added, "Success in fishing and in the club doesn't always happen immediately. In fact I would measure success as someone being able to patiently wait for that fish without getting frustrated or moving on!"



Inspired by the book, "Lost in Translation: An Illustrated Compendium of Untranslatable Words from Around the World," Found in Translation is a club that aims to explore the intersections between language and culture, thus expanding the community's understanding of different cultures through creative writing and self-expression. President Celina Wei '23 said, "We compare the nuances and word choices, share our writing in different languages, and we explain the significance of the writing to their culture." During club meetings, students will be granted the opportunity to bring in and discuss works or translations of different languages with their peers. "Our goals are to enhance our cultural understanding, broaden our horizons, and learning cultures through language," said Vice President Jimena Acosta Cullen '23.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Yujin Kim '23, Cheyenne Company, and Garrett Curtis '24.

THREE STUDENTS WIN SECOND PLACE IN DECA COMPETITION WITH "REJOY"

Photo by Yoyo Zhang '24/The Choate News

ReJoy, "Make happiness a habit."

By **Aubrie Williams '24**
Staff Reporter

On March 7, 2022, the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) announced the three winners of its Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandise (FIDM) Entrepreneur of Tomorrow Challenge.

In second place were Annika Lee '23, Isa Turri '23, and Yoyo Zhang '24. They had been meeting weekly since the fall term to develop ReJoy, a monthly subscription box aimed at building healthy habits to combat seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Lee, Turri, and Zhang were among 125 entries for the contest, which tasks students with producing a four-minute video about a product related to a topic such as beauty, health, and clothing.

Before settling on the idea of ReJoy, the team conducted many hours of extensive research on potential product ideas. "We researched previous winners and found the common theme was related to mental health, social justice issues, and what most of the products people did were subscription boxes or care packages," shared Lee.

They wanted their product to address pressing issues related to their daily lives. Mental health was one of the first topics they considered both because of Choate's goals towards improving the health and wellness of students as well as raising awareness of teen mental health in general. Lee, Turri, and Zhang took inspiration from advent calendars as an accessible, enjoyable method for Gen-Z to build healthy habits. "For mental health, it's recommended to do something daily, like meditating or journaling," advised Turri.

Catering to customers of different needs, the ReJoy box came in three levels, with the premium option providing daily affirmations, emoji mood-trackers, mints, mini-goals, weekly stress-relievers, aromatherapy, as well as light therapy and access to an online community that shares healthy tips and provides emotional support.

Besides the design of the product itself, another essential component of the competition was having effective marketing strategies. To ensure that the presentation included compelling explanations about ReJoy's target customers, promotion, and distribution, the team spent weeks devising plans on written documents.

"This whole process made me realize how important marketing is because one of the most important things is how you showcase your idea and convince your target market to buy your product," said Turri.

The group encountered an unexpected challenge when two members contracted Covid-19 the week their project was due. Quarantining together in the health center, the two teammates "had to improvise in terms of posters, pamphlets, and decorations by using things that the health center had," according to Lee. "At one point, we had to pull the blankets off the bed and use it as a backdrop for our video."

In the final days before the competition deadline, Lee and Zhang managed to finish the physical prototype, media mock-up, script, and product video as Turri provided support from afar. While this obstacle deviated the team from their original timeline, they were eventually able to complete the entry on time thanks to their close friendship and effective allocation of tasks. "We had a really good dynamic because we were such close friends already," noted Turri. "We would talk together and give tasks out depending on what we were doing that day.

Despite the challenges, participating in this competition proved to be a valuable experience, not only for the accolades it brought Lee, Turri, and Zhang, but also for the essential lessons it taught them about business and entrepreneurship.

"I learned that planning, collaboration, and marketing are very important," described Lee when asked to summarize her biggest takeaways from the competition. "You can have a great idea, but would people buy it? You have to think about who you're targeting," she said. Their ability to reach their target audience proved successful, and the group was able to receive $1,000 in funding to continue developing their product.

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The Healing Project

By **Ming Qin '25**
Reporter

In the past week, a table stationed in the dining hall has been covered with colored markers, baskets, and sticky notes. It's not a new arts-and-crafts corner for those feeling artistic — it's the first step to creating a community mural, aptly named the Healing Project.

Choate's Medical Director, Dr. Miriam Cohen, spearheaded the movement. She was inspired by the Westminster School, which has been working on a collage of community members' reflections on the pandemic. Mirroring them, Dr. Cohen recruited a committee of faculty members to establish The Healing Project. The project's BoarCast announcement stated that in order to return to "a new normal," we should reflect on all the pain and suffering the pandemic has brought about. "As a community, we need to take time to think about our lessons and our losses. Call these things out, put words and pictures to our pain, but also hopefully, find the silver linings."

The mural consists of sticky notes with Choate community members' thoughts and reflections on these past two years. However, the project will also add the component of a slideshow for those who prefer to write things down in words or prefer photography and other forms of art. Dr. Cohen believes that through the trauma of the pandemic, addressing, acknowledging, and reflecting on experiences is a step the community must take to heal. "Unfortunately, this virus isn't going away, and we need to take the next steps. In order to take those next steps, we need to do some healing about what we've experienced," Dr. Cohen said.

Dr. Cohen described the Healing Project as a community-oriented initiative. "Ms. Raquel Simoneau is helping a lot with the staff side because we really want everybody in our community to participate. She reached out to all the staff managers around campus to talk about how to bring the sticky notes to them and get their departments involved. Hopefully, we can get people all over campus and all different jobs to participate."

The Choate Community's participation is essential to the operation, contributing their "silver linings" of the pandemic. Ms. Simoneau said, "I'm a very social person, so I love being able to hang out with my friends and family, and not being able to just go over and see my niece. So when I finally got to see her for her birthday after a whole year... I burst into tears, it was crazy." On one of his silver linings, Judah Brecher '25 said, "The pandemic brought me closer to my siblings. The problem has always been the lack of time, and with the pandemic, there was nothing but time."

Dr. Cohen hopes that going foward, the Healing Project will expand into the School's programming and play a role in future student wellness. "My idea is that the sticky notes are the start of it, but it's not the end of it. Healing doesn't happen by writing something down on a sticky note — it's a process, and this is a symbolic start to that process."

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Graphic by Katherine Chong '25/The Choate News

Choate Students Earn Top Honors

Photos by Maya Chiravuri '23 and Ryan Kim '23/The Choate News

Maya Chiravuri '23 and Ryan Kim '23, respectively.

By **Erin Li '24**
Copy Editor

On March 5, Maya Chiravuri '23 and Ryan Kim '23 competed in the 59th annual Connecticut Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (CT-JSHS) hosted virtually by the University of Connecticut.

Chiravuri received first place in the poster presentation category with their research on developing a home test for heart failure. Kim placed third in the oral presentation category for his traffic control system using artificial intelligence. Since Kim was also the highest academically ranked junior, he was selected to receive the UConn Academic Excellence Scholarship.

Chiravuri's project aimed to create a more accessible test to detect early heart failure — one that would eventually become as easy to use and obtain as an at-home Covid-19 or pregnancy test. Chiravuri's test screens for brain natriuretic peptide (BNP), a peptide secreted during heart failure within human serum.

The inspiration behind Chiravuri's research was their own community. They compared readmission rates of previous heart failure patients and the number of patients readmitted for the same problem within 30 days of release between two cities with drastically different resident socioeconomic statuses: Bridgeport and Greenwich. Chiravuri questioned, "Why are so many people being admitted and getting readmitted for heart failure in Bridgeport and lower-income cities?" They recognized that detecting heart failure in the early stages was difficult for many low-income families due to expensive and inaccessible screening. They hope that with their project, people can avoid hefty hospital bills and find out their results within minutes.

To create this project, Chiravri worked out of their basement and went through a lengthy process of self-teaching and trial-and-error. One challenged they faced was budgeting resources. "I realized I had such a little amount of stuff because it was pretty expensive to buy. I had to make sure that I could get the results I wanted as quickly as possible," they said. As their project continues to develop, Chiravuri hopes to conduct experiments with human blood and create a self-test kit that can be sold in drug stores.

From this experience, Chiravuri gained insight on lateral flow immunoassay tests and how accessible they are. "I think that if you have a disease that has a very specific biomarker — like Covid has your spike proteins, heart failure has your BNP— you could use this test for anything. It just showed one more time that this type of test, this lateral flow immunoassay, was super applicable," they noted. A similar model of this experiment can be used to test for other diseases in the future.

Kim's project focused on developing a portable real-time Internet of Things (IoT) traffic control system using artificial intelligence (AI). He developed custom AI vehicle detection and lane detection algorithms that operate in real-time, along with an analytical traffic optimization algorithm to maximize throughput in an intersection. As he couldn't alter real traffic lights, he developed a custom traffic simulator to compare results from his method to the less effective traffic control methods that are used in the real world.

Kim's project was motivated by both real-life interactions he had while volunteering at a disability center and significant global issues such as the devastating economic, environmental, and health impacts that arise from traffic congestion. The main objective of his project was to create a reduction in air pollution and save both lives and the dollars spent financing issues that consequently arise from traffic congestion. Additionally, his system would detect emergency vehicles and override traffic signals, allowing the vehicle to rapidly pass by an intersection without being stuck by other vehicles.

The experience has furthered Kim's respect for scientific researchers. Conducting his own research, he has grown an appreciation for the passion and grit needed to attempt new and innovative approached targeting prevalent issues.

While their research fields and topics may vary, both Chiravuri and Kim hope that their research can be implemented in the future to help improve people's lives. Among the top five performing students from Connecticut, both Chiravuri and Kim qualified to represent the state of Connecticut at the National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, which will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico from April 20 to 23. Additionally, both juniors will be presenting their research to the Connecticut Academy of Sciences in late May.

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COMPASSIONATE HOME, ACTION TOGETHER SUPPORTS THE MENTAL HEALTH OF AAPI COMMUNITY

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

Founded in 2019 at Yale University, Compassionate Home, Action Together (CHATogether) is a program dedicated to the mental well-being of Asian-Americans and to fostering better communication between Asian-American children and parents. Knowing that it can be a challenge for children to bring up certain topics with parents who may have different viewpoints and experiences, CHATogether has many resources designed to facilitate open discussions. An Asian-American parent herself, Dr. Eunice Yuen MD, Ph.D., the Founder and Director of the program, has both a scientific and personal background on the issue. The CHATogether team is comprised of members from diverse backgrounds, all united by a common drive to promote better communication.

Graphic courtesy of Compassionate Home, Action Together

To encourage healthier dialogue between Asian-American individuals and their parents, CHATogether holds a variety of skits and publishes vignettes on topics such as racism, teaching family members how to discuss these topics. These events have three parts to them. First, members of the CHATogether team act out an original, less healthy scenario. After that, a moderator discusses the event from both the parent and child's point of view. Then, the situation is acted out again, but this time with more effective communication and a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives. This sequence is a great way for families to revise how they communicate. Regarding this approach, Max Su '21, the development coordinator for CHATogether, said, "This process, both going back and rewatching the final project, as well as creating content like this, was very helpful in allowing me to realize my own emotions and work through them, as well as giving you methods that can help you have more effective communication."

With the rise of Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate, CHATogether is a valuable resource for finding a supportive and understanding community. "It's very important in these times to come together because it is very easy to feel alone and afraid. CHATogether really emphasizes finding an AAPI community that will support you," said Su.

CHATogether's resources can be accessed on their website, which provides content such as videos, flashcards, and transcripts on topics including communicating about sexuality, model minorities, and racism. According to Dr. Yuen, the purpose of these resources is to "address cross-cultural issues and child-parent communication."

On Wednesday, April 6, and Friday, April 29, CHATogether will be hosting events on Zoom for Choate, Deerfield Academy, and Yale University students focused on culture shock and cultural literacy for international students.

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ONE BOOK, ONE WALLINGFORD BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

By **Eva Li '24**
Copy Editor

Following the reveal of this year's novel for the One Book, One Wallingford program in early January – *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi – members of the local community have participated in a series of events planned by the Wallingford Public Library.

The main goal of the annual town-wide One Book, One Wallingford reading program is to help bring the local community together by encouraging town residents to read a specific book and gather together to discuss both the novel and its themes. Regarding the program's purpose, Ms. Cindy Haiken, the Readers' Advisory Librarian at the Wallingford Public Library, said, "[these programs are] educational, of course, but they can also serve to broaden people's understanding of complicated issues, especially when the themes of the novel have not touched their lives personally. In addition, coming together to discuss the same book is a way to create connections and break down barriers."

This year, there have been several programs focusing on the various themes of the novel, along with a series of discussions of the book itself. One of the programs hosted was a book discussion with the Ashlar Village Book Group that was moderated by Ms. Haiken on March 3. "I usually provide a biographical overview of the author, and then, usually, I can find the interviews that the author has given when the book came out, and I share some of the quotes from those interviews. I ask people what they thought of the book, and usually, that's enough to get the conversation going," Ms. Haiken explained.

Ms. Leah Farrell, Head of Adult Programming and Community Service at the Wallingford Public Library, found the event "Faith and Science: An Inter-faith Discussion" to be her favorite. Serving as a moderator, she was astonished by the fascinating discussion about what faith meant to each person and was equally amazed by the amount of respect people had for each other in spite of their different beliefs.

"I went in with a certain viewpoint on the relationship between faith and science, and they all really opened my eyes to see that there isn't a conflict. The two in their viewpoints very much support each other, and I think that that was really eye-opening for me personally, as someone who is not religious," Ms. Farrell said.

While most of the programs have taken place at the public library with options to participate over Zoom, a few have been entirely virtual or have taken place in locations away from the library. Ms. Farrell explained, "That way, people could participate in a way that they were most comfortable without having to miss out on the issue if they weren't so comfortable coming in person."

The novel *Transcendent Kingdom* marks the fourth reading of the One Book, One Wallingford program since its founding in 2018. In the past, the library has presented a selection of renowned books, including *The Reason You're Alive* by Matthew Quick in 2018, *Girl Waits with Gun* by Amy Stewart in 2019, and *Furious Hours by Casey Cep* in 2020. Due to the pandemic, however, the 2020 author visit was conducted on Zoom, with the program being canceled entirely the following year.

The One Book, One Wallingford Committee had to consider a variety of factors when choosing from the list of best titles curated by board members. The criteria incorporated relevant themes around which the library can organize programs and events; a book that is relatively new with a broad appeal, and willingness from the author to come to visit Wallingford.

"We do feel that we hit the jackpot with *Transcendent Kingdom*. The book meets every single one of the criteria ... it was one of my favorite reads of 2020, and I think Gyasi is going to be one of the most important writers of her generation. We were overwhelmed when she agreed to come to visit us in Wallingford," said Ms. Haiken.

Dr. Sherry Marrotte-Newman, the Director of the Andrew Mellon Library at Choate and member of the One Book, One Wallingford Board, explained that her decision for picking *Transcendent Kingdom* was heavily influenced by her consideration for the students. "When we voted on it, I was kind of making sure that it would be something that our community would also benefit from, so when picking books, it impacts how all ages can be benefitted from the book."

Ms. Gyasi will be visiting the Paul Mellon Arts Center on April 4 for an author visit as part of the annual One Book, One Wallingford program. Free tickets for the event can be found at the Wallingford Public Library.

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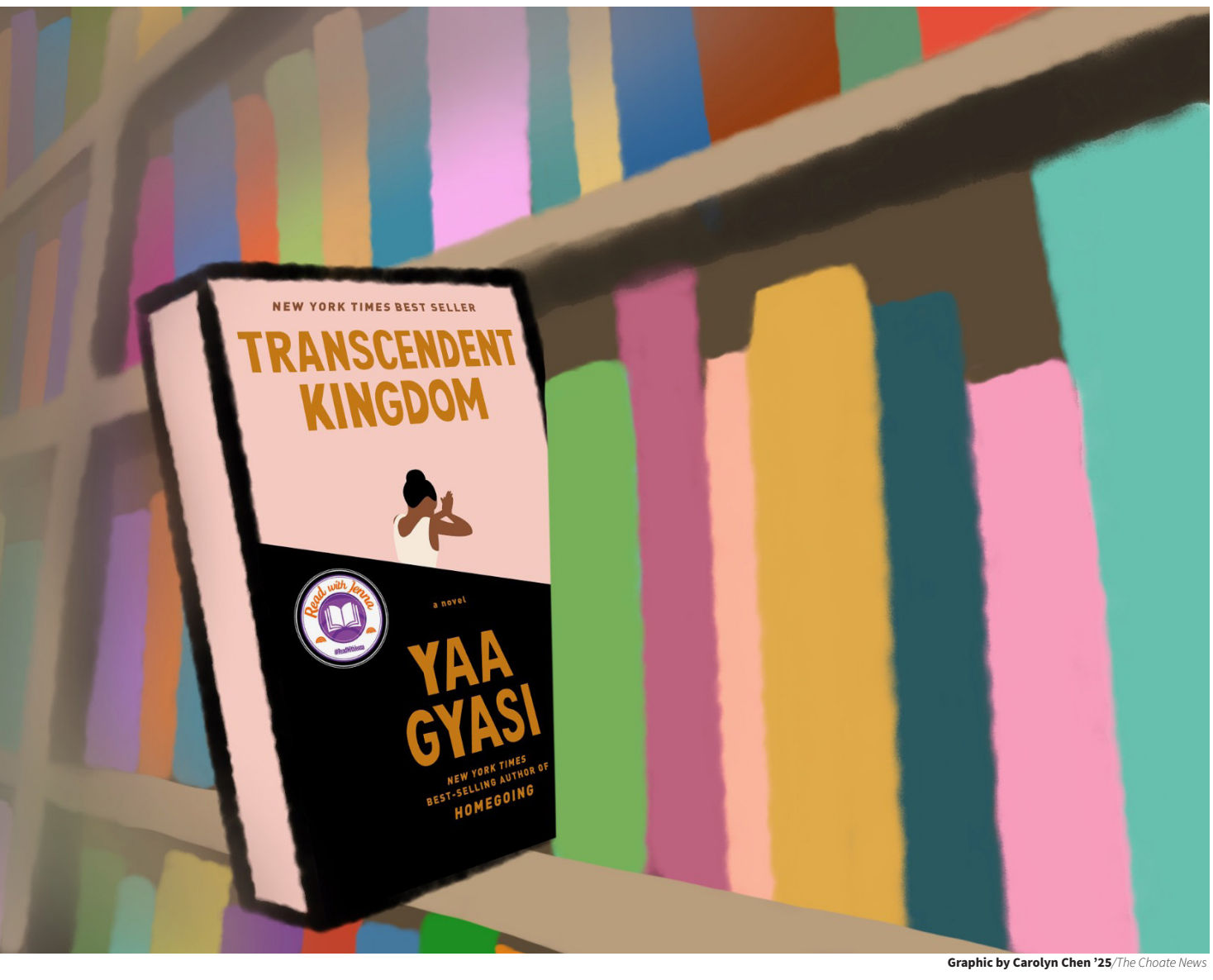

Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

CONNECTICUT IN SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

By **Tyler Kuo '23**
Copy Editor

On February 24, Russian troops began their offensive against Ukraine, triggering a month-long conflict that has since displaced almost four million Ukrainian refugees, killed over 1000 civilians, and caused a humanitarian crisis unseen in Europe since the end of World War II. Yet, Russia has maintained its stance that a modern, West-leaning Ukraine would pose a significant threat to its safety, development, and existence. Despite predictions of a swift victory, Russian forces have been met with fierce, unexpected resistance from Ukraine. In addition, countries across the world have aided Ukraine by providing both economic and military support.

As the war grinds on, the state of Connecticut has continued to show support for Ukraine. Connecticut Senator Mr. Richard Blumenthal visited Ukraine earlier this month with a bipartisan group of senators and delivered remarks on the Senate floor on March 15 to urge for greater assistance to Ukraine. During his visit, he spoke with Ukrainian refugees in the aftermath of the bombing of the Yavoriv military base, located 12 miles from Poland's borders. In his remarks to Congress, Mr. Blumenthal praised the generosity of the Connecticut community, stating, "In Connecticut, we see the Ukrainian-American community providing clothing and blankets, donations, along with the Polish-American community. Indeed, throughout the state of Connecticut and throughout the country, America's hearts are going out to these refugees in this humanitarian crisis. That is what we do in America."

Mr. Chris Murphy, a fellow Connecticut senator who also visited Ukraine, corroborated the importance of bipartisan support. He stated in an article written in *The Day*, "Part of what made my trip so significant was the makeup of our group: four Democrats and three Republicans. Traveling together showed Russia and the world that Republicans and Democrats are united in defending Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression." Mr. Murphy hoped that Putin would be able to take "stock of the situation at hand and the cost of an invasion, and then commit to sitting down with Ukraine, the U.S., and Europe to come to a diplomatic agreement."

Everyday Connecticut citizens are also doing their part to show support for Ukraine. Volunteers at the Ukrainian National Home of Hartford, a cultural center dedicated to creating and maintaining "a center of Ukrainian Cultural and Community life in Central Connecticut," have been helping to move valuable surgical equipment and supplies that will eventually make their way to Ukraine. Myron Kolinsky, the Communications Director for the Ukrainian National Home of Hartford, stated that the Home had completed two 53-foot tractor-trailer shipments with medical supplies, food, and clothing, which will be delivered to the city of Lviv. "Two other relief shipments are planned within the next two weeks," he said.

In addition, police agencies across Fairfield county have donated more than 200 ballistic vests and helmets to aid the war effort in Ukraine. In a department news release, Fairfield Chief of Police Robert Kalamaras stated, "We hope that with this donation of much-needed gear, Ukrainian civilians will have the vital protection needed throughout the ongoing war." Aquiline Drones, a drone manufacturing company based in Connecticut, also plans to send dozens of drones to provide humanitarian aid in Ukraine. Barry Alexander, the Founder and CEO of Aquiline Drones, said, "When you have such crises that involve the loss of life or displacement of human beings, these are extremely beneficial tech tools you need to have at your fingertips. Ideally, they'll provide search and rescue inspections, delivery of pharmaceuticals, or other relief items."

There are numerous ways for Connecticut residents to help Ukraine. Donations to charity organizations such as the International Rescue Committee, the Ukrainian Red Cross, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) play vital roles in supporting refugees displaced by the war. In addition, the local Wallingford government can provide aid to fulfill the needs of new refugees. We can all extend our helping hands to the displaced refugees looking for aid by donating, advocating, or volunteering.

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Reagan Colton'24
Lauren Hsu '24
Melody Qian '24
Aubrie Williams '24
Eva Swanson '25
Analy Vega '25

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Dear Choate Community,

(Excerpt from Ava Maha's inaugural speech)

Ava Maha giving her Student Body Council election speech during School Meeting

Photo Courtesy of Choate Flickr

By **Ava Maha '23**
Opinions Writer

Dear Choate,

Thank you for trusting me to lead the student body and student council. I feel honored to work with the group of driven and brilliant representatives you have elected as your incoming student council. We are very excited to amplify your voices and enact meaningful and tangible change within our community.

I also want to thank the departing council for serving with such vulnerability, advocacy, and grace. To Abby, along with the representatives and faculty advisors, who poured so much love and energy into the School, thank you.

Although we are finally emerging from COVID restrictions, our world isn't the same as in 2019. We have an invasion in Europe, record-high rates of mental health issues and substance abuse, and a general sense of disunity. These issues aren't specific to Choate, but we must acknowledge and support those impacted by them. To kickstart this support on a larger scale, the council is currently determining the recipients of the 5,000 dollars we have fundraised from Daily Grind donut sales. Charities we are considering include funds for Ukrainians in need and mental health services for underserved communities.

The council will also zoom in and examine how these larger world issues manifest on our own campus. For example, whether or not you supported the protests before Spring Break, it is evident that some community members feel the need for more support, so the incoming council will hold listening forums and joint meetings to problem-solve collaboratively.

Although Lex and I were the only students to officially "swear in," I think every single one of us has already sworn into something larger than ourselves.

When we chose to become a member of the community, we all signed on to live under a set of shared values. By signing the dotted line, I believe we swore to stand by our morals and treat ourselves and those around us with dignity and compassion. In a way, we have all sworn in.

If we truly hope to revitalize the spirit of our school, we must collectively act with respect, integrity, and compassion — the values we swore in upon. Yes, the student council has the duty and platform to create change, but to make meaningful progress as a community, every one of us, beyond just the council, must remember that we have sworn in, both for ourselves and one another.

I'm excited to see our school transform, not only from student council initiatives, but also through a sense of shared purpose and appreciation, which I think we are beginning to revive. We have so much to look forward to.

Sincerely,
Ava

Ava Maha *is a fifth-former from Pittsburgh, PA. She may be reached at amaha23@choate.edu*

More Than The High School Stereotype

Graphic by Yujin Kim '23 */The Choate News*

By **Eva Swanson '25**
Staff Reporter

Growing up in the UK, I had little exposure to the stereotypical American high school experience. My only understanding of teenage life came from the plots of various Y2K teen rom-coms and Disney classics — basically, I had no realistic idea of what to expect. Coming to Choate, I comfortably assumed that I wouldn't experience any of the typical high school tropes — the huge football games, exclusive cliques, and negative peer pressure. To my surprise, though the experience differs significantly from that portrayed in the media, the Choate experience and life in these films have surprising parallels.

Growing up with two older sisters, I have watched Mean Girls more times than I can count. Set in Chicago, *Mean Girls* follows the escapades of three high schoolers attempting to sabotage the group of popular girls. The movie depicts aggressive cliques, gossip, drama, intrigue, and, of course, the notorious queen bee. That last trope is a very common one, and one of the few that I thought would definitely translate to my time at Choate. I've realized that, despite the school being reasonably small, the heterogeneity of the community has prevented a single queen bee from emerging as the dictator of all social interaction. While popularity is measured through a subjective lens, I think that here at Choate, it's not doled out based on superficial qualities. Instead, I think that we use talent, intelligence, and skill to dignify our students. The most 'popular' students aren't necessarily the captains of the Basketball team or the person who can throw the most extravagant parties; instead, it's the kids with a bunch of leadership positions, the people you see on stage at school meeting, or the people who don't limit themselves to a single group of friends.

The theme of turbulent relationships is synonymous with the high school experience, leading students to blend into a somewhat homogenous groups. Dictated by impenetrable groups, labeled by single identifiers—think jocks, nerds, and theater kids — in the stereotypical high school setting, people aren't expected to stray from their presumed crowd. At our school, though aspects of these dynamics are ever-present, it is not to the extent depicted in the high school classics. Take *High School Musical*, for example. The song "Stick to the Status Quo" is sung to deter a fellow student from pursuing an interest outside of his encompassing "jock" identity. On the contrary, our school motto is "Be Undefinable"—people at Choate are encouraged to go out of their comfort zone, try new things, and make friends with people that, on the surface, they have nothing in common with.

It is this resilient and supportive attitude that I believe to be the most significant difference between Choate and the high schools seen in media. Choate actively encourages students to focus on their academics, creating an environment of determined students always looking for ways to improve themselves. However, through fostering a community of students who push their limits, Choate pressures students in a way that these high school movies do not. In these movies, it's rare to see students attending classes or doing homework, let alone spending all night trying to perfect their English thesis. This, on top of all the emotions one experiences during adolescence, does make differentiate Choate in this respect.

Though fun to watch from afar, many of the things depicted in these teen movies don't seem very fun to partake in. Though parallels do exist, Choate differs in the challenges and hurdles students must overcome to achieve their desired goal.

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The Pressures of Being Undefinable

Graphic by Evelyn Stanley '24 */The Choate News*

By **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Copy Editor

BE UNDEFINABLE. As the school's newest motto, these two words encapsulate Choate's quintessential goal for its students — a goal that inspires and emphatically encourages both individuality and success. To "be undefinable," you must take risks, try new things, and challenge your limits until you are the very best, but at what point do these words turn from an inspirational slogan to an unattainable standard of academic and extracurricular participation? I believe there are many tracks one can take to become undefinable depending on their unique definition of this goal. Some of these paths are euphoric and exciting, while others have the potential to be dangerous.

The adjective "undefinable" is associated with qualities like perfection, excellence, and being better than the best. Many interpret this motto as a requirement; in other words, this advice convinces students to overwork themselves and exceed the natural boundaries built to protect their mental health and wellbeing. In the eyes of far too many, the school motto implies that you should take six classes, play two sports, and join five clubs while being president of two more. For too many, the message received is, "Sleep three hours tonight, so that you can ace that test! That way, you'll be excellent!"

Telling a student, who might already be struggling just to complete their classwork, to "Be Undefinable!" is like telling someone who is unhappy to "Be Positive!" It is a statement that is short, sweet, and simple; hence, it often misleads into thinking it's easily achievable. The video that you see when you first open the Choate website showcases students who, in the eyes of the school, have achieved this definition of "undefinability." They're seen smiling and high-fiving their teammates after a hard practice while the voiceover raves about how Choate students will save the world. It's a picture-perfect image of what we should be, but it doesn't show the behind the scenes.

It doesn't show those same students staying up until 3 a.m. to finish their work because they had too many commitments during the day; it doesn't show them running across campus, trying to be on time for everything they have to do; and it doesn't show the stress, pressure, and burnout that comes with trying to reach such a high expectation. The straightforward facade of this advice can lead to students feeling like a failure when they can't navigate a million different activities. While it's important to encourage students to embrace all parts of who they are, they shouldn't be made to feel like "less than" someone else just because they also need time to relax or — God forbid — take a nap.

In other ways, the "Be Undefinable" motto has contributed to some of my worst days and nights. There are times when I want nothing more than to go to sleep, but I force myself to keep studying until I know everything about Newton's Laws to ace my test. I've seen the pressure to "work until you drop" cause so many of my friends to suffer, and, even worse, I've seen the people who are supposed to be our role models continuously perpetuate this toxic culture. This idea that we are obligated to do it all and exceed expectations has, on more than one occasion, imprisoned my peers in a state of suffering — fearing that they will fail, afraid they are not enough.

Ultimately, the vague nature of this motto means its message is subjective. One's home life, personal beliefs, and so forth, determine how they interpret the command to "Be Undefinable." It can encourage a path of exploration and freedom or a path of joylessness, stress, and feeling inadequate. Instead of being "undefinable," I think we should strive to simply be proud of the people we are without feeling like we constantly need to pile more obligations onto our already fragile plates. I alone am not creative enough to come up with something catchy and new, but I do know there is a more suitable motto out there. If the student and faculty body work together, perhaps we will find it.

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RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE

The United States Must Provide Aid to Ukraine

Graphic by Brian Yip '24/*The Choate News*

By **Helen Ryan '24**
Opinions Writer

On an average weekday night, American students spend their time preparing for the school day ahead. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, teenagers are forced to evacuate their homes and hide in bomb shelters to protect themselves from the imminent threat of Russia's invasion. Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, initially launched his military campaign in February, and it has since escalated to a full-scale war. Major Ukrainian cities are under siege. The port city of Kherson was left unrecognizable as Russia fought to seize the area, ultimately succeeding on March 2. Museums, universities, and other landmarks have crumbled to the ground, and the lives of Ukrainian citizens have been forever changed. As of March 16, an estimated 250 citizens have been killed in Kharkiv alone. While civilians face death and destruction in Ukraine, we must ask ourselves — what responsibility do we Americans have to the Ukrainian people?

Aid is essential to ending the crisis in Ukraine. The U.S. cannot sit by idly while Ukraine suffers. Thankfully, on March 11, President Joe Biden signed a funding bill into law that includes 13.6 billion dollars in emergency aid for Ukraine. Aid given by the U.S. will go toward humanitarian relief, disaster assistance, and helping refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) within Ukraine. The U.S. has given indirect military assistance in the form of weapons from the U.S. defense stocks. The total amount of aid the U.S. is providing exceeds the amount in the package itself. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), "On the ground, the [agency] is partnering with United Nations agencies to position critical relief supplies throughout Ukraine." These supplies include emergency food, surgery, medical kits, thermal blankets, sanitation, and an additional $107 million in humanitarian aid.

This is not the first time that the U.S. has provided emergency relief and humanitarian aid to a country. The world cannot function if countries do not help each other in times of crisis, and the U.S. has plenty of resources to lend to Ukraine. It is important to think about what the near future will look like. So far, the Biden administration has supplied arms to the Ukrainian army but has rejected a Polish proposal to send fighter jets to Ukraine with U.S. help. This is a good line to draw as of now because direct military support in Ukraine could cause this war to escalate to a global level. It is important not to act impulsively by sending its troops preemptively, especially when it comes to a situation as delicate as the one at hand.

Some argue that because Ukraine is not a member of NATO, the U.S. does not have a responsibility to protect them. However, if we refuse to support Ukraine in any capacity, it will send a dangerous message to the rest of the world — that the US will turn its back to unjust attacks on its allies. No one can truly predict what the future of this war is, but if the U.S. is able and willing, they can help support Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion.

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Sending American Troops to Ukraine is a Dangerous Move

By **Stanley Cho '25**
Copy Editor

As the war between Ukraine and Russia rages on, the United States is at a crossroads on whether or not to intervene militarily. Though the United States has an extensive history of partaking in international conflicts, they have shown reservations in the amount of support they have supplied to Ukraine. Though it may seem that the militaristic assistance from the United States is essential to the protection of Ukraine and to bring an end to the Russian invasion, the underlying repercussions could lead to the destruction of international relationships and political policies.

Just weeks after President of Russia Vladimir Putin promised that Russia's "special military operations" would not endanger the civilians of Ukraine nor threaten the control over the territory, the Russian military has levied significant damages on the country. Since the initial invasion on February 24, multiple countries have demonstrated their support for Ukraine by imposing heavy economic sanctions on Russia. In addition, more than twenty-five nations have provided support to the militaristic efforts in Ukraine through donations of ammunition, weaponry, and tactical gear.

However, none of these nations have provided direct militaristic support through the use of troops in Ukraine, largely due to the fear of damages because of these countries' concerns about Russia's response. The creation of nuclear weapons during the Second World War led to a drastic change in global politics, as countries do not want to be the leading cause of an uncontrollable international nuclear war. To make matters worse, Putin referenced its nuclear arsenal by stating that any country that interferes with its invasion will face "consequences you have never seen." The weaponization of the fear of mutually assured destruction mirrors the conflict seen during the Cold War, and the United States ought to be determined to prevent nuclear warfare at all costs.

Despite the possibility of a nuclear war, many individuals support the idea that the United States should provide extensive support to their Ukrainian allies through weaponry and military personnel. First, supporters of militaristic intervention look back on the United States' history of interfering in international conflicts to spread their influence across the world. Through historical events such as the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the War in Afghanistan, the United States has provided significant support to their international allies financially, politically, and militarily. The United States' push for global freedom, safety, and democracy has led it to intervene in multiple global conflicts, which has caused supporters to question the support that the U.S. has withheld from Ukraine.

In addition, supporters of militaristic intervention fear that the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine may set a frightening precedent that would allow countries with a nuclear arsenal to invade other countries. International conflicts previously suppressed from the fear of intervention from the United States may occur as a result of its inaction in Ukraine. Such conflicts may include a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, an Indian invasion of Pakistan, or an Israeli invasion of Iran. It is due to these reasons that many individuals have expressed their desire for the United States to increase their support for Ukraine through a supply of American soldiers.

Unfortunately, despite the implications that the United States' limited action may have on global political stability, it is imperative to consider the severe consequences that may result from the United States' participation in the war in Ukraine. First, frequent international interventions made by the United States have led to serious complications in global politics. Unfortunately, most of the foreign interventions made by the United States since World War II were unable to achieve their objectives as they were disturbed by limitations such as political outrage or financial insufficiency. Militaristic interventions of the past have also been shown to cause significant repercussions on the United States' economy and international relationships. The United States' intervention in the Russian invasion of Ukraine will endanger the current stability of U.S.-Russian relationships and may escalate the current conflict into a full-fledged war between the two global superpowers.

Second, the United States must consider the financial implications that increased support for the Ukrainian invasion may have on the U.S. economy. The United States has already faced severe consequences in their limited support of the Ukrainian military through increased prices in commodities and resources such as gas due to Russian boycotts against the United States. Increased support for the Ukrainian invasion will lead to increased spending of taxpayer money on the United States' military funding and increased severity of Russian boycotts. The United States should avoid setting a precedent of allowing countries to conduct invasions by interfering only when North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies are under attack. Such change in the intervention policy of the United States will allow for the maintenance of global security while considering the United States' international political relationships. This balance in foreign intervention will allow us to protect the American people and maintain global political stability.

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POKING THE BEAR: THE REAL CAUSE OF THE WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

By **Adam Carroll '23**
Opinions Staff Writer

Graphic by William Gao '24/*The Choate News*

If you're anything like the average American, you've been watching mainstream Western media and seeing every political commentator set up the same rigid dichotomy on the subject of Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine is said to be the virtuous, brave, and resilient little guy who is being picked on. Russia is said to be the immoral, ruthless, and expansionist schoolyard bully looking to "rebuild the Soviet Union." However, clinging on so tightly to this simple message prevents us from understanding the conflict and identifying the correct solution. In fact, the way we view the conflict has prevented us from seeing Vladimir Putin's motivation for attacking Ukraine — the expansion of the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO). Despite the effort of the West to completely change the structure of international politics, it has become clear that Russia was forced to keep Ukraine as a buffer zone between itself and NATO due to the West's history of political intervention and Russia's view of the treaty as something dangerous.

Since NATO was initially formed as a treaty to protect against an attack of Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union, it is unsurprising that Russia has declared in meetings following the collapse of the Soviet Union that they do not want NATO to move too far East. According to Lord Ismay, the first Secretary-General of NATO, the organization's premise is "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." Therefore, as the Cold War came to a close, the Soviet leadership wanted to ensure that they could go through a new nation-building process uninterrupted by NATO aggression. This is why in February 1990, when discussing the expansion of NATO, the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, repeatedly promised, "not one inch eastward," to the Chairman of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. However, at the 2008 Bucharest Summit, the Bush Administration and NATO went back on their words in their proposal for Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO. Snap. That's the sound of broken promises and the broken illusion of a new liberal order in Europe.

Though it may seem like Ukraine's prerogative to join NATO, the issue is that by excluding Russia, NATO won't be able to operate as a peaceful and inclusive treaty; it will continue to act as the same anti-Russian military coalition it was during the Cold War. During an interview with the *BBC* in 2000 about the possibility of Russia joining NATO, Putin said, "Why not? I do not rule out such a possibility ... if it will be an equal partner." Yet, Russia has never actively pursued or had its terms met by NATO. The consequences of excluding Russia are seen in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the 2014 Annexation of Crimea, and, of course, the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War.

NATO failed to realize that Putin was not on the same page, as he clearly outlined in a 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference. Putin stated, "I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with ensuring security in Europe. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended?" Russia has a right to be worried in this case because while we are inclined to think that Western democracies are always correct, they attempt to dispose of leaders they disagree with left and right. These regime changes often lead to political turmoil and civil unrest. So it's not unreasonable for Russia to fear what the actions of the West might lead to.

To understand the precipitating causes of the ongoing disaster, we must look at the U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership and Ukraine's progression toward the West's orbit. Following years of new arms deals between the West and Ukraine, in November 2021, the U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership was introduced with the aim to "underscore...a commitment to Ukraine's implementation of the deep and comprehensive reforms necessary for full integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions." Concerning this new development and failed negotiations that sought to guarantee that Ukraine will not join NATO, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, "We reached our boiling point." This is the main reason we have a war in Eastern Europe.

Yet, the most pressing issue is that since we currently have a war, what should the United States do from here now that we understand the principal cause of the conflict? Once again, the United States is tasked with the responsibility of putting itself in Russia's shoes. In this country, the idea of the Monroe Doctrine, an allegiant and democratic hemisphere, looms large. Think about the Cuban Missile Crisis. We almost went to nuclear war on the prospect of an enemy with a foreign ideology entering our hemisphere. Should Russia have to hold itself to a different standard than the U.S. and tolerate a NATO-aligned Ukraine? Professor Jeffrey Sachs at Columbia University pointed out, "Neither the U.S. nor Russia wants the other's military on their doorstep." Therefore, the United States must create a plan that acknowledges this fundamental truth to create peace and protect Ukrainian sovereignty. Greek economist Yanis Varoufakis expressed it as "a Washington-Moscow agreement that Russia withdraws in exchange for a commitment of Ukrainian neutrality." Russia needs to have its voice heard because no one would want to see the consequences when Russia is pushed to its breaking point. If no other off-ramp is given to Putin, nuclear destruction would be imminent. The solution that will save the most lives is ensuring a neutral Ukraine through guarantees of denial from NATO and Euro-Atlantic organizations. The United States' foreign policy needs a dose of pragmatism to save the Ukrainian crisis from spiraling.

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April Fools' Special: A Look Into JFK's Muckers Club

By Jacqueline Yan '24
Copy Editor

Ask not what mischief you can concoct for April Fools, but what mischief April Fools can concoct for you. Those were the words not-quite-spoken by John F. Kennedy '35, the famed 35th president of the United States and, of course, founder of the School's "Muckers Club."

Kennedy, nicknamed "Jack" and "Ken" by his friends, was an infamous prankster, ladies' man, and charmer. Though not the most dedicated student, he won the hearts of many young girls and the vote for "Most Likely to Succeed" among his class with his charismatic personality, witty sense of humor, and "a smile that could charm a bird off a tree," as described by the headmaster at the time, George St. John.

A firm non-believer and saboteur of rules, Kennedy made sure to stir up lots of trouble for St. John during his four years at Choate. Unlike his elder brother Joseph P. Kennedy '33, who was often regarded as the "golden child," Kennedy sought out misbehavior and naughtiness as another way to define and make a name for himself. With his loyal band of friends and troublemakers, Kennedy founded "The Muckers Club," a scheme to mock authority. Ironically, the group's name was inspired by St. John's many, very public harangues, during which he would call students whom he saw as going against his vision of an Episcopalian school "muckers."

The Muckers had a room within proximity to the dining hall, and exclusive membership was required to participate in the discussion of forthcoming pranks during the after-dinner period. The club grew so steadily in size that it soon came to be known as the unofficial opposition party within the School. In fact, to proudly display their status as Muckers, the 13 boys decided to strike a golden emblem that could be worn. After a hefty fee of $12 and the work of a Wallingford jeweler, the Muckers each received a little golden shovel with their respective initials and "CMC" — which stood for Choate Muckers Club — engraved on it.

Though many details of their successful pranks may be lost to time, it was rumored that a young Kennedy blew up a school toilet with a powerful firecracker. Another oft-told tale is that he persuaded his classmates and friends to aid him in a scheme to fill another student's room completely with pillows. One particularly nasty prank almost cost all the Muckers their graduation certificates and was thwarted before it could be carried out. According to Mucker Paul Chase '35, Kennedy boasted to his roommate about their plan to pile horse manure on the dance floor during Spring Festivities and take pictures with their golden shovels. Kennedy's roommate, who took him for his word, informed the headmaster of their latest plot. Thankfully, after much deliberation, St. John rescinded the order for their expulsion notice and allowed the students back onto campus. However, St. John made sure to punish them by keeping them on campus for a few extra days during Easter vacation.

Kennedy's time at Choate was characterized by plenty of mischief, fun, and laughter. According to reports from teachers, he was a bright student who excelled at subjects he liked but lacked that same dedication towards subjects he cared little for, such as Latin and French. He was a leader amongst his friends, a mischievous prankster, but most importantly, a young boy who was enjoying his teenage years at Choate.

Kennedy's suave, witty personality accompanied him beyond high school and even into his presidency. At the start of a Paris news conference in 1961, he cheered up the crowd by remarking the sensation that his wife caused among the French people. "I do not think it altogether inappropriate to introduce myself to this audience," he said. "I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have enjoyed it."

Happy April Fools' Day to all you Choate Muckers, and may you concoct your own comic plots (without earning a letter of dismissal, of course)!

John F. Kennedy '35 (right) had a loyal group of friends at Choate.

Photo courtesy of the Choate Archives

Jacqueline Yan *may be reached at jyan24@choate.edu*

Choate's Radio Station: It's Dead Air From Here

By Kate Bailey '22
Features Editor, 115th Masthead

One weekday in 1988, students' cheers started in Memorial House, then Library, then spread further. The radio show they'd been tuning into had been interrupted: tomorrow was President's Day. The announcement didn't come over email, Instagram, or even the phone — instead, the fastest way to get the word out was through Choate's own radio station.

WWEB 89.9 FM first hit the airwaves in 1969 as Choate's student-run radio station. For the next four decades, its staff — sometimes small but sometimes numbering in the dozens — broadcasted a mix of music and news to audiences on and off campus nearly every night.

Through the '70s, the station focused on news. A number of shows tackled national news, responding to the decade's thorny political climate. In the weeks leading up to the 1972 election, for instance, sixteen- and seventeen-year-old hosts interviewed numerous significant figures, such as Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and spokesmen from the Nixon and McGovern campaigns.

Students, many of whom had small radios in their rooms, listened in. A 1973 editorial in *The Choate News* described the station as "the new forum of this community," since it was a daily, always-updated broadcast.

By the time the '90s rolled around, though, WWEB, which always had some music mixed in, decidedly became a music station. DJs — a coveted gig for which there was, at one point, a 120-student waitlist — got to pick music from their personal collection or the station's own record library.

DJs embraced that freedom. Show taglines from the 2002–03 school year include: "We are eclectic so listen to us" and "Meaningful music/noise broadcasted from under your underground." According to a 1994 article in the *New Haven Register*, the sometimes-bizarre mishmash of genres was "dubbed 'Choate rock' [and] went by names like 'noise,' 'industrial,' and 'techno.'"

Fifth-form dean Mr. Will Gilyard '98, who hosted a WWEB show with his best friend, described the experience as "incredible, because we played music that we thought our community would love. It was mostly hip hop and R&B, but we also played songs that were obscure to us." He continued, "We would spend a couple of days thinking about our playlist and what we would talk about. Sometimes we stuck to it, and sometimes not."

As the only radio station based in Wallingford, its programming also attracted local audiences, who would sometimes call in with song requests. Mr. Gilyard said, "It was as if we had a real following, despite the reality that it may have been ten people listening from Wallingford. We embraced those ten."

While WWEB's news days cast a more objective view on Choate and the nation, the variety of shows from its music-focused period put the individuality of each DJ up front. Mr. Gilyard, who said that his show mirrored those from his hometown of the Bronx, said, "We wanted to share our passions, thoughts, and experiences with our peers in a way that gave them access to our culture."

The station fizzled out for good in the early 2010s. It's unclear what, exactly, caused it to go off air for the last time, but one can infer: Spotify; social media; mass emails for President's Day announcements. Although there is still some equipment in its old broadcasting room on the third floor of the humanities building, the School hasn't paid any licensing fees in several years.

In fact, WWEB's license with the Federal Communications Commission expires today, April 1. Choate's 89.9 FM will probably be taken over by a nice classical station, or perhaps a NPR affiliate. And it seems that WWEB won't get a funeral.

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Photo courtesy of the Choate Archives

WWEB, Wallingford's only radio station, faded out after being hosted by Choate for four decades.

Ava Gizzie '23 Shares Unique Perspectives Through Podcast

By Brian Harder '23
Staff Reporter

In December of 2021, Ava Gizzie '23 created her own podcast called *anthroposcreen extinctions* where she speaks with peers on topics that matter to them in a thoughtful, introspective way. As of now, a few months into the project, Gizzie has put out four episodes on topics ranging from communism to religion, and multiple Choate students have had the opportunity to be on the podcast.

Gizzie's decision to create a podcast came from a friend's suggestion. "I've always been into doing podcasts and recording ... so I thought it was a great opportunity," she said. The podcast's current name is based on Gizzie's yearlong biology project on the Anthropocene Extinction, but she modified it to "anthroposcreen" to frame the podcast as a way to "get off technology and go out into the world." Since *anthroposcreen extinctions* is still young, Gizzie has not come up with a specific purpose yet; however, its premise so far has been having "introspective, analytical, and self-actualized" conversations with her peers, according to the podcast's description.

Through her podcast, Gizzie is able to share a unique perspective on any given topic with her listeners. On a personal level, she expands her own horizons by learning about what her peers have to say. "There is an opportunity for both parties to get involved with something that is not typical in the Choate curriculum," Gizzie said. Compared to traditional extracurriculars like athletics or arts, *anthroposcreen extinctions* involves an unlimited number of disciplines.

Gizzie does not have a set schedule for the podcast; instead, she records episodes whenever it seems feasible. She is the one to approach others and invite them on the podcast, and so far she has recorded four episodes with three of her friends at Choate. In the second episode, she hosted Mwendwa Daisley '23 to discuss Seven-Day Adventism, a form of Christianity. "A lot of the topics discussed are philosophical questions and thought-provoking things that would make a great podcast," Daisley said when asked to explain why he was interested in being on the podcast. In terms of deciding on a topic, Gizzie strives to "do episodes with people on topics that they're passionate about" in order for their enthusiasm to shine through.

In preparation for episodes, Gizzie creates guiding questions and general themes, though "the conversations are more free-flowing" and dependent on what her guest wants to talk about. While she had to do some audio editing for the first episode, Gizzie generally makes minimal edits. "I just make sure that the sound is okay and there's not too much static, but I don't edit any words out," she explained.

According to Gizzie, this project has not been too challenging. "It's not a difficult project in any way, and it was something that I really wanted to do and am passionate about on the side," she said. Generating a larger listener base is always a goal to strive for, but creating the podcast itself has proved to be straightforward.

Going forward, Gizzie is looking to put out more episodes of her podcast and expand her listening base. When asked about how he would recommend the podcast to others, Daisley said, "The one thing about this podcast is that it's things that help you experience the world in a different way and things that you actually take away." Gizzie's main strategy to attract more listeners is through word of mouth as opposed to social media.

Gizzie's work with *anthroposcreen extinctions* has allowed her peers to share something meaningful with a broader audience. Listeners are able to learn about a topic that is likely foreign to them, and the seat is open to anyone with something meaningful to discuss. As Gizzie put it, "I and the other party get to broaden our horizons, and people get to listen in on that."

Photo by Garrett Curtis '24/*The Choate News*

Ava Gizzie '23 created *anthroposcreen extinctions* last December.

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Spring Dance Concert
PMAC Main Stage April 1 and 2 7:30 PM

The Dance Concert: I.M. Pei, Dance Parties, and Physioballs

By **Laya Raj '24**
Copy Editor

I.M. Pei's Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) stands proudly on the Choate campus as the budding home to inspiration and creativity. In this year's annual Spring Dance Concert, the PMAC itself became a source of inspiration. Reflecting a remarkable variety in student and faculty choreographed pieces, the juxtaposition between I.M. Pei's angular architecture and nature's rounded shapes, large physioballs, and the spirit of Latin American dance forms inspired some of the pieces that will grace the PMAC stage on April 1 and 2.

Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/*The Choate News*

Dance Company rehearses "Cántalo" (top left), "Artificial Nature" (top right), and "Your Higher Self" (bottom row) during dress rehearsal.

"Artificial Nature" by Mrs. Sandra Parks

When choreographing "Artificial Nature," Mrs. Sandra Parks, the Arts Department Director, was greatly influenced by Pei's work, including the PMAC. "He was inspired by nature a lot, but he used harsh lines to define nature for us in some way," Mrs. Parks said.

Mrs. Parks created the first movement phrases for this piece from images of Pei's architecture. While looking at the ubiquitous triangles, squares, and circles, she pondered what the "harsh line cutting through nature" meant to her. Explaining her thought process, she said, "That got me into a more of an emotional space and sort of just embodying those emotions was how the movement came about." Mrs. Parks further explored the concept of contrast by showcasing the jarring juxtaposition between large movements and small gestures.

When she began her choreographic process, the Instrumental Ensembles Director, Mr. Gene Wie, reached out to Mrs. Parks with "Blue Motions" by Alan Terricciano for a potential project that the Dance and Music Departments could collaborate on. Coincidentally, the way that this piece for string quartet shifts from being energetic and abrupt in the beginning to being slow and smooth in the end aligned perfectly with Mrs. Parks's exploration of the rigid architectural lines present in the rounded shapes of nature. For the performance, live musicians will be accompanying the dancers on stage.

Since the sharpness from the beginning of the music brought about a sense of confrontation, the piece starts with the dancers briskly walking toward the audience in silence. "We tend to not have that direct connection to the audience," she said. "So I was like, alright, let me first go break that and see where the piece goes."

Although the music for this piece was decided on prior to the start of rehearsals, the dancers did not dance with the music until the final weeks before the performance. "I did not want to have the dancers to go with the beat, but with the overall feeling," said Mrs. Parks. Marissa Jacobs '24, a dancer in "Artificial Nature", added, "I think the music complements what I'm doing when I'm dancing. It's not the driving force, but it helps with pacing and the quality of movement."

"Cántalo" by Irene GarciaGutierre '22

Incorporating elements of flamenco, salsa, cumbia, perreo, and hip-hop, flamenco dancer Irene GarciaGutierre '22's "Cántalo" is a joyful experience for both the audience and the dancers. "I wanted to do a dance that resembled the parties I grew up with, and so I wanted to incorporate the different styles of dancing I saw in them," she said. She chose the song "Cántalo" by Bad Bunny, Residente, and Ricky Martin to accompany her piece, which reflects the different styles of dance displayed. Staying true to the inspiration, she would blast the music for this piece in Colony Hall every Sunday, where she would have a dance party by herself. Through noting down the movements that came to her naturally when dancing to the pulsing rhythms of the music, she created a piece that brought a party to the stage.

Olivia Siegel '24, a dancer in "Cántalo", said of the piece: "The choreography is a lot about having fun and celebrating ... we have a lot of good formations, we spin, and we trade partners — it's very dynamic."

"Your Higher Self" by Ms. Shelley Morigno

"Your Higher Self" portrays the mysterious ways of the human mind and features a rather interesting prop — large physioballs. Dance Faculty member, Ms. Shelley Morigno, came upon this idea by accident when stretching with a physioball before teaching a class at Choate two years ago. "It just kind of dawned on me like, 'oh,' [it] would be really cool to create a piece with such a large complicated prop — complicated in the sense that it's rolling [around and] moving," Ms. Morigno said.

The relationship between the dancers and the physioballs represents the ideomotor effect, which is a hypnotic state that takes place when the brain takes control of what the body is doing without the mind being aware of it. The first half of the piece embodies the ideomotor effect with omnipresent physioballs and fluid movements; the latter half grapples with the difficulty of regaining awareness of the mind and body, which is depicted by sharp and fast movements, independent of the unpredictability of the physioballs. "It's a contrast, and you have to switch mindsets," said Yuko Tanaka '22, a dancer in the piece, when describing the challenge of embodying the two phases of the ideomotor effect.

Final Thoughts

As this year's pieces cover a wide array of styles, dancers have had to transition quickly between drastically different dances. "The dynamics of the movement is very different, and the presence you have to have on stage is different," Siegel noted. "[However,] I think that it's very entertaining for the audience to see such a variety because, otherwise, we'd get very monotone, especially in a longer show like ours."

Dance is a product of any inspiration; the pieces in this year's program are as unique as the choreographers and dancers who make up Choate's Dance Company. Together, they showcase the diversity of dance present in the Choate community.

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Raving Reading Recs

Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata

By **Celina Wei '23**
Reporter

Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata is a love tale drenched in a beautifully depressing tone that can be condensed into one word: futility. The novel won Kawabata the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986. *Snow Country* allows readers to dip their toes into the vast world of Japanese literature, as it is a classic work that explores its common themes of love, nature, innocence, and the arts.

At the beginning of the book, Shimamura, the protagonist, looks out the train windows and sighs at the twilight, which is nothing more than a mirage. Everything that happens in his relationship with Komako builds upon the illusion. In the desolate snow country, Shimamura does nothing more than immerse himself in the illusion, admiring Komako's stunning yet austere beauty.

The everlasting snow in the village strips away hope from people like Shimamura and Komako, so they seek comfort in love. Shimamura lives a wealthy life in a prosperous city, but he lacks any sort of passion. His heart is like still water; he falls in love with a short enthusiasm, only to be forgotten quickly. His greatest sorrow is that he knows himself too well and sees the futility too clearly, so he pulls himself away from hatred, love, and resentment. Shimamura knows that Komako's love and sustenance for him are completely illusory, yet he accepts it happily and carefully chooses a time to leave.

There are many details in the novel that allude to Komako's state of being: the delicate sewing box and the cabinet of straight tungsten wood, both of which are remnants of her life in Tokyo. She is skilled at playing the shamisen, a three-stringed traditional Japanese instrument, and is in fact the best in the village, but she is unknown anywhere else. She is unable to feel fulfilled and depicts herself as the failure of her city. She seduces Shimamura intentionally because he embodies the ideal life in Tokyo — a life Komako yearns for. Komako loves Shimamura with a passion symbolic to women in Japanese literature. Her manufactured love is built on her hopes; she never feels as if her actions are in vain, as long as there is a vague hope. Her mistake is that she roots her hope of salvation in a man who does not even have the ability to help himself.

Along with this idea of desperate love, many other hallmarks of Japanese literature lead the novel's progression. The theme of nature that is prominent in many other Japanese works is connected to Komako through the presentation of Shimamura's desires and the reflection of Komako's character. In addition, the pursuit of innocence and the arts supports every decision made by all the characters. *Snow Country* can be the introductory gateway to Japanese literature, especially for anyone interested in exploring its common themes as well as Japanese culture on the whole.

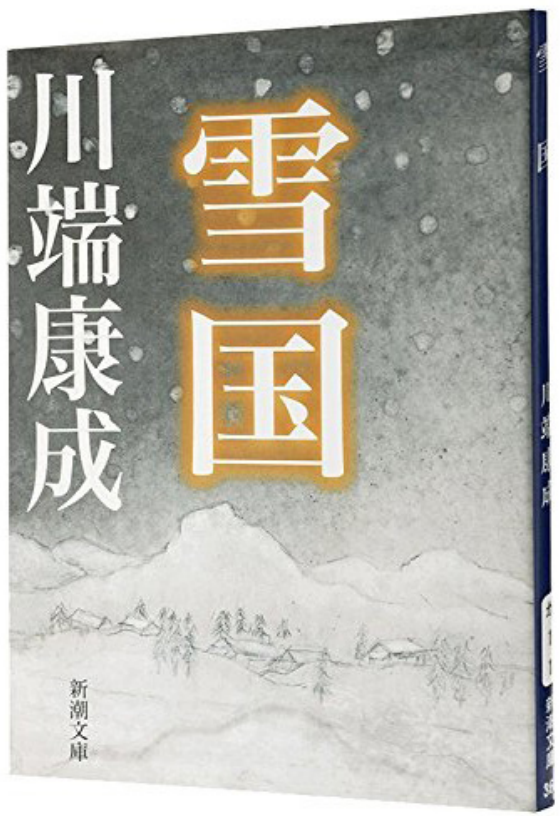

Photo Courtesy of AbeBooks

Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata with its Japanese cover.

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CHOATE ARTISTS DRAW ON LIFE

By **Erin Li '24**
Copy Editor

On the second floor of the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC), easels are scattered on the concrete floors, canvases line the walls, and still-life setups are laid out on tables. In this studio, artists in the Life Drawing class diligently work on their pieces.

Life Drawing (VA450HO), an honors-level visual arts course taught by Ms. Jessica Cuni in the winter term, allows students to further develop their abilities to draw from observation, understand the basic human anatomy, and learn to convey the human form expressively.

When asked about why he decided to take Life Drawing, Braydon Ellis '22 said, "I really wanted to challenge myself and try to learn how to draw things from life." Cathy Liu '24 was also intrigued by the course because of the opportunity it provided to further develop her artistic abilities. "The class seemed cool, and I wanted to learn more about drawing people," she said. While Liu and Ellis were enthusiastic about the class from the start, Kate Bailey '22 had taken a break from art and hoped to use this course as an opportunity to get involved again. Still, she said, "It ended up being a really great choice. I'm glad that I switched in."

One class activity included a direct-observation drawing of a nude model. Bailey appreciated the experience and thought it was "the best way to learn about anatomy, form, and how to draw it." Liu also liked that she could draw a real person. "Before, I drew more from sculptures or from other pictures but not something real life in 3D," she noted.

Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/*The Choate News*

Artwork made by Alex Reitman '22 (left) and Sejin Kim '22 (right).

Students also engaged in a blind drawing activity, where they had to draw without looking down at the page. Ellis appreciated how it let him "laugh at what [he] made" and "establish a good dynamic for the rest of the class." Completing this activity earlier in the year allows students to approach the course in a less stressful environment. "It's good to remember that you don't always need to compare yourself to other people," Ellis added.

Ms. Cuni incorporated fun activities into the course to help students de-stress and find inspiration. Bailey noted that she enjoyed meditation drawing, in which students meditated for a few minutes, then drew freely. "A lot of other parts of that class were really focused on getting everything right ... but the meditation drawings were more like letting your brain flow," she said.

One common challenge that students faced was the rigorous coursework, as Life Drawing is the most advanced drawing class at Choate. "It was definitely a learning curve for me to kind of get back into [drawing]. But, with it being serious, it was also a very supportive environment," said Bailey.

The time-sensitive drawings also proved to be a challenge. Ellis said, "Since we're drawing live models, it's much more pressing that you need to finish your drawing within the class because, obviously, the model is going to get up and leave; you can't spend as long as you'd like on it." Liu concurred that the class helped her adjust to working faster: "We really have to draw the outline and do the shading in that period of time."

Overall, the students thoroughly enjoyed the class and its unique opportunities. "My takeaway is that there's always a new way to look at the world because you spend so much time looking at the little things — looking at people and the objects we draw," said Ellis.

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SPORTS

Friday, April 1, 2022

SATURDAY PREVIEW

Choate Spring Season

Varsity Games

Boys' Tennis Away
vs. St. Paul's School
@ 2 pm

Girls' Tennis Away
vs. Philips Academy
@ 4 pm

Girls' Softball Away
vs. Greens Farms Academy @ 2:30 pm

Frisbee Away
vs. Gunnery School
@ 3 pm

Sailing Away
vs. Super 10's
@ 9 am

Girls' Water Polo Away
vs. Staples High School
@ 3 pm

Girls' Baseball Away
vs. Avons Old Farms School @ 3:30 pm

Boys' Lacrosse Away
vs. Pomfret School
@ 4:30 pm

Boys' Volleyball Away
vs. Phillips Academy
@ 4:30 pm

Girls' Lacrosse Away
vs. Phillips Exeter Academy @ 4:30 pm

J.V. Games

Boys' Lacrosse Scrimmage Home
vs. Litchfield Hills
@ 3pm

SACHI MEHRA '23 MAKES CHOATE WRESTLING HISTORY

Photo by Garrett Curtis '23/*The Choate News*

Sachi Mehra poses for a photo outside the SAC.

Photo courtesy of Choate Communications

Mehra wrestling at the National Prep Wrestling Championship.

By **Olympia Wolff '25**
Reporter

Sachi Mehra '23 made history as Choate's first female All-American wrestler at the 2022 National Prep Wrestling Championships, where she ranked fifth in the female division. This year marked Mehra's first season as a wrestler, but this was not her first time competing in a male-dominated sport. In the fall, she's a wide receiver, corner, and kickoff for Choate's football team.

Rather than playing basketball as she had done in the past, Mehra was encouraged by her friends to join the wrestling team. "By doing football in the fall, it made me more open to the idea of wrestling," said Mehra. Mehra's openness gave her a straight shot to victory. She began her first season with a fiery motivation to learn the sport and devoted time to refine her skills outside of the intense practice schedule. She had a team full of supportive teammates and coaches who guided her throughout the season, many of whom she knew from football. "Football guys are very supportive; as I progressed through the season and as I improved, they were there to support me, be there for my victories, console me if I lost, they pushed me to get better," Mehra remarked. The team created an environment where Mehra was able to thrive and succeed in tournaments, leading to her accomplishment of making Choate wrestling history.

Mehra has set the tone for young girls at Choate who aspire to compete in male-dominated sports. "I still can't process; it doesn't process in my brain that it's a title that's mine," said Mehra. She said she encounters "imposter syndrome" here at Choate, an anxious feeling of doubting your abilities and belonging. She described the experience of finding wrestling — something new and succeeding — as overwhelming. "Being able to do this was crazy for me."

We are in an environment of success, with academically inclined students, athletes, and musicians; Choate students can be afraid of failure at times, leading them to veer towards familiar extracurricular activities and away from new things. "I think by being a junior, and this being the first season I was doing two of the most male-dominated sports, and showing a willingness to try a new thing, it shows underclassmen and younger girls at Choate that you can be part of male-dominated sports here. It's not the wildest thought to encourage young girls to do that," said Mehra.

On paper, the wrestling season for Mehra may look like a piece of cake. She has quite an impressive record, taking fourth place in the all-girls Andover tournament, placing sixth in an all-boys Class A wrestling tournament and placing fourth at the Girls New England Championships. Despite her remarkable record, her ability to pursue her passions and embrace her authenticity regardless of gender stereotypes in sports demonstrates her dedication and diligence as an athlete. Many athletes will look up to Mehra's accomplishments, becoming inspired to try out things they are passionate about, despite the norms that try to limit their success.

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Teams Prepare for Spring During Preseason Trips

By **Lauren Hsu '24**
Staff Reporter

Thanks to preseason trips, several teams are well prepared as they head into games this spring season. From March 5 to 11, 37 Girls' and Boys' Crew team members trained in San Diego's Mission Bay. Head coach of Girls' Crew, Ms. Stephanie Neul began planning the trip in October but faced uncertainty throughout winter as Covid-19 cases rose. Nevertheless, the trip was a success. Cathy Liu '24, a coxswain for Girls' Crew, stated, "We got more done in one week than we can get done in a whole term." Liu's day started at six a.m. An hour later, the girls' team would walk to the boathouse. After a three-hour practice, the team would break for lunch, then return at 1:45 in the afternoon for another two-hour practice. By nine p.m., Liu was asleep. Ms. Neul said that heading into the trip, her goals for the team were "to focus on the technique especially as we had a lot of newer people on the trip which was really exciting, and then I think also to build a base of fitness for the season. Doing two practices a day, about two hours each, is a really good way to start that off."

Boys' Crew Head Coach Mr. Pat Guelakis noted that one advantage of rowing in Mission Bay was the long stretch of water , preventing the rowers from turning as often. "It allows us to have a good chunk of time where we can really focus on good continuous rowing," Mr. Guelakis said. The extra time was especially beneficial as most rowers had never raced due to the pandemic. Consequently, the trip's focus shifted from developing a race piece to learning how to row. Sam Thompson '23, who attended the preseason trip, also noted this dynamic, saying, "It was definitely a wake-up call to a lot of the rowers since our team is very new. It introduced a lot of us back to the water and some of us to the water."

Two days after the end of the Girls' and Boys' Crew preseason trip, 35 members of the Boys' Lacrosse team arrived at the brand-new Legacy Sports Complex in Mesa, Arizona. According to the Head Coach of Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Mr. Ethan McDonnell '09, the facility, which boasts around 30 turf fields, is the future home of U.S. Olympic Trials and NFL Combine Day. Heading into preseason, Mr. McDonnell had three main goals: learning schemes, tactics, and terminology, developing a team identity, and team bonding. Trilogy Lacrosse, a program run by two former professional Hall of Fame players, provided additional coaching.

Like the crew teams, Boys' Lacrosse had multiple practices each day, typically with the first practice in the morning and the last after dinner. Outside of practice, players participated in stretching and yoga, went to Topgolf, and hiked to the Hole in the Rock in Papago Park. Additionally, the team played in two scrimmages against Andover and Blair. For Mr. McDonnell, "another highlight was developing an identity. We are a really tough team that stands up for each other — that plays with a lot of energy." Similarly, Alex Krusko '24 reflected, "I think that with a good hard preseason that we had, it's going to give us a little bit of grit, a little bit of trust in each other that we wouldn't have had without it."

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Photo Courtesy of Choate Boys' Varsity Lacrosse

Boys' Varsity Lacrosse practicing in Arizona during preseason.

Post-graduates' Natural Athleticism

By **Carolyn Chen '25**
Reporter

Some post-graduate students at Choate have decided to expand their athletic expertise by participating in new sports during their off-season. Despite their limited experience, many post-graduate athletes are exceptionally skilled in whichever sports they decide to try. Not only are these talented athletes able to expand their athletic abilities, but they also become more connected with the Choate Community.

Owen Clark '22, now committed to play at Brown University, was recruited to Choate as a Varsity Football player. After playing football in the fall and completing his training in the winter, Clark decided to shift his focus and try out for baseball in the spring. "I like sports a lot, so I wanted to get exposed to a new sport and meet new people and try new things." He continued, saying, "I have a couple of friends on the baseball team, and they talked me into it." After tryouts this past week, Clark has officially secured his spot on the varsity roster.

Similarly, Sarang West '22, a post-graduate who played basketball and is now a member of Varsity Softball this spring, brought up a similar reason to explain why she tried out. "I'm athletic, so I decided to try it out. I always wanted to do it at my old school, but I didn't get the opportunity to." West mentioned how her former basketball teammate played a role in her decision to try softball. "One of my teammates on the basketball team is actually on the softball team already, so I got her help and got her help to go over a couple of different things, and I tried it just for fun."

Although trying out a completely new sport can come with various challenges, many post-graduate athletes find that their extensive experience in sports helps them adapt. West said, "I spent like a good hour and a half before I tried out just trying to figure out how to hit a softball off a tee." Other than this minor inconvenience, West explained, "Everything else came pretty naturally. I found that it was easy to apply everything because I had so much prior sports experience."

Clark agrees, as he has also found that his experience playing football has helped him with baseball. "Elements of baseball like reaction time and being fast correlates pretty well with football." He added, "Baseball is a super mental game, football isn't as mental, but there are things that I've learned in football that will help in baseball."

Choate's Athletic Department ensured each post-graduate felt they could explore new athletic avenues during their first and only year at Choate. Landon White '22, a post-graduate who came to Choate to play baseball and joined Varsity Football in the fall, was "kicking a football, practicing extra points" when the Varsity Football extra team's coach approached him. There was no looking back for White as he accepted the offer to join the team as a kicker. White, along with many other post-graduates, viewed the support from coaches and players as a key factor in his decision to play. "All the coaches and players welcomed me and were nice, which made me feel confident in my decision to try a new sport."

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