The Phillipian

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VOL. CXLVII, No. 29 | Veritas Super Omnia | JANUARY 17, 2025

Changes in Dorm Utilities: Paper Towels Removed and Laundry Machines Replaced

CHRISTIAN ESTRADA & SOPHIA TOLOKH

Multifold paper towels in all dorm bathrooms have been permanently removed this term. Originally introduced during Covid-19 to prevent sharing hand towels for health concerns, single-use paper towels have now been removed due to excessive waste and cost. In addition, all washing machines and dryers have been replaced across campus.

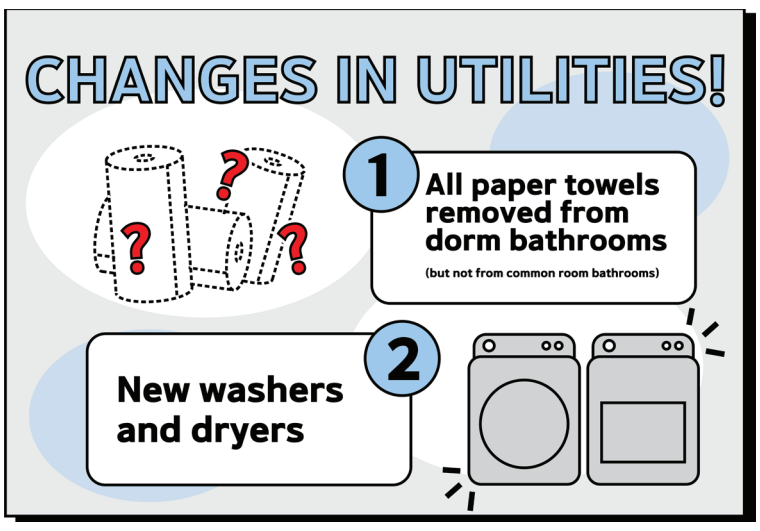
The removal of the paper towels was a sustainability and budgetary decision, according to Susan Tsao Esty, Dean of Students and Residential Life. However, common rooms will still be stocked with paper towels. Esty explained that this decision was a response to reports from the Office of Physical Plant (OPP), reporting the high cost and waste created by paper towel usage.

"I received a report that there was so much waste happening. The custodians noticed that there were those multifold paper towels. People were taking them, and then there were a bunch strewn around the bathrooms that clearly weren't all used, even. We were replacing them really frequently and they weren't even all being used... It was showing up in our budgets, we were having to replace them so frequently," said Esty.

Dean Yang '27 said he believes paper towels were essential to maintain dorm bathroom hygiene. Yang suggested that an alternative way for drying hands should be provided.

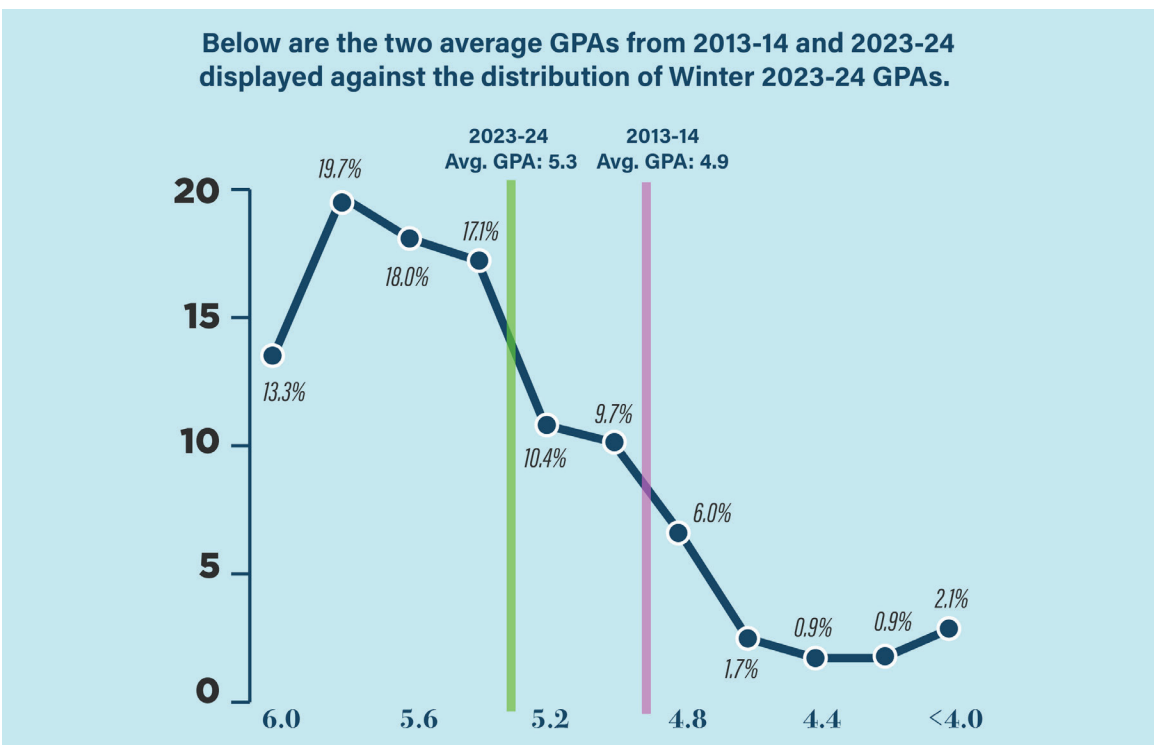
"It feels unsanitary because after washing our hands, they're wet. Touching the door handle with wet hands makes it wet, which is disgusting. It's a hygiene issue, and removing paper towels hurts the dorm's general hygiene... They're a necessity in our bathroom routines, like water. Just because something costs money or might be wasteful doesn't mean it should be removed... If they remove paper towels, they should install hand dryers or an alternative

Continued on A5, Column 1



K. MA/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Update on Grade Inflation/Deflation at Andover



Data for Winter 2023-24 GPAs are from the State of the Academy 2024.

C. WANG/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

NIKI TAVIKOLI & SAKETH LINGISETTY

Students at Andover have recently seen significant trends in grade inflation similar to other major educational institutions across the nation. As part of a larger effort to address grade inflation, departments have begun to take action through various measures including departmental reviews, common assessments, and regular faculty meetings.

Caroline Odden, Dean of Studies and Instructor in Physics, stated that the average grade for an Andover student has gradually climbed from 4.9 in during the 2013-2014 school year to 5.3 a decade later in the 2023-2024 school year. During the 2020-2021 school year, grade averages faced a major increase when Andover switched to hybrid learning following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The school, though it does not view all grade inflation as an urgent problem according to Odden, has been considering how to combat grade inflation. Christopher Xia '23 described what Head of School Dr. Raynard Kington mentioned about the school's approach during a December alumni event in Chicago. Although there is no finite approach as of yet, part of the administration's plan centers around further unification of grading standards, an approach favored by many students.

"[Dr. Kington] did talk about how grade inflation isn't something you just solve in one or two academic years, it takes a lot of time and you [have] to go at it slowly," said Xia.

For students and faculty alike, the problem of grade inflation impedes healthy learning at Andover. Dr. Christopher Jones, Interim Chair of the Department of History and Social Science, explained how this dynamic creates inconsistencies in grading across teachers. He highlighted yearly reviews as a way that departments are currently addressing the issue.

"I don't think that there's a sense among the History Department faculty, or even the faculty at large, that the grading system right now is a particularly healthy one that has the kind of integrity in it that we would want. That causes us some degree of anxiety because the grades end up oftentimes [getting] in the way of teachers helping students learn. Teachers want students to learn," said Jones.

He continued, "The History Department is itself undergoing a review this year... How we grade and assess is a component of that review. One outcome of the process will be some ideas about thinking differently about grades. We're in the midst of the review, and we're actually having a committee of other teachers from other schools come to visit us to talk about grading as well

Continued on A5, Column 4

ASM Speaker Lacey Schwartz Delgado Discusses Her Mixed-Heritage Identity

ADELYNE LIU & KRISSY ZHU

Andover kicked off its twelfth annual Mixed Heritage Awareness Week with keynote speaker Lacey Schwartz Delgado, award-winning producer, writer, and director of "Little White Lie" and "The Loving Generation," last Friday. A co-founder of production company Truth Aid Media, she shared her path towards creating multimedia content for social change at All-School Meeting (ASM).

In her speech, Schwartz Delgado described how she discovered her biracial identity at age 18 after being raised as a white Ashkenazi in Woodstock, NY. Accepted to Georgetown University as a Black student before even knowing of her own African-American heritage, she explained how unconventional stories could be more common than expected.

"What is a good story? A good story is a crazy story, but also a relatable one. When I was working through my own situation, I realized that my story was [relatable]. Even though I had what I considered to be a more extreme identity issue, I was looking out into the world and I was seeing all these people, in their seventies [or] older, who are still reconciling their relationships with their parents and had still been working through these pieces of themselves. I hadn't really come to terms with it. The patterns I was seeing out of the world were really fascinating and I felt like I could talk about those issues through this

A. LEE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

During her presentation, Schwartz Delgado showcased clips from her projects "Little White Lie" and "The Loving Generation."

film," said Schwartz Delgado during her presentation at ASM.

During ASM, Schwartz Delgado used multiple clips from "The Loving Generation," a docuseries that highlights the lives of various mixed-race people born after the Supreme Court overturned laws against interracial marriage. Denys Tereshchenko '26 mentioned how the interviews led him to reflect on the meaning of culture and community.

"The name 'Loving Generation' was so interesting, because the fact that that was an entire generation so influenced by one core decision, one event, is incredible to think about... Another thing that jumped out to me was the case of Barack Obama, because we think of him as the first Black president of the United States, but he's actually mixed. What do we take from that? What do we take from our understanding from how we understand the first? Who claims what culture, what community claims who," said Tereshchenko.

Schwartz Delgado also outlined the importance of using narration to build educated communities centered around acceptance of different perspectives. Chloe Nichols '27 spoke about how Delgado's speech was highly relatable, highlighting that the clips helped her see how others go through similar struggles.

"I would say this ASM really related to me, because as a mixed person, you usually don't understand the perspectives that come with it. I really loved how she spoke about how different people identify more with one side versus another, and I truly believe that for me. I'm half Black, half Latina, but I identify more with my Latina side, so that's the takeaway that I got... What helped me in a sense is seeing how others also have the same

Continued on A5, Column 1

Nikita Singareddy '13 Named to Forbes 30 Under 30 List

COURTESY OF NIKITA SINGAREDDY

Nikita Singareddy '13 is the CEO of Fortuna Health, helping people navigate the Medicaid system.

ANDY GAO & NIKI TAVAKOLI

Nikita Singareddy '13 has recently been selected for the 2025 Forbes 30 Under 30 list, a symbol of "achievement and recognition" for individuals under 30 years of age in their respective industries. Singareddy is the co-founder and CEO of Fortuna Health, a platform analogous to a "TurboTax for Medicaid." An avid debater and CaMD Scholar while a student at Andover, Singareddy worked in numerous industries after graduating before starting Fortuna Health.

Having grown up in Australia, Singareddy entered Andover in tenth grade. In an interview with *The Phillipian*, she spoke about her time in the debate club Philomathean Society (Philo) and the intellectual exploration that came with debate. As a CaMD Scholar, Singareddy researched the media portrayal of immigrant sex workers, a topic that prompted the criticism of a conservative commentator online.

"Philo — I was a ride or die from the second I got to campus. Hugely influential for me as a certified debate kid and a lot of my closest friends came from Philo, [with whom] I'm still close with today... Being a CaMD Scholar is one of those wonderful opportunities that Andover gives you. You can go really, really deep and you get to do the type of research and interviews that college Ph.D. student researchers are supposed to do," said Singareddy.

She continued, "If you want to know the truth, I cried when I read [the critical comment]. When you're fifteen, sixteen years old, you don't expect

Continued on A5, Column 4

Commentary, A2
On the LA Fires
In her article "LA Fires: The Solution is Too Small For The Problem," Zoë Gilbertson '27 urges political leaders to address the problem of wildfires.

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Two Roasts and a Phuneral
the fall of two american heroes.

Sports, B1
Athletic Highlights
Learn about recent accomplishments from Andover's athletes.

Arts, B6
MHAW Movie Screening
This past Friday, Lacey Schwartz-Delgado held a screening of her documentary "Little White Lie."

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Editorial

An Invitation to the Head of School

According to the 2024 State of the Academy (SOTA), 17.8 percent of student respondents believed that Head of School Raynard Kington connects with the student body. When asked if they approved of the work he does for the students, 44.8 percent said yes. In the 2023 SOTA, these numbers were similar; 15.4 percent and 41 percent respectively. The majority of the student body feels that Dr. Kington is largely absent from their lives. At *The Phillipian*, we believe the Head of School should connect with students more.

The Phillipian invited Dr. Kington to reflect on his leadership style and his meaningful experiences at Andover five years into his tenure. This article intended to better understand and communicate Dr. Kington as a person within his role as Head of School. We specified that we were not looking to report on the progress of his administration's strategic plans. From late October to mid-November, we engaged in back-and-forth communication with Dr. Kington about conducting an interview. We were ultimately told to bring the idea up again at a later date.

Last week, we reached out again and received the following response from Dr. Kington through Chief Communications Officer Tracy Sweet: "I assumed my first leadership position, directing a research center, about 30 years ago. At many points since that time, including while leading a large national epidemiological study, one of the largest public scientific agencies in the world, and a great liberal arts college, I have been asked to reflect, usually for publication, on my leadership at various milestones, and I believe that in every case I decided to decline those invitations. It is a purely personal decision to focus on doing the job that I am called to do. I believe that the right time for public reflection on a specific job is usually when that job is done (and maybe - for many reasons - not even then!). Reasonable people certainly may disagree with my choice. I stand by my decision."

We are saddened that our attempt to connect the community with Dr. Kington as a person rather than a voice of the institution was declined. While we respect his decision to focus on the job he is called to do, we believe the job of being Head of School includes engaging substantially with students. It need not be a reflection in *The Phillipian*, but it needs to be something.

Our time at Andover is built upon personal connections. School leaders across all levels have a responsibility to cultivate authentic relationships, from student leaders to Dr. Kington himself. Coming to Andover, a boarding school, means participating in a uniquely interconnected community. At the same time, we understand that the functioning of Andover as an institution comes with a host of responsibilities that are not visible in our day-to-day lives. The administrators, including Dr. Kington, dedicate themselves to work that students do not directly see. Yet the two — personal connection and institutional leadership — are strengthened when entwined.

We invite Dr. Kington to connect with the student community more: to talk more with students on the paths; to host cluster munches at Phelps House; and to regularly attend our performances and games. It is undeniable that his leadership has successfully traversed multiple institutions, and benefitted Andover. Still, we are a residential high school with students as young as 14 who are away from home for the first time. Connecting with students should be a central part of the work of the Head of School.

This editorial represents the opinions of The Phillipian, vol. CXLVII.

After Assad: Empowering Young Syrian Refugees

TIGER JING

I. PADMAWAR / THE PHILLIPIAN

Just over a month ago, the world witnessed the rapid and unanticipated collapse of the Assad regime in Syria — a brutal, dictatorial dynasty that maintained an iron grip on the country for 54 years. The regime presided over one of the bloodiest civil wars in human history, with over 600,000 killed and 14 million displaced from their homes. The violent crackdown began in 2011 when civilians peacefully protested against corruption and political repression during the Arab Spring movement. Civilians protested as a result of a five-decade-long state of emergency, which enabled the regime to suspend constitutional laws and use soldiers to enforce domestic security. Bashar al-Assad leveraged the emergency to gain tighter control of the country and oppress dissidents. Elections were rigged in favor of Assad, which brutally put down the peaceful uprising. This led to more than 5,000 deaths within the first year, followed by a civil war.

A myriad of political parties and foreign government-backed militias entered the fray and further complicated the war. Syria went from having 252 billion dollars of annual GDP to 9 billion dollars in 2024. 650,000 of the 6.6 million Syrian refugees that left the country poured into neighboring Jordan. These refugees ultimately accounted for 6% of the Jordanian population. The crisis placed immense strain on Jordan's resources, as it is the third-most water-scarce country in the world and lacks natural resources. Among the Syrian refugees displaced to Jordan, over 80,000 sought safety in the Za'atari camp, which sits just 15 kilometers from the Syrian border. It is now the second-largest refugee camp in the world.

In the fall 2023, I came face-to-face with the human toll of the Syrian conflict as I conducted a fact-finding mission in Za'atari camp to understand the challenges facing the refugees there. I interviewed Syrian refugees across all age groups. Most refugees my age had been born in the camp and had never set foot in Syria. I worked with MercyCorps, a global emergency aid organization, whose volunteers spent significant time teaching these young refugees about the history and culture of their motherland.

The challenges faced by children in the camps are staggering. Residents of Za'atari live in a state of constant purgatory: returning home risks conscription or arrest, while staying provides scarce opportunities for employment. Refugees, with half of them being under the age of 16, are not permitted to leave the camp other than to study at nearby universities. Jordan does not recognize them as citizens. Without permanent status and work permits, full-time legal employment is nearly impossible. Many scrape by as illegal seasonal farmers or fruit vendors within the camp's market.

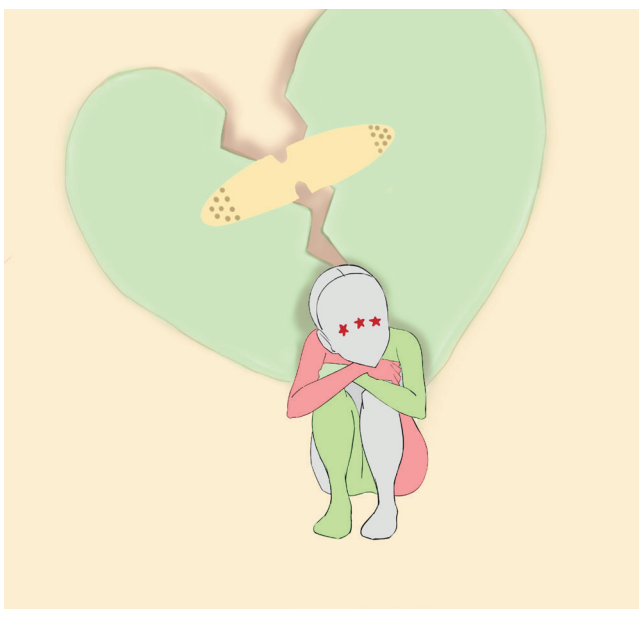
In parallel, aid organizations are steadily withdrawing as resources are redirected to emerging global crises, leaving Za'atari's residents in the dust — both figuratively and literally.

To address these challenges, I founded an organization called Dust Astronauts, which teaches coding to 14 to 16-year-olds in Za'atari. We worked with MercyCorps to gain access to the camp and on-site computers. Our mission is to teach relevant skills such as coding to ensure young refugees can access career opportunities outside of the camp. Physical barriers dissolve if they are able to work as outsourced tech development team members for global technology companies. In this way, refugees can virtually escape their physical confinement and attain a sustainable income.

During my visits, I heard inspiring stories that left a profound impact on me. One young girl shared her dream of becoming a translator, hoping to use her language skills in politics. A boy told me he aspired to be an engineer, determined to help rebuild Syria from its ruins. Another girl said she wanted to become an astronaut, "not just to escape the camp but to fly beyond its societal constraints." Her quote inspired the name of my organization.

With the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad last month, the conflict has been reactivated. Clashes have erupted between pro-Assad loyalists and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) forces. These confrontations have led to casualties on both sides. Disinformation campaigns aimed at destabilizing the region have exacerbated the instability.

As I watch these events unfold, my thoughts race back to the children of Za'atari. I wonder how they perceive this pivotal moment. Does this mean they can finally go "home"? While the Assad regime is over, the country is far from stable. Syria now faces a power vacuum with various factions, along with external nations, vying for territory and control. The road ahead seems perilous, and I worry about the safety and future for my friends in the camp.



MICHEAL KAWOOYA / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

While the world celebrates scenes of liberation, my mind is consumed by a single question: Will my friends in Za'atari actually return to a normal life and achieve the dreams they so passionately sought?

Many individuals on the Phillips Academy campus are driven to aid refugees. However, there are others who are completely unaware of these refugee's circumstances. Out of everyone I asked, little knew of the Syrian civil war before it made headlines. None of them knew about Za'atari, the second-largest refugee camp in the world. I encourage students to conduct research on forgotten topics like this rather than just checking headlines. If you want to make a change and help those in need, there are numerous avenues to get involved. You can support aid organizations like MercyCorps, or Doctors Without Borders (MSF). You can also create your own nonprofit. I believe one of the most meaningful ways to support children in these conditions is by helping them build sustainable income through education. By equipping them with the skills necessary to find work and provide for their families, we can empower them to break this vicious cycle.

For those looking to help refugees, I urge you to focus on long-term solutions rather than one-off aid. By investing in the future of these children, we can create truly meaningful, lasting change.

Tiger Jing is a Junior from Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. Contact the author at xjing28@andover.edu.

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CORRECTIONS:
In the News article "10 Questions with Natalya Baldyga," Natalya Baldyga only performed in "Annie."

The Solution Is Too Small for the Problem

ZOË GILBERTSON

COURTESY OF ZOË GILBERTSON

The start of 2025 has been truly devastating, not just for the residents of the Los Angeles area, but for our earth as a whole. If the extreme weather patterns were not already a wake-up call, the devastation of one of the nation's most fire-ready cities must be. Clearly, it wasn't lack of preparation for the wildfires that caused the destruction, as over three million gallons of water were stored to fight the blaze. If that isn't enough water to contain even a fraction of the damage, there must be a larger problem at hand. It is immature to criticize the city's solution; instead, we must attack the root of the problem: climate change.

As a California native, I have experienced my fair share of evacuation warnings and smokey skies. Throughout my childhood, the months of May through October were known as "fire season," and it was not uncommon to wear N-95 masks to school, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Of course, I hated the sour bite of smoke that settled in the air even hundreds of miles from the fire's core, however, this annual occurrence was normalized in such a way that wildfires hardly felt dystopian. Though I didn't realize it then, the idea of "fire season" was just another way of dismissing the true destruction of our planet's changing climate.

The Los Angeles fires consist of three main blazes: the coastal Palisades fire, the Eaton fire near Pasadena, and the Hurst fire further north. According to "CNN," as of January 15, 24 deaths have been reported and more than 40,000 acres of land have been burned. The "Los Angeles Times" reported that the fires were a result of the significant drought of Southern California, alongside the raging Santa Ana winds, reaching speeds of one hundred miles per hour. This phenomenon occurred from high air pressure to the east and low pressure on the coast, causing the two currents to circulate rapidly to equalize the pressure. While both drought and high wind mileage happen naturally, climate change has caused both factors to intensify over the past years.

"The New York Times" explains that the rain patterns over the past year have been extremely erratic. Last winter, Southern California experienced a considerable rainy season that was quickly followed by a multi-month drought. The sudden increase then decrease of rainfall allowed for a larger cultivation of the region's vegetation. However, when the moisture depleted, the immense amounts of dry soil placed Southern California at high risk for brush fires. Unfortunately, it took little more than high wind streams to set off what became the most destructive fires in Los Angeles's history.

PENELOPE TONG / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

The problem stems from a multifaceted climate issue that is far greater than a lack of stored water. However, through his Truth Social platform, President-elect Donald Trump inaccurately blamed the destruction on the state government, accusing them of being unprepared and irresponsible with water distribution. "ABC News" debunked this claim, as they reported that three million gallons of water were prepared before the fires began, however, the demand quickly grew to four times that quantity.

Three million gallons.

If that amount of water is too little, we are focusing on the wrong concern.

The California Natural Resources Defence Council officials confirmed that the millions of gallons stored was an ample amount to fight the usual California wildfires. Water scarcity director, Mark Gold recently stated to "CBS" that the fires' destruction could not be contained by any amount of ready water, especially as The Metropolitan Water District had a record water supply stored prior to the disaster.

It is ineffective, and truthfully, immature to blame the destruction of the Los Angeles fires on a solution that was meant for a problem of a much smaller scale. Attacking California's preparation is similar to putting a band-aid on a bullet wound. The solution cannot merely be to store more water or to find a more efficient way to refill hydrants, but instead society must prioritize preventing significant drought as a whole.

While there is little that can be done to reverse the damage of the Los Angeles fires, there are multiple measures that can help prevent this disaster from occurring again. Though it takes significant time and resources, regional projects such as removing dead trees and vegetation in times of drought can considerably decrease the risk of brush fires. For California residents, following government guidelines such as practicing campfire safety and maintaining all-terrain vehicles and equipment can be impactful everyday practices that directly protect communities from wildfire. However, to tackle the long-term root of forest fires, we must avoid drought and excessive dehydration in its entirety. For this horrific disaster to not become our generation's reality, political leaders must acknowledge that the fate of our world hinges on the trajectory of our changing climate. If we do nothing to target the root of this tragedy, the damage will become irreversible and any subsequent efforts will all be too late.

Zoë Gilbertson is a Lower from San Francisco, Calif. Contact the author at zgilbertson27@andover.edu.

The Dangers of Perpetuating an Illusion of Happiness

EMMA HONG

K. TOMALA / THE PHILLIPIAN

One of my favorite books, "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury, portrays a government that has created an illusion of happiness by eradicating anything that may lead the people to discomfort or self-reflection, such as books and intellectual discourse. These people are told that ignorance is bliss and that knowledge brings nothing but pain or suffering; they are taught to pursue manufactured "happiness" by avoiding discomfort and seemingly escaping the obstructive complexities of life. Recently, I've found myself wondering: Would it be so terrible to live in avoidance of uncomfortable knowledge? Is it possible to procure genuine satisfaction from an illusion of happiness?

Before coming to Andover, I honestly thought that I was pretty competent — I was used to breezing through classes and tests and winning some accolades here and there. I wasn't used to struggling academically, and so not doing the best on my first chemistry test, getting a less-than-desirable grade on a history assignment all became hits to my confidence in the beginning of the school year. Sometimes, despite the fact that my days were perpetually packed with schoolwork and extracurriculars, there nagged a quiet, obstinate sense of emptiness I couldn't quite shake, so I'd just end up distracting myself with endless media at night, scrolling through social media feeds, or binge-watching shows that required little emotional investment. For a while, I thought I felt genuinely happy, or at the very least content, because I was working hard and covering up anything that could "force" me to be miserable. But one night after four hours of scrolling endlessly on social media, I found myself awake but not quite alive — just existing and unaware — at three in the morning. It was then that I realized with a cold rush of reality that I was just seeking a superficial fix for an inner turmoil that wouldn't go away by itself, an illusion of happiness to cover up what was really bothering me. Though this illusion didn't feel inherently wrong, it was just an easy out, a way to momentarily soothe the discomfort of facing hard truths; it was only ever going to be temporary. This realization made me think of "Fahrenheit 451," where characters like Mildred Montag, protagonist Guy Montag's wife, live in a state of shallow bliss without deeper emotional and intellectual engagement with the world.

I began to wonder: Is it so wrong to choose an easier, more comfortable happiness, if it means avoiding the pain of confronting life's complexities? For some, blissful ignorance seems to lead to happiness, in one form or another. Mildred Montag, for all her superficiality, doesn't seem to mind her lifestyle. To her, happiness implies the absence of discomfort and the presence of something else to distract her from ever going near that discomfort. But, as the novel shows, this illusion comes at a steep price: a life devoid of real connection, intellectual engagement, or true fulfillment. I realized that I didn't want to become like the characters of "Fahrenheit 451," like Mildred, living a life that, on the surface, might seem content, but lacked depth. But the more I thought about it the more reality struck me cold: I'd been living a sort of modern parallel to the lives of the "Fahrenheit 451" citizens, deriving a false illusion of happiness from ignoring my unhappiness. I'd been relying on external entertainment — social media, television, not much unlike Mildred's parlor TV — to smother my struggles and discomforts rather than acknowledging them.

Yet, our discomforts are ultimately a reflection of who we are, who we've been, and who we can become. We can never truly think to better ourselves without confronting the issues that are obstructing us from improvement in the first place. As I think back on the period of time in the beginning of the year when I was ignoring all my internal struggles, I can say I've experienced feelings of growth since. I now acknowledge and validate my doubts, my struggles, when they arise. I don't merely ignore my academic battles: I go to conferences, reach out to teachers, and talk to other trusted adults about what I'm having a tough time with. I talk to others a lot more in general, confide in them, listen to them, form deeper connections with them. I choose to focus on the small wins — the quizzes, the homework, the short stories — allowing the tedious daily grind to become opportunities for growth rather than sources of frustration. I confide in the people around me when there is something incessantly bothering me and I try to find solutions to my problems rather than simply ignoring them and wishing like a child on their birthday that they'll go away. I can say that I feel a lot more authentically happy now, even if I do have more struggles to face, I'm no longer trying to live by an illusion. So, I encourage you to think about the negative areas of your life you might be avoiding or ignoring. Which aspect of your life are you quieting in the hopes that it will assuage itself this way? Understanding and acknowledging these parts of you daily can lead you down a happier, more meaningful life. Like Mildred, we all sometimes seek the ease of superficial joy, an illusion of happiness that helps us avoid unhappiness. But by extinguishing everything that makes us uncomfortable, we also shut down the opportunities for growth. Someone who is happy is someone shaped by what they've done to face the things that could block them from happiness. Someone who strives to improve is someone driven by their shortcomings.

KATE RODGERS / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

Emma Hong is a Junior from Iowa City, Iowa. Contact the author at ehong28v@andover.edu.

LUCY HEYD / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

How Are Those New Year's Resolutions Holding Up?

MANALEE CHOWDHURY

I. PADMAWAR / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

As we hit mid-January, the pressure of Winter term is starting to settle in, and the enthusiastic New Year's resolutions we all set two weeks ago have already begun to collide with the reality of everyday life. For many, the demands of stressful majors and overwhelming assignments have taken center stage, causing goals to feel like they're already a distant memory from the past year. So, with the rush of midterms week behind us, now is the perfect time to reflect on whether we're on track or if our 2025 resolutions have fallen flat.

Personally, I made two resolutions for 2025. So far, I've stayed consistent with one of them, but the other hasn't gone as planned. Let's start with the successful one — daily journaling has always been a major goal of mine, and one that I've always promised to do at the start of the year but ended up falling short on. However, I decided to add a fun twist to 2025's daily journaling to try to incentivize the task. I made a "My Life 2025" journal where each day is titled like an episode of a TV show which in this case is my life. For example, my January 1 entry is titled "Pilot 2025," January 2 is "Yapping 101," etcetera. Then, each day, I write down some shorthand bullet points on what happened and the highs and lows of that day. By giving each day a comedic title, I feel more excited to journal every day because I have turned my goal into a fun activity rather than a rigid resolution. Although I'm not writing paragraphs about my entire day, I like to think that one day I'll read back on "My Life 2025" and be happy that I documented my Junior year in high school in an amusing and cute way. What I've taken away from this objective is that resolutions shouldn't cause stress or make people feel a sense of failure. If the resolution set in the excitement of New Year's optimism is no longer feasible or motivating, it's better to recalibrate and adjust goals rather than quitting after facing setbacks. Success in resolutions isn't defined by perfection but through persistence and flexibility.

Finally, for my second resolution, I wanted to start waking up at 7:00 a.m. every day without fail. One thing about me is that I am not a morning person, but this year I wanted that to change. Ever since coming to boarding school, I was handed a lot of independence in terms of time management and choosing activities. Although I was able to manage my school commitments and assignments well on my own, I found myself rushing for time in the morning and was starting to skip breakfast more frequently in order to not be late

PIPER LASATER / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

for class. Reflecting on this goal now, I have definitely not been waking up at seven every morning, but I have been starting to get up earlier so that I have enough time for breakfast. Even though I thought this was a simple goal I could set for myself, it proved to be more challenging than I expected. This doesn't mean I've given up though; I decided to simplify my goal by waking up five minutes earlier than the previous day, such as 7:30 a.m. on Monday and then 7:25 a.m. on Tuesday. I will admit that I've regressed a little on this plan, like the occasional day of sleeping until 7:50 a.m., but I think I still have made good progress in working towards my goal. More importantly, I think the biggest change I've noticed in me in 2025 is my mindset on how I hope to accomplish my goals. I've started to value progress and perseverance more than perfection, and that has shown in my modified resolutions this year.

I encourage all of us to revise our resolutions if they feel too lofty right now. High school can feel like a rush, but our New Year's resolutions don't have to be. Perfectionism can drive us to chase major, lofty goals all at once, but it's the consistent pursuit of progress that truly matters. Instead of striving to achieve all our aspirations in the short span of a year, focusing on meaningful milestones along the way makes a greater impact in reaching our larger ambitious objectives. So, here's to 2025: a year of growth, learning, and making it through high school, one step at a time.

Manalee Chowdhury is a Junior from San Francisco, Calif. Contact the author at mchowdhury28@andover.edu.

Looking Back, and Moving Forward

ALEXANDRA LIN

N. AMIN / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

My mother never loved New Year's resolutions because she believed they were useless. On the contrary, I loved coming up with them. Each year, I would decide to go to the gym regularly, learn how to cook a new dish every month, or finally learn how to ride a bike.

My mother would always sigh, pat me on the back, and say, "Alex, there's no point in making a New Year's Resolution." My mother believed that setting a big, flashy goal due at the end of the year, despite sounding nice, was daunting when one embarked on their pursuit to achieve it. She wanted me to set smaller, more manageable goals. If I hoped to accomplish something by the end of the year, I couldn't just talk about setting a New Year's Resolution. I had to form a plan and act on it.

She had a valid point since I still don't know how to ride a bike.

You can imagine my surprise when we sat down at a cozy restaurant with some friends on the dawn of January 1st, 2025 and she suddenly stated, "Let's talk about New Year's Resolutions!" Picture this: dim candlelight illuminated the table and faint wisps of conversation drifted by in the background. My friend and I, dazed freshmen grateful for a relaxing break after our first term in high school, looked up attentively as we waited for the food to arrive. My mother pulled up a list of questions she'd written on her phone:

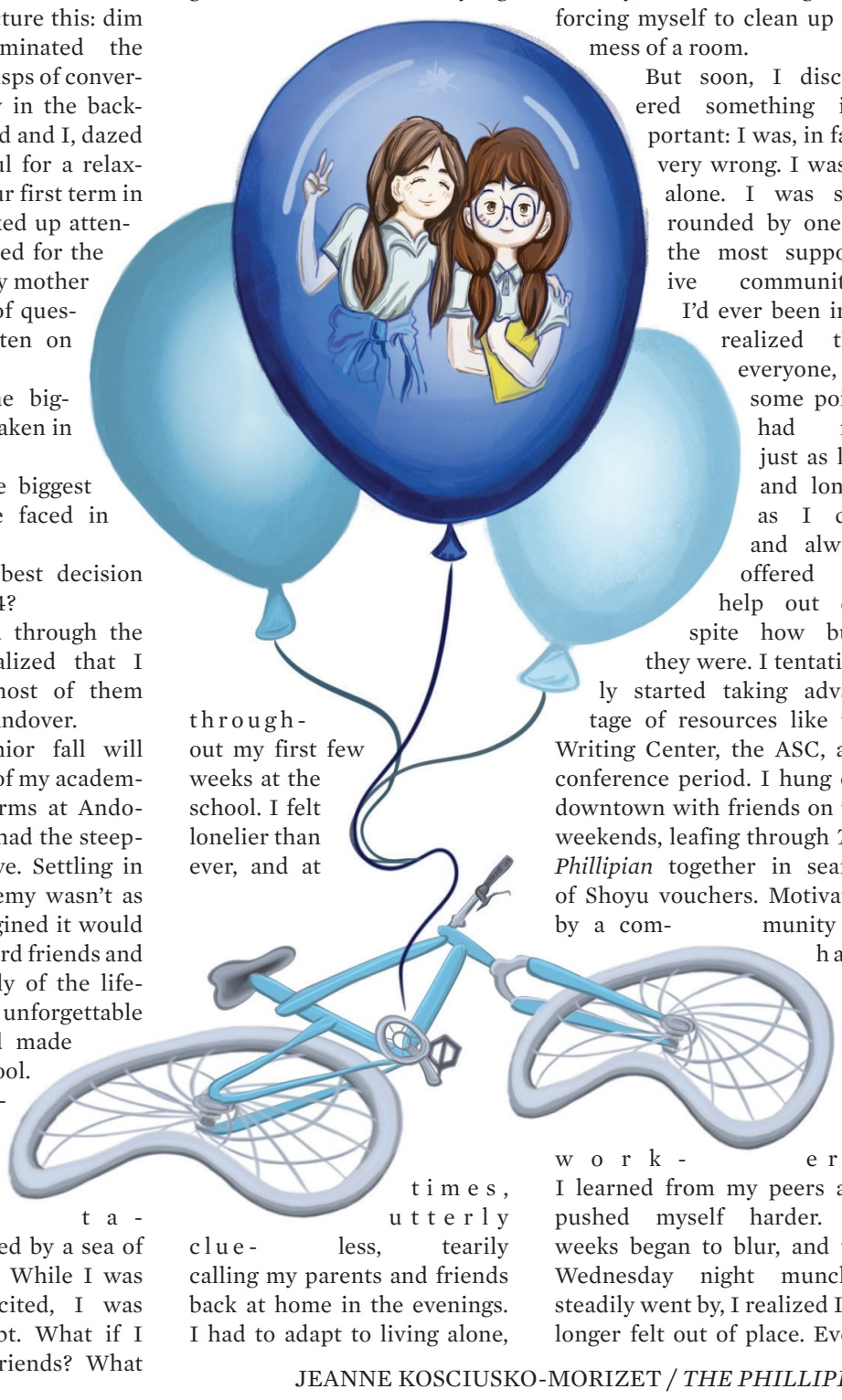
What was the biggest risk you've taken in 2024?

What was the biggest challenge you've faced in 2024?

What is the best decision you made in 2024?

As we moved through the questions, I realized that I could answer most of them with one word: Andover.

Although Junior fall will probably be one of my academically lightest terms at Andover, it felt like it had the steepest learning curve. Settling in at Phillips Academy wasn't as smooth as I imagined it would be. I'd always heard friends and family talk fondly of the lifelong friends and unforgettable memories they'd made at boarding school. Stepping into Underwood Room during New International Student Orientation, I was greeted by a sea of unfamiliar faces. While I was undoubtedly excited, I was plagued by doubt. What if I couldn't make friends? What if I wasn't responsible enough to live alone? This worry lingered over me like a dreary fog throughout my first few weeks at the school. I felt lonelier than ever, and at times, utterly clueless, tearily calling my parents and friends back at home in the evenings. I had to adapt to living alone, learning the hard way to set reminders for my homework and laundry, as well as regularly forcing myself to clean up my mess of a room.



JEANNE KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET / *THE PHILLIPIAN*

But soon, I discovered something important: I was, in fact, very wrong. I wasn't alone. I was surrounded by one of the most supportive communities I'd ever been in. I realized that everyone, at some point, had felt just as lost and lonely as I did, and always offered to help out despite how busy they were. I tentatively started taking advantage of resources like the Writing Center, the ASC, and conference period. I hung out downtown with friends on the weekends, leafing through *The Phillipian* together in search of Shoyu vouchers. Motivated by a community of hard workers, I learned from my peers and pushed myself harder. As weeks began to blur, and the Wednesday night munches steadily went by, I realized I no longer felt out of place. Eventually, walking from class to class became a steady, reliable rhythm. The sea of strangers I'd first been so intimidated by turned into classmates, and then friends. I began seeing the red-brick building in the far corner of the quad, glowing faintly golden in the night, as home.

Stepping into a new year, and a relatively new term, the doubts that I had haven't completely disappeared. However, the New Year gave me a chance to reflect upon what Fall term taught me. I noticed that the worries that were swirling around in my mind prevented me from stepping outside my comfort zone. I stuck to the subjects I was good at, chose to opt out of clubs I no longer had time for, and stuck to people I felt happy to be around with. I decided to set a New Year's Resolution for myself: to widen the range of people I choose to hang out with, step outside of my comfort zone, and talk to a couple of strangers. Perhaps I'll find a lifelong friend or two!

The New Year is a chance for us to reflect upon the past, upon things that we're proud of, as well as mistakes that we've made. My New Year Resolutions for 2025 are not the flamboyant goals my mother dislikes, or the ones I forget about within a few weeks. Instead, they are the mindset and attitudes with which I will face the challenges of 2025!

Alexanda Lin is a Junior from Singapore. Contact the author at alin28@andover.edu.

Students React to MHAW ASM

Continued from A1, Column 3

struggles as I [do], and that it wasn't just me who felt like this," said Nichols.

Sebastian Lemberger '25 talked about the organization of the ASM. Although the videos and Delgado's story were interesting to him, he pointed out that the videos, which are publicly available on YouTube, took up much of the ASM.

"I was surprised by how little she was actually talking and the fact that she spent the majority of her speech showing us publicly available YouTube videos. I really liked the videos, but my main gripe is that if they had just sent out the videos in an email, I would have watched them. I wanted to actually hear her speak, because her story sounded interesting... The clips, though, showed me how it is impossible to live life without certain imports of who you are. I learned a lot about how other people were attempting to balance the different parts of themselves," said Lemberger.

Schwartz Delgado concluded her presentation with an incentive to ask ourselves questions about race and identity, even if they may appear difficult to tackle. Reflecting on the ASM, Bruce Ru '28 emphasized the value of open dialogue and creating safe spaces.

"Sometimes it might be difficult to have those conversations. A lot of the time there's some things that are very difficult to admit and very difficult to confront, but the cost of not confronting that can sometimes be even greater. The importance of creating that space, an environment where people can bravely ask questions and try to figure out who they really are, is very important," said Ru.

On Changed Utilities: Free Laundry and Sustainability

Continued from A1, Column 2

for drying hands," said Yang.

While she acknowledged the convenience of having paper towels, Lisa de Boer '26, Co-Coordinator of the Phillips Academy Sustainability Coalition (PASC), agreed with the removal. De Boer viewed the removal of the paper towels as a way to help Andover become more sustainable.

"If you asked me before they were removed I might have been slightly less supportive, but now that they're gone I think it was a very good idea. It's a quick and easy way to reduce paper waste on campus, and they're not absolutely essential, so it makes a lot of sense. Not having paper towels to dry your hands is not the end of the world, you can let it air dry or use a hand towel. That being said, sometimes paper towels are useful, for example when you're doing dorm duties and maybe the trash leaks or something. I'm definitely all for using paper towels when it's necessary, but I don't think drying your hands is 'necessary,'" said de Boer.

Addison Deng '26, a Prefect in Nathan Hale House, noted previous instances of wasted paper towels in her dorm. She described how towels were not used properly and created a mess in bathroom areas.

"A lot of my prefectees have been complaining that there aren't paper towels in the bathroom. But I've also noticed that they were using them irresponsibly. We would find paper towels clogged in our sink and just extra paper towels on the sink that would be wet and unused and people would have to throw them away. So I feel like people have been complaining, but people have also been working through it by using their own towels," said Deng.

From January 8 to 10, laundry machines were replaced in dorms across campus. This change followed the announcement earlier this school year that students would be able to use the machines for free. Esty explained that laundry machines with card slots to receive payment were replaced as a result.

"It was a huge decision not to charge for doing your own laundry. Students had been petitioning for that for a long time. It's an expense, but we do believe it was the right decision for us as a community. When we did that, we knew we would eventually phase out the machines that take the [laundry] card," said Esty.

Esty continued, "We also were waiting until it was time to upgrade. We had scheduled this with E&R. [They] not only provide the full-service laundry, but they provide the machines and service them... There are no new machines anywhere where there weren't machines before. They're just machines replacing the ones that took [laundry] cards."

Though he noticed some issues with the new machines, Yang appreciated the addition of free laundry machine usage.

"The new machines have rust on the bottom, and the dryers don't work well. Last year, money wasn't a big issue, but it was inconvenient to fill the card. This year, it's easier and more convenient to do laundry without worrying about payments, making it a positive change." said Yang.

Faculty Discuss Grading Policies Following Inflation/Deflation

Continued from A1, Column 5

as many other issues. I can't say with certainty what the History Department will do in the future, but it is a major topic of discussion, grading in general, and a subcomponent of that is grade inflation."

Among older Andover alumni and current students, grade inflation is a widespread concern. Eugenia Evangelinos '27 expressed her mild concern about grade inflation. She explained why grade inflation could result in reduced rigor and standards by disadvantaging students who work harder for the same result as others.

"Grading has become a thing where a lot of people get a very high grade, where maybe one person has done a lot of work and understands the material very well and somebody has done a lot less work or is struggling more with the material and then they get the same grade. I feel like that really undervalues the hard work that maybe that one person put into the class," said Evangelinos.

One rumor at Andover is that some teachers have been assigned a "six quota" or "six cap." These terms apply to teachers that had given out too many sixes before, and are then assigned a maximum number of sixes that they could give for the next term. Odden clarified that Andover does not do this, and explained why.

"[The six quota is] not a thing. Setting grade quotas tends to distract students from the important goal of learning. Princeton University famously attempted to institute a quota system in 2004, limiting the number of As to 35 percent of all grades. The controversial experiment was abandoned in 2014. Rather than setting quotas, our instructors work hard to base grades on the quality of student work as it relates to the learning goals of the department and the course," wrote Odden in an email to *The Phillipian*.

For some students, measures to combat grade inflation need to be carefully thought out because they may impact college admissions. Nurul Kharunnisa '25 spoke on how grade inflation, though not ideal for the school, provides a level of security to students that allows them to take risks and make mistakes, a mindset that the school should focus on retaining even if grades are deflated.

"I personally don't think it's something detrimental to the students because yes, they are aiming for perfection, but it's so much easier for them to do so. The fact that a lot of people that I know can just comfortably be in a six or be comfortably in a five, [and] they can focus on retaining the information, I think that's not a bad thing," said Khairunnisa.

Kington noted that Andover's trends in grade inflation are not an isolated instance. Across academic levels, institutions are grappling with how to fairly assess the performance of students in their studies. Kington also commented on how many alumni and faculty have inquired about the issue and is looking to support faculty efforts to address grade inflation and deflation.

"How faculty assess student work — with grades and constructive feedback — has been the subject of discussion and debate at both the secondary school level and in higher education for quite some time, and public debate about the issue has increased in recent years. I am regularly asked to comment about this issue at alumni events and in meetings with alumni. Andover is certainly not alone in this trend of seeing grades increase over many years. I fully support our faculty's efforts to evaluate and address Andover's grading practices in a manner that ensures student learning at the highest level," said Kington through the Office of Communications.

Class of 2026 Dives Into College Counseling

IAN S. KIM & JENNA LIANG

The College Counseling Office (CCO) kicked off the college counseling process for Uppers last Thursday, hosting group meetings between counselors and their students. The meetings detailed what to expect from the CCO in the following months.

Before meeting with their counselors individually, Uppers and their parents must fill out a survey about themselves and their thoughts towards the college process. After completing the survey, Uppers are then required to meet with their counselor individually at least twice before Spring Break, and twice after. Karina Hernandez-Guarniz, Director of College Counseling, expressed her enthusiasm about starting the new process.

"For me, [the assignments are] like the start of the new school year, even though it's not, because we're picking up a new group. It's really fun sitting down and getting to know all about their experience here, and before they got to Andover... We provided an introduction to the CCO during Family Weekend, and then [the students] got their assignments in January. That's when the process really kicks off for the 11th graders," said Hernandez-Guarniz.

Students noted the various feelings of excitement and nervousness they felt as the application process suddenly seemed much closer than before. Ethan Zhu '26 commented on what the first group meeting consisted of and looked forward to the more personal individual meetings.

"[There] wasn't much information. [The counselors] really were telling us about who they are, what they do, and what the point of their job is. I felt fine after it, it was a regular introductory overview meeting... We are going to have our individual meeting where we are going to talk about our grades, our individual scores, what colleges we may be thinking about, or what direction we are trying to go towards," said Zhu

Sophie Liang '26 pointed out how in earlier years, college seemed like a faraway thought. She noted that becoming an Upper and starting college counseling suddenly makes the application process very real and apparent.

"It's a mix of being excited but also being scared. Especially where we are within our high school career, college is something that is on a lot of people's minds, so starting the process makes it feel very real very soon... For Junior and Lower year, everyone is like 'I'm going to college,' but it really doesn't start to manifest itself as much until your Upper year. That's where part of the stress is coming in, but also excitement," said Liang.

Lily Liu '26 emphasized the limited prior interaction and unclear communication about a survey used for the counselor assignments, which left students feeling that their assignments were randomized. Liu suggested that making the system more geared to personalization and individual circumstances could make the process more beneficial overall.

"I would have appreciated it if they got to know me a bit better before I got assigned someone. I know [the college counseling process] is supposed to be a microcosm of the Andover community, but I didn't give them any information prior to the assignments. If I would have been able to be matched with someone who would better understand my situation or things that they can help me with, then I feel like that would be more beneficial for students in general. There was a survey, but a lot of people didn't know that you had to fill it out, so we pretty much got assigned [our counselors] by random," said Liu.

Malkese Edwards-Perry, Associate Director of College Counseling, highlighted the office's continuous efforts to create supportive approaches by altering the process to meet the needs of students. Edwards-Perry also emphasized the importance of viewing the college process as a personal self-discovery journey to find the best fit rather than fixating on external pressures.

"We've been putting in a lot of work in the office to try to improve our practices, make our conversations more equitable, continue to try to meet students where they are, and to develop the curriculum and content for students from a wide variety of backgrounds... This process is really about getting to know yourself, getting to know what you want that next step in your life to be, and [trying] to find the best fit for [yourselves] and [your] families... My advice is to take this process as a really personal one and not listen to a lot of the outside noise," said Edwards-Perry.

A. ZHU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Singareddy '13 Reflects On Journey

Continued from A1, Column 5

your work to go beyond Andover... But actually, I had a bunch of Andover faculty members, some from the English Department, writing defenses of not just me as a student, because it's not about that... [They were] more a defense of Andover's educational style and the way that it's very fiercely independent."

Singareddy went on to obtain a degree in History with a concentration in Statistics at Columbia University. During college, Singareddy also pursued a wide range of internships and advocacy projects, from working in digital privacy and governance to advocating for a 15 dollar minimum wage.

"I am not someone who likes to be bored, so picking things that interest me and then just leaning into it to find out more has just continued to connect me to wildly fascinating people and projects... I always make it very public that I'm leaning into those things and after I've talked about it, I also ask for things. I'm not afraid to ask. A lot of the internships that I did were not real internships, as in they weren't available. I just tried to create them as opportunities and manifested it in a structured way," said Singareddy.

After college, Singareddy worked at various healthcare companies before joining with two business partners to solve a problem in the healthcare system: Medicaid, the government's health insurance program for people of low incomes. They eventually created the premise for Fortuna Health, which helps people navigate the complex Medicaid system.

"Every state has its own rules related to Medicaid eligibility. There are multiple different Medicaid programs you [or] your household may qualify for. And then you have to go through actually enrolling in that program... It can be very confusing to a lot of people, particularly if you're doing multiple at the same time. So what Fortuna does is create that as an end-to-end digital experience. So the first part starts in just understanding if you're eligible. We try to create that magic moment of letting you know in less than 60 seconds if you or your household qualifies for one of the government coverage programs," said Singareddy.

She continued, "Then we take you through a kind of guided enrollment, personalized to you, as efficacious and easy to understand as possible. And then we are submitting applications, triaging applications, doing a bunch of automations to process those with the administrative body on the back end. So the TurboTax analogy is pretty similar to how you might do your taxes on TurboTax instead of doing it directly with the state."

Kicking off 2025, Singareddy and her partners Ben Wesner and Cydney Kim were named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, recognizing their work as younger entrepreneurs in creating Fortuna Health. Singareddy reflected on the honor, highlighting the feeling of validation that the recognition gave the company, especially as a young organization compared to the rest of the healthcare industry.

"I'm really, really proud of our work, [and] I'm really proud of our co-founders. But most importantly, our entire team is under 30... A lot of healthcare, [and] generally a lot of industries, are full of people who've been in the space far longer than you have. So to build anything, you need to be a little bit naive, [have] a lot of passion, and also be really thoughtful about what you're working on. And I think our team has the perfect combination of those things. And so getting [30] under 30, I think, was another way of being appreciated for doing that," said Singareddy.

Singareddy reflected on how many moments that turned out to be formative ones happened by accident. She concluded by noting that her approach to life–leaning into spontaneity — has so far been a worthwhile method to making a meaningful life.

"So many of the best things in my life have come from doing unexpected things or leaning into the randomness. I have found that that has brought me to the things that have given me the most pleasure and enjoyment and the things that have made life worth it. And so that means if a path that has not been trod is in front of you, take the weird path. I highly encourage taking the weird path," said Singareddy.

10 Questions With Nick Zufelt

REPORTING BY VEDANT BAJAJ & CHRISTIAN ESTRADA

Dr. Nick Zufelt is an Instructor in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, a House Counselor in Stevens House, and an advisor for the Brace Board. As a Tang Institute Fellow, Zufelt co-founded the Ethi{CS} project to introduce ethical thinking into the classroom. He received a Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of Texas at Austin and has done extensive research on topics including manifolds and astrophysics. He enjoys game design, systems thinking, and finding meaningful connections within the Andover community.

E. LIU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

What initially drew you to Andover?

I finished my graduate degree, then I went into a postdoc in London, so I lived in London for one school year. At that time I was doing that research, and I was considering doing more research or teaching... This teaching position [at Andover] came up around the same time I was teaching myself coding because of the very possible option that I didn't get a math position, which is fantastically hard to get. I was learning a lot of machine learning, data science, and computer science. I took a class in college about it, but I am mostly self-taught... This position came up, it was a position that was partially math, partially CS, and I jumped on it cause it sounded great.

Do you have any advice for students interested in Computer Science and learning how to code?

I always tell my students at the start of a CS class that the wealth of material you ought to learn on your own online is much stronger in computer science than basically any other field. You can learn to code anywhere online, and you can learn to put anything online. "So then, what are you doing in class?" I think that's reasonable to ask and this is what I always try to talk with students at the beginning of the term. You're getting not just access to the teacher, but access to a cohort of people, so you really need to lean into that aspect of the course if you want to get anything useful out of it at all, because you can just learn this stuff online. If you want to learn it well and learn how to collaborate and communicate with others and code, build, and think abstractly, you need a lot of the other things that complement the coding skill that most high-school students think of. But computer science is more than just learning to code.

Do you think that an AI takeover is possible?

Anything related to the singularity and stuff, I would argue, is worth thinking about from a theoretical perspective, but there are much more pressing issues related to AI that we should probably spend real resources on. For example, huge problems with bias in AI and other sorts of present-day issues. Is it possible? Sure, but the future is so hard to predict... I think all technology has the potential to cause more harm than [it] currently does. People who are creators of technology...need to think responsibly about it. Therefore, as a teacher of someone, the teacher of people who are using technology, that's something that we think a lot about in classes. Technology exists to consolidate power, that's what technology's job is... With that larger consolidation of power, you need to make sure that you are using it to do good in the world.

What is Ethi{CS}, and what did you do during your time as a Tang Fellow?

So the Ethi{CS} project has been in existence for many years now... Dr. [Kiran] Bhardwaj, [Department Chair of Religion and Philosophy] and I co-founded it. Originally, it started out as working to meaningfully incorporate ethical thinking into a CS classroom. There are two major things we are trying to avoid with [Ethi{CS}]. The first is setting up structures so that students feel like, "Oh man, it's time to put my ethics hat on," and then happily taking that hat off to go back to doing the, quote-unquote, "real work of coding." Trying to show students that this work is the 'real work' and it's important. Building projects that are simultaneously technically and ethically rigorous is one of the main goals, and then the other goal is to center the ethical work, so you're not saying, "Shame on you Facebook," but you're thinking about the work that you do... Thinking through that kind of question is a much more important question for a high school student to be wrestling with than "ought the government shut down Facebook." Maybe we can have that conversation, but that is aside. We need to focus on the harm that we might cause first.

You have a background in research, especially earlier on in your education, for example with cluster galaxies. Why did you choose to research that, and what did you find out?

That was actually for when I was an undergraduate. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has this program, the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU), so I did a summer project at the University of Rochester. I was part of two papers out of that, which makes me sound more of an astrophysicist than I actually am... I had a research advisor who ran the whole thing. She had multiple postdocs that worked for her and they had multiple grad students working for them and then we were like the army of undergrads that worked for the graduate students. So this kind of hierarchy of thinking was really fascinating. You get these precious few moments with the professor that's the head researcher for the project. I remember learning to be super prepared because, unlike Andover, where people go talk to any of these amazing researchers and thinkers on campus whenever you want, I had 20 minutes a day over the summer where I could [talk to the professor]... Thinking about "how do you prepare for these really important moments with people" was probably the [skill] I learned the most, which has nothing to do with physics, but it was really useful.

You have done a lot of research. Do you have any advice for people who want to navigate the hierarchy of research?

There are two things I would say about that. The first is, you have to be genuinely curious about the topic that you're researching. You can tell, everyone else can tell. If you're just doing it to check the research box, if you're not genuinely curious, not only can people tell, but also your work won't be as good. You have to actually have some real curiosity. So read. Ask questions. Ask second questions, ask more follow-up questions. Just keep diving down these rabbit holes, that's what being a researcher is all about. The other thing is to find the relevant professors who are doing awesome work in this category. Don't bother emailing them, they are not going to respond. Find their graduate students and write to them. Because graduate students might be like "Oh cool! I'm important in the world now! I have undergraduates and high school students writing to me and asking me questions!" They are connected to these excellent researchers. They are becoming excellent researchers and so they will relish the opportunity to answer your questions.

You wrote your PhD thesis on the combinatorics of reducible Dehn surgery. What is that about, and what inspired your interest in it?

The idea is actually relatively straightforward, but truly explaining my thesis topics would take a super long time... When you stand somewhere on the earth, you look around, you can look north, south, east, or west. Locally it looks like a sheet, but the people who then say "Therefore the whole world is flat," we call those people flat earthers, and we mock them. However, we all make the same mistake about the Universe. You can go above or below the orbital plane, forward or backward along the orbital path of the earth, or to and away from the sun. Locally it is three dimensions, so therefore the whole universe is in three dimensions. You can go in that direction for all time. That is the same mistake flat earthers make and yet we're all cool with it. So there is no reason to suggest that the universe doesn't eventually turn, right? So there's no reason to suggest that the universe doesn't eventually wrap around on itself like the surface of a sphere... You can kind of interpret it as being, "What are all the potential finite or closed options for what the universe could be?"

How long did it take you to learn computer science?

I've been coding on and off for about my whole life. I coded on an Apple TV when I was in first grade, but never very serious[ly] until this one year of a postdoc; I sort of transitioned my topic over towards that so that I could learn a lot of the coding stuff along the way. Going back, I had a little bit of programming in elementary school, but my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Schaffer, changed my life. She had this system where every Friday she would crash course us through the whole next week's math content like "boom, boom, boom here's 20 minutes, let's go as fast as possible through the math." That was all we did on Friday. On Monday she would give us a test on that content and if we aced that test, we were quote-unquote "exempt" from math for the week. Then we could work on the computers and whatever programming stuff we wanted to. So I worked my butt off in order to actually get the computer rather than do math worksheets.

Do you have any unique hobbies?

I'm a big fan of all kinds of games: Board games, card games, video games, you name it. But in particular, I really like learning a new game. I teach a game development class on campus and we focus a lot on the idea of what makes a game compelling, fun, and interesting. To me, I love the beginning stages of, "I have no idea what this game is, let's see what it has to offer," and that can be anything. I mean you can have the same kind of experience in a math block, these things that are game-like in math. When my kids get a new board game, I love to just read the instructions, which sounds so nerdy, and I know it's super nerdy, but this whole idea of "Let's see if we can go from 'this is a mystery to me' to 'I understand this system.'" Games are like micro-systems in a way. I say my hobby is games but more importantly, it's learning about games.

Who is someone that's inspired you and what did you learn from them?

My PhD advisor, Cameron Gordon, was an absolute legend, and one of the nicest people I have ever met. Wildly smart and infinitely patient. Really cool guy... [I learned] so much literal math, content-wise obviously. But then just a lot of how to strive for humility in all situations. Every room he entered he was probably the smartest person in, and yet you could never tell that he felt that way. He is incredibly smart yet incredibly down-to-earth with every conversation he has. He was such an inspiration... I try to [mimic his teaching style]. He was really funny too, he has all these stories. One thing I do that mimics him is that I tell a lot of stories from my random past as well, a thing that a lot of teachers do. Every once in a while, a student in class or in the dorm will be like, "Oh yeah we just learned some Nick lore."

HERE AND THERE: THE WORLD RIGHT NOW

COLLECTED BY NICCOLO LEE-SUK & SELENE PARK

Natural Disaster: Thousands Evacuated Amid Devastating Los Angeles Wildfires

Wildfires have engulfed Los Angeles since January 7. "NBC News" reports that the first fire started in Pacific Palisades, while others have been spreading throughout the city. Although the cause of these fires remains undetermined, California's dry conditions, combined with heavy offshore winds, have bolstered the flames. With a death toll estimated at 16, the fires have been extremely harmful to city residents, and are expected to lead to even more victims, according to "BBC News." With over 166,000 inhabitants under evacuation warnings, 153,000 people have already evacuated the area. Even though firefighters were able to contain about 11 percent of the fire, more than 23,000 acres of land have been decimated.

Death: Nation Mourns the Passing of Former President Jimmy Carter at 100

The 39th President of the United States James Earl Carter Jr., widely known as Jimmy Carter, passed away on December 29, 2024 at the age of 100, making him the longest-lived president in American history. His funeral was held on January 9, which was declared a national day of mourning by President Joe Biden. "NPR" reported that the service was attended by all five living U.S. presidents, and speeches were given by many of the latter's friends and family. According to "The New York Times," the speeches highlighted not only Carter's presidential accomplishments but his kind and faithful character. Many have praised the former president for his sincerity and moral values, as well as his efforts during and after his presidency to solve issues such as inflation and climate change. Carter was buried next to his wife, Rosalynn Carter, in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

Diplomacy: Agreement to a Ceasefire Reached for the Israel-Hamas War

Israel and Hamas officials have agreed to a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, as well as a release of multiple hostages, "The Politico" reported. The three-phase agreement calls for the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced Gazans to what is left of their homes, as well as the release of hundreds of Palestinian inmates in Israel and dozens of hostages held by terrorists in Gaza, states "AP News." Humanitarian aid can now enter the region, which has been devastated by 15 months of conflict, according to the recently signed agreement. This new approach, reckons U.S. officials, is the closest they have come to putting an end to the 15 months of war.

War: Two North Korean Soldiers Captured in Ukraine

Ukrainian forces operating in the Kursk region of Russia have captured two North Korean soldiers, marking the first time that Kyiv has imprisoned living soldiers from the isolated state. Although 11,000 North Korean troops have been aiding Russia in Kursk, these are the first to be captured by Ukraine, according to "CNN News." The two captured soldiers claimed that they thought they were sent to Russia for training, not to fight Ukraine, states "The New York Times." As the war in Ukraine continues to rage on, with North Korean troops entering the battle last month, Russia has managed to regain half the territory it lost in the Kursk area. The Biden Administration has reported that 1,000 North Korean soldiers have been wounded or killed in battle.

Crime: President Trump's Hush Money Case

President Trump's charges of business fraud and hush money payment to pornographic star Stormy Daniels have reached an eventual sentence of unconditional discharge, according to "CNN News." Although Trump was indicted in four separate criminal cases in the four years between his terms in office, this was the only one to go to trial. While this sentence spares President Trump of any penalty, including prison or a fine, his conviction still stands, making him enter office as a convicted felon, according to "BBC News."

Angeline Zhao '25 Named Top 300 Scholar in Regeneron Science Talent Search

I. PADMAWAR/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Angeline Zhao's project centred around analyzing gerrymandering in New York City using Monte Carlo simulations.

KRISTEN MA & KAI OBATA

Angeline Zhao '25 and her project "Finding Belonging in the Big City: Understanding Communities-of-Interest in NYC Redistricting via Monte Carlo Simulations" landed her among the top 300 scholars in the 2025 Regeneron Science Talent Search (STS). Widely acknowledged as one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious math and science competition, Regeneron STS honors high school seniors for their extensive research, leadership, and creativity.

Scholars each pursued independent passion projects affiliated with STEM. With over 2,500 projects submitted to the competition this year, the process was highly competitive in determining the top 300 scholars, each of whom received 2,000 dollars with an additional 2,000 dollars going to the school.

Zhao elaborated on her use of mathematics and statistical simulations in her project. Bridging STEM with current political issues, part of her project included using Monte Carlo simulations to investigate how redistricting maps may indicate gerrymandering.

"The topic came from the professor that I'm working with. I was really interested in his research which was focused on using mathematics and statistical simulations to analyze redistricting and gerrymandering... My specific topic is looking at NYC and looking at these communities of interest, which are these very vaguely defined geographical regions in cities that are supposed to be preserved so that people of similar or racial or political beliefs or cultures are grouped together and have the power to elect representatives that they want," said Zhao.

Zhao continued, "What the Monte Carlo simulation does is allow you to very quickly generate a very big data set of potential [redistricting] maps... They group the precincts into these city council districts, and if you look at a really big subset then you can see how much of an outlier the current political map is. If it's a really big outlier, you can look at the specific area where it differs from all your simulations and use that to conclude if it's an instance of gerrymandering, etcetera."

One of the things that Zhao appreciates most about math is the ability to apply it to interdisciplinary fields with tangible impact. She emphasized the applicability of STEM to real-life problems and how research can serve as tools to advocate social justice.

"I was always interested in interdisciplinary research that uses math not only within the field itself but also other [areas] like social or political issues... It's a very powerful way of advocating for people whose voices are not represented properly or advocated for in government or other areas," said Zhao.

Zhao continued, "What my research showed me is that there is a lot of power in using mathematics and numbers to advocate for change in a lot of these political and social contexts. I think that's something that isn't recognized enough, and I hope that more research like this will be conducted and that there will be more space for governments and other organizations to advocate for change based on [research] like this."

Christopher Odden, Instructor in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, has taught Zhao in math for five terms at Andover. Congratulating Zhao on her achievement, Odden highlighted some of Zhao's standout qualities as a student within the classroom.

"As a math student, she's just phenomenally gifted, and she really understands the material, and she's a great expositor. She can explain complicated ideas, and she thinks very clearly about the subjects, and she really has [a] great rapport with her peers in class, and is able to talk through problems with them. It is a great joy to teach her," said Odden.

To other students interested in STEM research or independent passion projects, Zhao encouraged them to seize and pursue research opportunities that they find interesting, highlighting how simply reaching out can be a start.

"Think about topics that you are really interested in, and think about things that you notice in the world around you that you find really interesting. I would just advise you: Go for it. I cold emailed [my professor] and that's how I got my research opportunity... STEM research seems very intimidating [but] I think there's also a lot of room for you to learn and grow through the process. And you can get some really cool results out of it," said Zhao.

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Phillipian Phorever

OVERHEARD ON THE PATHS

"Inauguration Day? Talk about juxtaposition..."

"Let's address the 600 lbs gorilla in the room."

"It looks like someone has been playing golf on your head and not replacing the divots."

"Just wait till *The Phillipian* gets a hold of this!"

"People KNOW when I'm in the den bathroom."

"I heard that that MLK workshop is going to bring in Charlie Kirk as a special guest."

Week's Top Headlines

- *Students Buy Norovirus Laced Tissues off eBay in Hopes of Another Four-Day Weekend.*
- *Andover Special Investigation Unit Reveals the Truth Behind the Sykes Honey Packet Scheme.*
- *Students Required to Do the Good Ol' Handshake With the President After Budget Cuts Restrict Toilet Paper*
- *Multiple JV Hockey Players Break Vegan Streak by Eating Ceremonial Pork Before Saturday's Choate Game*
- *Studies Predict ASM Attentiveness to Increase by 40 percent after TikTok Ban*

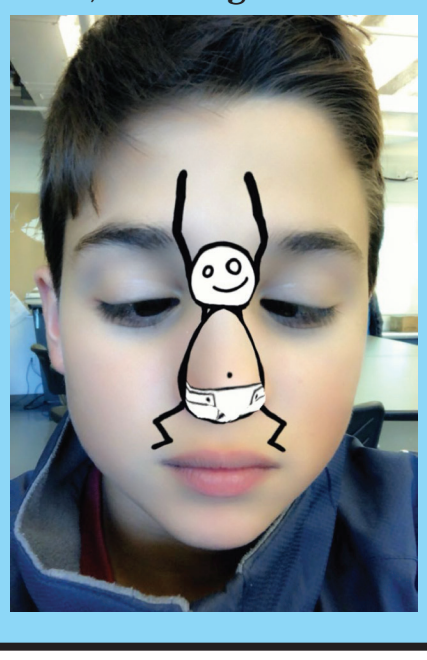
SQUID GAMES: Andover Edition

NATHAN WU/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Louisa and Jac Roast Theo and Charles

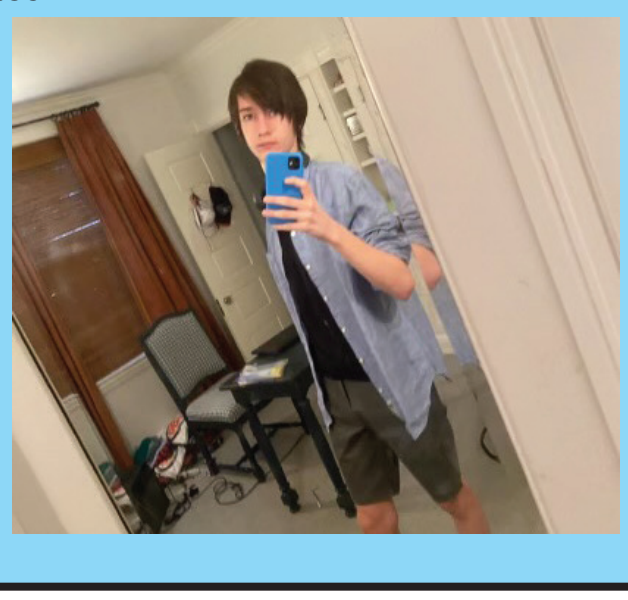
Theo

- Champion of men's rights
- Treats Elite Prospect stats like a game of two truths and lie (hint, there are actually two lies)
  - From North Reading
  - 165 lbs
  - 5'10
- Doesn't have LinkedIn – will probably never get a job
- Social butterfly (friends include David, Oni, #27, @onifans)
- Acted like he won Gatorade Player of the Year when he got tagged on @ljoelpaathletics for JV hockey goal
- Drives a car referred to as " The Steel Coffin"
- Can crush a watermelon with his BBL
- Patient zero of the sassy man epidemic
- Tiny ears – needs custom airpods
- But come on now, "He's a good kid"



Charles

- Has zero LinkedIn connections (also will never be getting a job)
- Will be first in line at the Chopped Chin Meet and Greet
- Humiliation kink (No one else yells that much in commons)
- The center of gravity is in the knees
- Cosplays giraffes for local petting zoos
- Theater kid, like actual theater kid
- Dresses like he's a peaky blinder (Thinks he's Tommy Shelby)
- Food takes 30 minutes to reach his stomach
- Thinks he's Shakespeare reincarnated
- Known for stalking the Sanctuary, slenderman style
- Always has his trench coat buttoned to the top
- Will check himself out on every single reflective surface



The Phillipian
SPORTS

i'll miss tiktok

Volume CXLVII | Number 29

January 17, 2025

Boys Hockey: The Redeem Team Faces Off Against Choate and Tilton

ALEX DIMNAKU

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	3
Choate	4
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	4
Tilton	3

On Saturday and Wednesday, Boys Hockey played two overtime games, against Choate and Tilton, respectively. Andover fell short in the last nine seconds of overtime where Choate scored from the backdoor zone to clinch the game. However, in the last minutes against Tilton with a goal from Assistant Captain Charles Sabre '25, Andover recovered with a win heading into the second half of the season.

Having lost to St. George's School in its first game back from the Flood Marr Championship, Boys Hockey had hoped to reignite the momentum with a win over Choate. Tyler Miocevich '26 elaborated on the aftermath of the team's loss to Choate, describing the locker room as quiet and somber. Despite the devastation, the team shifted its focus to the upcoming game against Tilton.

"[The game] was over with and we weren't going to change anything from it. Now, we had to focus on what was coming next, which was Tilton. So for a little bit, it was heartbreaking, everyone was a little down, but then we got refocused and understood that we had another task at hand," said Miocevich.

A.LEE/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

David O'Neill '26 works the puck around the rink, making his way toward the goal.

Struggling to bring its more physical and fast-paced presence into its game, Miocevich noted how Choate was able to capitalize on the team's deficits.

"All around, our team's competitiveness and focus comes from just playing super hard and tough. I think that was definitely lacking in the game against Choate. We took them a little easier. Let them off the hook a little bit, and didn't finish our checks or make tough plays," said Miocevich.

Rui Han '25 emphasized the importance of being composed under heavy pressure. Han noted how handling such difficult games can better prepare the team for later matches where the stakes could be much higher.

"Playing overtime games like this in the middle of the season definitely helps us get used to the feeling of being in high-stakes situations. I think an experience like this will help us stay calm and focus on the little details which can make a huge difference later on in the season," said Han.

Miocevich described the team's game plan for the season, which includes a more offensive-driven strategy that generates lots of turnover and forces its opponents to fall under pressure.

"If we start down in the offensive zone, our forecheck is a 2-1. So the forwards are pressing hard on their defense trying to get pucks turned over. We go in the neutral zone, we have a specific center-ice play that we like to run on those draws," said Miocevich.

Miocevich continued, "The defensemen get the puck and turn it up fast, just always pushing offense and trying to get it out of our zone fast on the transition to the D-zone, which is again hard on pucks, pinning guys, getting loose pucks, and getting out of our zone as fast as possible."

Following its loss against Choate, Andover regrouped over a team dinner to reflect on its loss and rekindle its motivation. Edouard Lord '26 shared the team's determination to win against Tilton to regain the momentum from its championship win in the Flood Marr Tournament.

"We knew we had a favorable matchup—we think we had the most talent and we just needed to prove once again that we were a good team after the two losses, so I guess just proving that what happened before break was not a fluke," said Lord.

On Wednesday, Andover fell into an early deficit against Tilton, mirroring Choate's game. However, Andover battled back to a 2-1 lead before halftime. Miocevich detailed Andover's first goal, by Matthew Petroski '27, which was a reviving moment for the team.

"It was either 1-0 or 2-0, and we knew we had to get something. We needed some momentum back. The puck went into a bit of a scrum in front of the net and ended up on Matt's stick and he was just able to force it in," said Miocevich.

In the third period, Tilton tied the game to 3-3 with two minutes remaining forcing the game into overtime where Han assisted Sabre to break the team's two-game losing streak.

Lord said, "He got the puck on the point and he just shot it through traffic. It might have tipped off a skate, I'm not sure, but it ended up just going through everything and going in between the goalie's legs."

Miocevich outlined how the captains' and coaches' support during the games kept Andover united and focused throughout the most stressful points of the game.

"They were outlining it for us, showing us, reminding us to stick to our team values, like our core, all of that kind of thing. Also, subtle reminders throughout the games, like little pump-up shouts on the bench, just keeping the team morale high and keeping us pushing," said Miocevich.

Boys Hockey will play away at St. Paul's this upcoming Friday.

All Gender Wrestling Dominates With Three Consecutive Wins

ASHLEY SUH

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	45
Choate	30
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	9
Open Invitational	4
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	46
Concord Academy	29

On Saturday, Wrestling had an impressive 45-30 win away at Choate. On Wednesday, Team Abbot Wrestling hosted an Open Invitational, securing a 9-4 win, while the Varsity team traveled to Concord, winning 46-29. On Wednesday, Sebastian Haferd '25 set a new school record, pinning his opponent in seven seconds.

Narek Hambardzumyan '26 pointed out the consistency of Co-Captain Dani Nugent '25's impressive wrestling skills, allowing her to always stand out from the crowd, but especially in her performance on Saturday against Choate.

"The people who always stand out during the meet are our two Co-Captains, Julian Rios '26 and Dani Nugent. They're both, by far, the best wrestlers on the team. They always stand out in their matches. Julian didn't wrestle at Choate, but Dani did. It was actually a really good match, too. She was one point away from a technical fall, which is winning by one point. [Nugent's] match was really good," said Hambardzumyan.

Grace Kim '27 highlighted the performance of Co-Captain Eva Murphy '25 and Tony Elliot '27 on Wednesday at the Open Invitational, who wrestled their way to victories by having good pins and movement on the mat. In her first meet back after recovering from an injury, Murphy managed to pin her opponent in rapid succession.

"Eva Murphy just came back, and she did really good. I think she got a ten-second pin. That was really nice. And Tony Elliott also did really well." said Kim.

Kim also noted the positive energy and strengths that members of the team possess, highlighting the competitive nature of the team, athletes' commitment, and willingness to improve.

Kim said, "Honestly, we're just really aggressive, and we're very passionate about what we do, and that is one of our strengths. We just have to keep trying hard."

Kai Wang '27 highlighted Co-Captain Bodhi Beroukhim '25 and Sebastian Haferd '25's notable matches against Concord Academy on Wednesday, contributing to the overall points.

"Bodhi definitely had a really exciting match today. He and his opponent went back and forth and the final score was 15-10. That brought us to the lead by 28 to 17. Also, Haferd won his match and set a new school record of seven seconds," said Wang.

Hambardzumyan talked about the camaraderie and the tight-knit community that the wrestling team brings to its meets. With only one whole team home match this season, Hambardzumyan noted Wrestling's ability to bring its lively energy on the road.

"It's really always great for the meets. It has been rough this year because we've only had one home meet, which was our first dual meet of the year. After that, we're all away at Choate and Concord. But even at away meets, we're always bringing the energy to the matches. People who aren't wrestling are always watching along, always cheering their teammates on, and people who can give advice at all times. Everyone's just really supportive of each other," said Hambardzumyan.

K.MA/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Bella Shmuylovich' 26 stands warily against her opponent.

Wang gave an insight into a creative activity that the team participated in the day before the meet, allowing athletes to calm their nerves and picture their matches in advance.

"One thing we did yesterday, which was something different than what we usually do, is we sat down in the dark for about 20 minutes. We visualized how the matches would go tomorrow. That's just a technique for getting into a good habit with your movement, even if you're not physically moving. We also do live matches with our wrestling partners. That's another way to get used to being in an actual match environment. We do a lot of physical drills as well, like push-ups [and] sit-ups," said Wang.

Varsity Wrestling will take part in the Eight Schools Meet on Saturday at Choate.

Nordic Skiing Breaks the Ice With Two Impressive Performances

MATHEW LIU & MICHAEL STAII

A canceled race before the winter break and the absence of snow set the All-Gender Nordic Skiing team off to a slow start to its season. However, after claiming second place on Friday against Middlesex and Belmont Hill and putting up a strong performance this Wednesday against Holderness, the team is hopeful, looking to develop new skiers and refine the team's overall pacing and conditioning.

Noah Binkowski '26 elaborated on the team's first event, which was friendly and served as a good form of practice, especially for the new skiers.

"It was a relay, so we were in teams of two. Each person did one lap three times. It was a small race with only three teams, and didn't matter towards the season," said Binkowski.

Sebastian Vermut '27 highlighted the standout skiers in this event, praising Co-Captains Luke Williamson '25 and Sage Preston '25. Vermut also shouted out Binkowski for his leadership qualities, noting how he supported and guided his new skier teammate during the event.

Vermut said, "Our captains are the two strongest members of our team, and also more than that. It was the first race back from the off-season, and they set the precedent of what being good on this team actually means. But also, I'd say there were standout performances from Noah Binkowski just because of his partner. Noah's partner was new to the sport and Andover itself, and he helped him get acquainted with the team."

Binkowski also received overwhelming praise from Michael Bria '27 for his performance in the second meet, in which he showcased his skill by keeping pace with Williamson.

"I'd say Noah Binkowski definitely had a good race. He was keeping up with Luke Williamson, who is, I think, our fastest racer," said Bria.

The new skiers, while initially requiring extra guidance, are viewed by the team as valuable assets to develop for future success. To support their growth, the team has been prioritizing these skiers by providing them with additional time on the snow machine and focusing on teaching the fundamental aspects of Nordic skiing.

Vermut said, "Priority was given to beginner skiers who had more time on the snow machine to practice on, just because they would benefit more. For the past couple of weeks, we've been keeping our cardio and doing the basics, waxing our skis to make sure all is ready. Also, we practiced double poling, which is more of a classic ski style, and it is really helpful to have on the ground, especially for beginners to learn on an open field."

Bria elaborated on the team's training leading up to the second race, attributing the team's success to dedicated cardio workouts. Bria also provided insight into how the team utilizes various parts of campus to enhance its training regimen.

"Before the second race, we were doing a lot of snow work up in the old Abbot campus with our snow machine, and just getting out and doing hill runs... The biggest thing for a lot of us was the 5K run in practice doing the Chatham loop... Just being able to continuously keep that endurance for a long time. That was definitely a major part of our success overall," said Bria.

On Wednesday, the All-Gender Nordic Skiing team will compete at Holderness Academy.

High Standards: Co-Captain Xavier Abreu '25 Looks to Make a Splash This Season

MICHAEL WILLIAMSON

After moving to Varsity in Lower year following his first year on the Junior Varsity (JV) team, Boys Basketball Co-Captain Xavier Abreu '25 (X) has aimed to bring his leadership and love of the game to his beloved team. Abreu has since stepped up as the team's highest scorer and an offensive powerhouse.

Abreu balances the role of being a player and a coach for his fellow teammates. By settling only for the best, Abreu promotes a culture of hard work and humility that the rest of the players can look up to.

"I am balanced between being both a vocal leader and a Captain that leads by my play. I like to hold my teammates accountable and really just get us going and fired up before games and in the huddle. If someone is slacking or not trying hard enough in practice, I try to keep all of the great athletes on the team humble. I also try to hold myself to the highest standard and lead by example for my teammates," said Abreu.

Since his first season, Abreu has been a standout player. His Co-Captain Oli Ogueri '25 spoke of their time together on JV during the 2022-23 season.

"One of my favorite moments was definitely our time on JV. That was just a really fun year. I'm not going to say we could do whatever we wanted, but we played very well in the game and were able to pull off a lot of plays that made the games pretty exciting. [Dr. Thomas] Kane was an awesome coach and gave me and X a lot of freedom. We were putting up crazy performances. A lot of people would come to our games to watch, and it was a great way to enter the Andover Basketball community," said Ogueri.

L. RUSTUM/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

With new additions to the team, Abreu has helped players settle under Head Coach Terrell Ivory '00 (TI) and his diligent playstyle. Jake Saalfrank PG '25 commented on Abreu's ability to lead the team effectively.

Saalfrank said, "TI runs a bunch of plays, so X is very helpful in knowing every spot, teaching everybody what they are supposed to be doing and when they are supposed to do it. He's also helped get me acclimated to the team culture under TI, giving me an idea of the ins and outs of the team and what I need to do to help the team perform the best and what TI wants me to do."

After a very successful first two seasons on the team, Abreu shared his most memorable moment during last season when the team won against Phillips Exeter Academy (Exeter) during Winter Andover/Exeter (A/E). He highlighted the impact of the win going into the postseason.

"My favorite memory has to be last year winning A/E. It was just like a big game. We needed a win to get into the playoffs. In terms of the team's performance in recent years, we had been in a losing slump against Exeter and it just felt great to come out on top. It was definitely an intense game, but it really just reflected what our team culture is all about in handling adversity both on and off the court. It is hard to go into such a historic rivalry with not the best record against Exeter and put up the performance we did to secure the win," said Abreu.

Emphasizing a growth mindset, Ogueri highlighted how their Co-Captain competitiveness allows the two to work on each other's game. He emphasized how challenging each other sparked creativity and a more refined playmaking.

"When you 1v1 someone for so long or play basketball with someone for years, you get to know each other's game pretty well. Even if it's just us playing together, because I know his moves so well, it forces him to be more crafty and create space in different ways. The time we have spent together has fostered an iron-sharpens-iron relationship where we are able to improve our games through teamwork," said Ogueri.

After a solid start to the season, Abreu aspires to bring a championship win to the program while instilling values of hard work and discipline in each game.

"We aspire to get better every day. Getting one percent better every day is exactly what TI preaches all the time and it's the message I want to convey to the team as well. With our long-term goal being to make the playoffs and hopefully back to the championship, we really need to stay disciplined and just together as we work toward bringing Andover a chip," said Abreu.

After his final season with Andover, Abreu will continue his basketball journey playing Division I Basketball at Northeastern University.

Boys Basketball Co-Captain Oli Ogueri '25: Making an Impact from Every Spot on the Court

MICHAEL WILLIAMSON

Since playing on Junior Varsity in his first season, to joining Varsity as a Lower, Boys Basketball Co-Capitain Oli Ogueri '25 has been an integral part of each basketball team he's been a part of at Andover. Since unexpectedly picking up the sport before high school, Ogueri has made strides to become a leader the team looks up to.

After living in Africa for many years during elementary and middle school, Ogueri came back to the United States to find many of his friends putting in hours on the court. Ogueri spoke about his discovery of basketball.

"I used to live in Africa for a period of time during elementary and middle school. I came back to the States in sixth grade and a lot of my childhood friends back home were playing basketball. My path to playing basketball really came down to the fact that all of my friends were focused on hooping. I was already a swimmer at the time, but I hated swimming so playing basketball became a cool way to hang out with my boys and it became something I did a lot," said Ogueri.

Co-Captain Xavier Abreu '25 spoke on his role alongside Ogueri. He mentioned how their connection has been able to push them to together foster the best community on the team possible.

"Oli and I have been boys since our [Junior] year. Being a captain alongside him is amazing because that's my guy. We hang out a lot outside of basketball and we hold each other accountable. We have both been with this team for a while and are pushing each other to be the best we can be," said Abreu.

Jeremy Woodley '26 described Ogueri's leadership as being very vocal and knowledgeable. Woodley highlighted his on-court intelligence and how he praises taking smart shots.

"Oli's leadership involves communicating a lot, whether it's on or off the court. He always makes sure that we're talking to each other, even when he's injured or can't play. He encourages us to think strategically and to try and figure out what the other team's weaknesses are and how we can exploit them. He is a really smart player and just encourages us to take the shots that we practice," said Woodley.

Woodley continued, "Right before our first home game of this season, when we huddled before the game, Oli gave a little pre-game speech and encouraged us to 'fight for our brothers and fight for our crowd, let everyone know why our team is here and give them a good game.' That just shows how he is present being a leader on this team."

L. RUSTUM/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Abreu elaborated on Ogueri's leadership style, highlighting how he manages to help bridge the gap between the coach and players. Additionally, Ogueri has helped convey the values of the team on and off the court.

"He brings a different perspective to leadership, as I'm more focused on our team on the court. He's more on the sideline, helping guys out and leading them where it really matters. He knows the values and what we pride ourselves on in this program. He definitely acts like a second coach for [Terrell Ivory '00] TI, as a player, which brings a new perspective for other teammates. It is one thing to hear something from a coach, but when you hear it from a friend... it helps the team stay together," said Abreu.

After years of playing together, Abreu highlighted his favorite moment alongside Ogueri being the team's big win against Exeter. He pointed to a standout moment of Ogueri's leadership during his Upper Year when he was unable to step on the court.

"There's a picture after the end of the Exeter game and we're both throwing up the 'W' signs with our hands. It was a great moment because being with the team for so long allowed us to see the struggles we had against Exeter. It was great to get over that hump, and especially since we did it together. So that was like a very meaningful picture and a great memory, I might look back on [it] 20 years from now and reflect on those good times," said Abreu.

Over his time on the team, Ogueri reflected on his favorite moments spent with the team. He highlighted his time spent with the team last season after he battled adversity just to support the team as they made the playoffs.

Ogueri said, "My favorite moment has to be the postseason last year, even though I couldn't play. Unfortunately, that term was filled with obstacles like concussions and injuries. I was considering just taking a term off and going home, which is what the school had recommended. However, I decided to stay to stick with the team watching every game they played. Staying and then being with the guys as we made a deep playoff run made my time spent with them feel very meaningful."

A Busy Week: Andover Wins Against Brooks but Falls to Choate and Worcester

BRUCE MCLAREN

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	51
Choate	67
TUESDAY 1/14	
Andover	65
Brooks	64
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	71
Worcester	76

Boys Basketball had a busy week, with three games in five days against Choate, Brooks, and Worcester Academy. The team fell to Choate on Saturday, returned to their winning ways with a nail-biting win against Brooks on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, the team barely lost in a shootout against Worcester.

A. PIZZI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Xavier Abreu '25 shoots his shot.

After the loss on Saturday, Xavier Abreu '25 said the team struggled to stay focused. Additionally, he mentioned that the team learned from their mistakes and was ready to strike back in the games ahead.

Abreu said, "Unfortunately, our game against Choate was not our best performance. We lacked focus and just could not get the job done... We are handling it well and just using that game to really push harder in practice and in our next game on Monday."

Additionally, Jake Saalfrank '25 mentioned that in their preparation for the game on Tuesday, the team focused on their defensive struggles in their Saturday game while also focusing on some offensive concepts, leading them to their victory against Brooks.

"Following our loss at Choate, we knew we had to step it up defensively, especially with our help defense, so that was a big focus during practice. We also focused on moving without the ball on offense in our preparations. This really showed today because we were very improved," said Saalfrank.

The high-scoring clash between Andover and Worcester was electrified by astounding plays that energized the stadium. Rex Corkins '25 highlighted David Fridia '25 and Abreu for their standout performances.

Corkins said, "There were a couple times where David had some nice blocks. He really just got up and made big swats which kind of brought the whole place up. Everyone was ready to go. I think mostly our defense was what was bringing us energy, and of course, also can't forget X [Xavier], hitting a lot of big threes, especially in the first half."

Reflecting on the atmosphere of the games he has played so far, Saalfrank noted that the energy from the bench has been a significant factor in the team's performance. He acknowledged the limited number of active players but emphasized their crucial role on the team.

Saalfrank said, "Only having six guys playing means that there were many people on the bench. They were energetic during the whole game. They helped let guys know what was open, and what they saw. The energy was through the roof. Any time someone hit a shot, they got up, jumped around; they were all just loud, which helped us a lot."

Coming off the victory on Tuesday, the boys went right back at it on Wednesday, but suffered a tough loss. Rex Corkins '25 described that the team's focus for the next week is to get healthy and learn from their mistakes during their games this week.

Corkins '25 said, "We have got to get healthy; that is the main thing that we have to do. We have a lot of guys who are hurt right now; we played against Brooks with six guys and against Worcester with only seven. We are going to watch film and rest to get ready for our game on Saturday."

Boys Basketball will play against Tabor Academy on Saturday at home.

BOYSSQUASH

Team First: Boys Squash Co-Captain Will Weissman '25 Focuses on Building Community Within Seemingly Individual Sport

AARON HUANG

Although squash matches are played individually, each result affects the team's score. Boys Squash Co-Captain Will Weissman '25's continued involvement in squash stems from his appreciation for this team aspect and the relationships he has fostered.

Weissman started playing squash at eight, participating in Under-11 tournaments at the Brooks School. Since then, Weissman has participated in countless squash clinics, met many inspirational coaches and new faces, and found meaning in playing for a team.

Weissman said, "What really kept me going was the team dynamic, because when I was younger, I would do a lot of tournaments, and they got a little boring after a while [since] I was playing individually, but actually playing for your teammates and a group of guys that you got to know is more motivating."

Weissman continued, "I've also had a lot of great coaches. I used to know a coach named Doug Burbank, and he just found ways to make drills really interesting. There used to be a lot of clinics where I got to meet a lot of new people. And then obviously with [Head] Coach JR [John Roberts] at Andover, I've gotten able to build a really good relationship with him. It's always fun going back to the courts, and getting a good hit in."

Along with Co-Captain Avery Lin '25, Weissman creates a positive, friendly team setting, bringing together players of all experience levels. Beyond his easy-going nature, Weissman also leads by example on and off the court.

"We try to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. I think it's important that everyone gets a chance to play with one another, even if you're on different sides of the ladder. So even if someone's really high up on the ladder, playing number one or three or two, they should still play with some of the kids who are eight or nine so we can all come together as a community. I think what makes our team unique is that we're all really friendly. We love hanging out outside the court [and] saying 'Hi' to each other, so there's creating a really good team bond. Then for me specifically, I try my best to lead by example. I think that's important," said Weissman.

According to Weissman, working with Lin and Roberts has become natural after spending four years with them. They are always in constant communication; brainstorming methods to boost team performance and morale.

"We talk a lot... Texting

T. BASVI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

each other after a match or before practice, or we like to get to the courts pretty early before practice, talk about how we think the season's going, what we need to work on as a team moving forward and what we can do to make the most of the coming practice. We just like to talk. We've gotten to know each other really well for the last four years so we have an open relationship where we can express ourselves and really talk about what we want to do to improve," said Weissman.

Pragun Seth '25 commented on Weissman's leadership style. One of Seth's most memorable experiences was when Weissman stepped up and gave an inspiring speech after a challenging game.

"One time we were all as a team sitting together on [the] court after a tough match. He took initiative and supported us to talk about what we could have done better and how we could grow as a team and that really inspired me," said Seth.

In a sport where every match matters, Alexander Yang '26 appreciates Weissman's skill on the court. Yang believes that Weissman holds the team accountable through his hard work.

Yang said, "He's very consistent. You can expect him to win the matches that he's supposed to win. You can always count on him to perform well. If he's playing someone that's relatively not as good as him, you can always expect him to win. I think that's really important because, in squash, it's seven matches against other schools. We always try our best to get at least four of those matches on our side. Will is definitely someone we can always count on to be one of those."

While Weissman doesn't plan to continue playing squash at a competitive level in college, he wants to stay connected to the sport. He enjoys the exercise and hopes to keep forming new relationships through the sport.

Weissman said, "I don't plan on playing in college but I want to continue to stay involved in squash. Even if I'm not playing at a competitive level, hopefully I'll play some club squash in college and then continue to play as much as I can even into adulthood. It's a really fun sport and I think it's a good way to stay fit, a good way to stay healthy and always meeting new people at different events or tournaments."

Boys Squash Co-Captain Avery Lin '25 is Nothing "Short" of a Great Leader

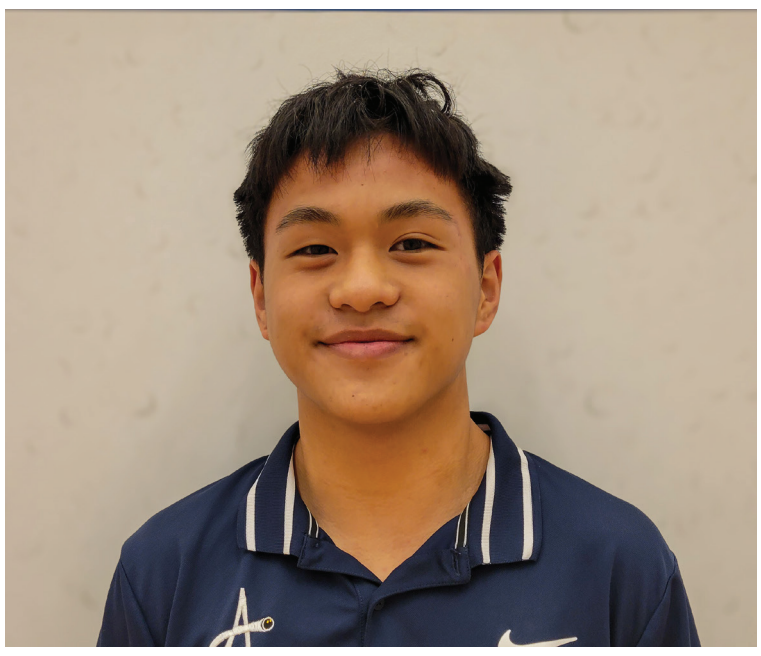
KEVIN NIU

As Boys Squash enters the second half of the season, Co-Captain Avery Lin '25 hopes to lead his team, as well as himself, to new heights. Despite being a size that might surprise those who expect towering athletes to dominate the court, Lin has consistently demonstrated that his passion lies in connecting with his new teammates. His brotherly love for younger players is what truly drives him.

Corey Shen '26 detailed Lin's relaxed approach to leading the team this season. Embracing his role as a team captain, Lin has become more outspoken to instill discipline within the players.

"Avery takes a pretty relaxed position as Captain, but he does put his foot down whenever someone does step out of line, when he does believe that something is wrong with the team. I don't think he's afraid to speak up, but he's not overbearing as well," said Shen.

Philip Meng '26, who has known Lin since he was eight



T.BASVI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

years old in Hong Kong, specified how Lin has matured as a squash player and leader. In addition to improving as a player by constantly refining his shot selection and strategy throughout the years, Lin effortlessly maintains a vibrant team spirit by virtue of his humorous attitude.

"We started off the season a little bit rough, but Lin has always led the team with a lot of conviction and a lot of humor, which I really like, and our team also appreciates it. We're really lucky to have someone like him who's always so stable mentally, but also able to converse with everyone on the team and keep the atmosphere lively... he's always been a humorous leader and I'm glad he's maintained those traits still to this day," said Meng.

Apart from being approachable and funny, Lin also promotes punctuality and discipline. Moreover, after every game, Lin sits down with the team in a circle to reflect on the team's strengths and weaknesses. John-Jayden Luo '28 recalled how Lin guided him at the beginning of the year.

"He guides all of us. When I first came here and was choosing my classes, he was telling me what class to take, considering the training I'm going to be doing for squash," said Luo.

Claiming to be shorter than others, Lin believes this attribute allows him to connect with the team's newer players. By witnessing Lin overcome the challenges he faces, the newer players are inspired by his character.

"[The players] are able to resonate with me more as a leader. They see the things I am capable of as a vertically challenged individual. They see the mountains I am able to surpass, and they think they can achieve the same," said Lin.

When asked which cartoon character most accurately reflects his play style on the court, Lin resonated with Judy Hopps from Zootopia in light of the character's exuberance portrayed throughout the movie.

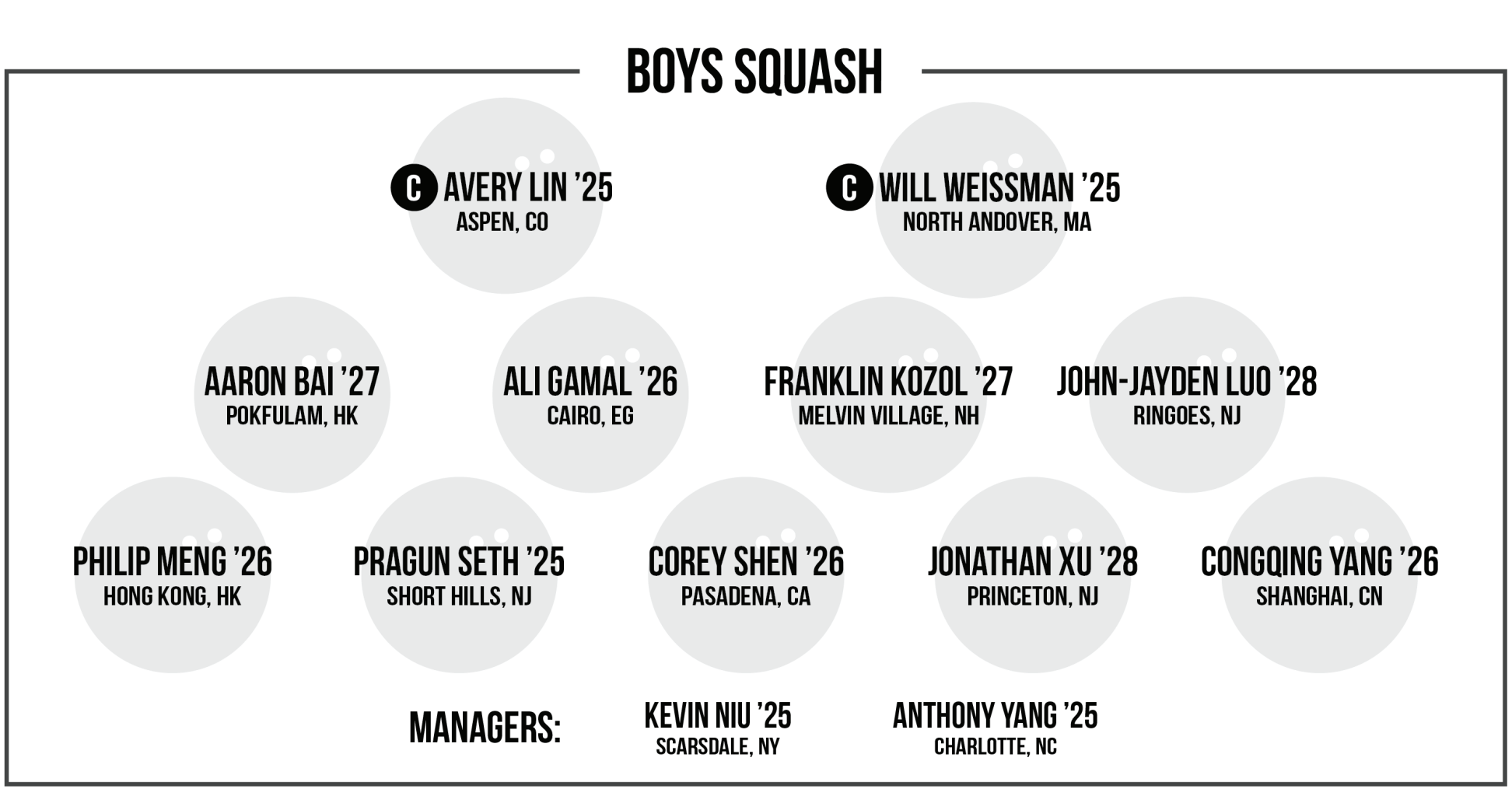
"I have been told by several people that my squash style would be characterized most accurately by Judy Hopps. For this reason, I've been described as a hot player. I'm fast, I'm hot, high energy, bouncing around. I get to every ball, each and every single one. I take them, and I run with it. I am Judy Hopps," said Lin.

Having sometimes been mistaken for a young player during games, Lin has overcome the notion that height is a weakness in squash. Furthermore, Lin uses these presumptions to his advantage.

"There is 100 percent a psychological component, and I use it to my advantage. When an opponent walks on [the] court with me, they immediately underestimate me. So it doesn't bother me; it's actually a strength of mine," said Lin.

Lin isn't just leading his team — he's redefining what it means to stand tall where it matters most.

Editor's Note: Kevin Niu is a Digital Editor for The Phillipian.



JAMES XIAO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Boys Squash Coach John "JR" Roberts: Composure, Commitment, and Culture

VIVIEN VALCKX & AUDREY BAETEN-RUFFO

Growing up in Northern Ireland, Boys Squash Coach John Roberts (JR) would occasionally play squash at the local club his father played recreationally at. Appreciating the opportunity the sport had for individual improvement, Roberts fell in love with the sport. As a standout player, Roberts took a gap year to play professional squash while applying to schools in the U.S., ultimately playing at Yale University.

After four successful years, Roberts still couldn't let squash go. He began to coach at a club in Boston while competing before coming to Andover.

"After I finished [college], I just wanted to stay involved in squash. I still loved the game. I did a little bit of coaching in college and really just enjoyed working with young kids of all ages, teaching them the intricacies of the game and the important things that come with just playing any sport, the lessons that you can learn," said Coach Roberts.

Corey Shen '26 described how Roberts impacted the trajectory of his own squash career. Having entered Andover as the top 60th player in the country for his age group, under Robert's guidance, Shen is now the seventh best player in his age group.

"On a bad day, he would reassure me that everything was going to be okay and that I just needed to stick to my practice, my training, and I just gotta keep on trying; a good match will always come. Then, on the matches I won, he celebrated me and congratulated me, so I always knew I could count on [having] him in my corner. He was always cheering me on from the sidelines," said Shen.

Aaron Bai '27, a new Lower, shared how Roberts welcomed him to the team. Having introduced Bai to everyone previously on the team while arranging practices, Roberts finds opportunities to create a tight-knit atmosphere that is conducive to the team's success.

"He was very welcoming. He introduced all the new people to old teammates. He also arranged practice sessions amongst the team during the fall, so we got to know each other. It was overall a good experience. We know each other very well no,w and the team is very cohesive," said Bai.

Roberts tailors his coaching for each individual member by creating a unique training plan reflective of each player's strengths and weaknesses; he recognizes players' stress of balancing out academics and squash, urging them to practice self care.

"JR finds a way to optimize for different people, and he's always a really great resource. Whether it comes to talking to college coaches or creating a specific training plan for someone, if you reach out to him, he'll offer you so many things that I don't think a lot of other coaches can offer or be willing to offer in the first place. A big thing for him as well is enjoying life... He really believes in taking, every now and then, to just take a deep breath, sunbathe a little bit, get some sun, and just relax," said Shen.

T. BASVI/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Although Roberts has been the cornerstone of the team's individual and collective success, he still attributes his players' achievements to having cultivated a respectful atmosphere through their work ethic. Despite squash being ultimately an individual sport, Roberts emphasized the significance of staying composed to reinforce a positive team culture.

"We're pretty lucky. A lot of our students here are very respectful, and they have a very good work ethic. Squash can be very heated, especially [considering] the nature of the sport. It's technically an individual sport, but you're also competing against each other while you're also on the same team as each other. You're doing that on a day-to-day basis. So it's trying to find that balance between working hard and being competitive, but also being respectful to your teammate, whether it's on or off the court, that can just be what you're doing every day. And if they manage to do that on a day-in and day-out basis, it benefits the team as a whole," said Roberts.

This season with a young team, Roberts hopes to build a solid foundation for the future by having the older players mentor the younger players. He also plans to enjoy the upsets that come with winning as a young team.

"This year is a little bit of a building year, just in terms of we've got a pretty young team. A very talented team, but very young, a group of ninth graders and a couple of tenth graders. It's a great opportunity for them to learn from the older guys on the team. It also is a chance for us to score some upsets against stronger opponents and just have a chance to enjoy being together as a team on the road," said Roberts.

Boys Squash Beats McCallie and Sweeps Brooks, Falls to Choate and Taft

HAOYU ZHANG

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	2
Choate/Taft	5
MONDAY 1/13	
Andover	7
Brooks	0
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	5
McCallie TN	2

On Saturday, Boys Squash (3-4) traveled to Wallingford last Saturday in their annual matchup against Choate and The Taft School (Taft). Despite a hard fight, Boys Squash fell short, losing to both Choate and Taft. The following Monday, Boys' Squash bounced back, sweeping Brooks for their first home meet of 2025, which was succeeded by a 5-2 victory on Wednesday against the McCallie School.

Corey Shen '26 acknowledged that the match against Taft was difficult, considering Taft's strong roster and the prospect of playing Choate immediately after. Although they lost 5-2 against Choate, Shen noted that it could have gone the other way, with the team losing some spark after the Taft match.

H. ZHONG/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Corey Shen '26 reaches for the ball.

Shen said, "Against Taft, they were a much stronger opponent, so many of us were fighting an uphill battle. Especially because we knew we would play Choate right after that. It was also a two-and-a-half-hour bus ride, so we were really tired. In terms of effort and spirit, we did top-notch work and gave our all. Against Choate, we were lacking our edge and our fight; we lost 5-2, but we could have easily turned it around and we could have won 5-2 as well. It was an unfortunate loss to Choate, but Taft had a much stronger roster, and we knew that coming into the matches, so we just tried to do our best and try to win."

Despite the losses, Franklin Kozol '27 noted that they had some strong wins. He also added that due to some players resting during the Taft match, some lower-half players were able to gain experience.

Kozol said, "Taft was a rough game. We decided we were going to cut our losses and rest some guys for the Choate match. The matches we did win were good, hard-fought matches, but some that we lost were just things we need to fix in the future. Because of the resting at Taft, it was a great opportunity for people lower on the ladder to get some reps, so that was a great experience for me, and we showed what we could do."

Following the loss, Kozol remarked that the match against Brooks served as a great confidence boost for the team. He expressed that it was especially gratifying to see Andover return to victory, particularly after their tough defeats on Saturday.

"Brooks was good; we had two people playing a challenge match, but it didn't matter much. It was a good team win, and that was something we really needed. We were 1-4 going into it, and it was nice to see all blue on the board again," said Kozol.

In their match against McCallie, Aaron Bai '27 observed that the team showed improvement compared to earlier matches. He also mentioned that the performances provided valuable match experience for many players.

"We played pretty well. It was an improvement in match experience and match play compared to previous games against other schools. The performances in the games were pretty good, and we won the game 5-2," said Bai.

Adding on to Bai, Shen mentioned that he was very happy with the team's performances, especially due to how tight their match against McCallie was last year. He also added that the two losses during the match were great learning opportunities, as the players would be able to learn and grow from them.

Shen said, "We won, 5-2. I am very happy with the five who won. The two we lost were close and were a little unfortunate. It is always good to suffer a loss because it is easy to identify where we need to improve and grow. Especially since one of the players who lost was a freshman, they will definitely grow. McCallie is a strong school. When we played them last year, it was a really tight match, so we didn't underestimate them. I am very happy we won."

Bai noted that there are some places for improvement moving into the second half of the season. He believes that coming in with a good mindset and improving on fitness and technique are key areas of improvement.

"We will try to go into matches with a better mindset with the match experience from the first half of the season. We will have to be more stable and consistent going into the second half of the season. We obviously want to win more matches, and we are constantly improving as a team in terms of fitness and technique. Our team spirit has been good, and we hope to improve our performance," said Bai.

Girls Squash Narrowly Triumphs Over Choate and Defeats Winsor, Extending Undefeated Streak

AARON HUANG

FRIDAY 1/10	
Andover	4
Choate	3
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	6
Winsor	1

On Saturday, Girls Squash (5-0) took on Choate in its first match of 2025. The team went on to play its first home match against Winsor the following Wednesday. With both matches resulting in a victory, Girls Squash remains undefeated this season.

At Choate, it was a battle from both sides, with many games down to the wire. Ultimately, the team pulled through thanks to a thrilling five-set victory by Selene Xu '27.

"I won the first set but then lost the second and the third, and in the last two sets, I didn't give up. In the fourth set, for example, I went from 4-7 to 11-7. In the last set, it was also like 7-10 to 12-10. I felt like my opponent had given up, especially seeing that I was coming back to take the game. It's a mental game sometimes," said Xu.

Minnie Kim '27 similarly praised Xu for her perseverance and hard work. She emphasized the importance of the match and expressed her amazement at the work Xu put in to secure the victory.

"Selene Xu, our number five or six, deserves a shoutout, as she was our deciding match. She was the one who won that really tough match. She was down 10-7 and she was able to fight her way back and win the match for us. That was amazing of her," said Kim '27.

Xu also praised Rachel Levitzky '28 for her hustle on the court. Despite ultimately losing, her work rate surprised even opposing spectators.

"I'd like to shout out Rachel Levitzky because I was reffing her match, and she played really well, as she always does, and she fought so hard. She would do the splits and everything, and she would run for every single ball and almost get all of them. Even the Choate girl, who was reffing with me, was so surprised by how fast she was to get to all the balls, and she did a really good job," said Xu.

The following Wednesday, the team defeated Winsor in a dominant fashion. Co-Captain Migyu Kim '25 expressed excitement and satisfaction about playing at home and the team's overall performance.

H. ZHONG/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

Girls Squash displays prowess on the court, starting off their season with an undefeated record.

"I was really excited because it was our season's first home match. It's already the second month of the season, but most of our matches have been away, so it's nice to be on our home courts. The team was also excited, and we all felt confident because we'd been practicing hard. We all had decisive wins against Winsor, which was nice. Personally, I felt really good about my match too, and I think everyone left feeling good," said Kim '25.

Once again, Xu was praised for her resilience under pressure. As the last match of the day, many expectations were set on her, but Kim '25 highlighted her composure.

"I would say Xu did well. Although she did end up losing her match, I really respected the way that she maintained her composure because there was such a big crowd and because it was the last match, so everyone was watching her. She stayed so calm even though it was really loud, and I'm sure it was distracting, but she focused on her game and gave it her all until the end. It was really great to see," said Kim '25.

Looking ahead, Kim '25 shared aspects of play that the team can work on. She highlighted maintaining composure amidst pressure from the audience and atmosphere.

"Going forward in the season, it'd be good for us to try and focus on different ways that we can stay focused on the court. Especially when we have different crowds, audiences, or pressures going on. Just really getting into the flow of being able to play in front of an audience or a crowd," said Kim '25.

Girls Squash will face a visiting Tabor squad next Wednesday.

Girls Basketball Loses in Tough Match against Choate, Rebounds for Two-Point Victory against Brewster

EMMA HONG

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	47
Choate	80
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	48
Brewster	46

Despite a rough start to 2025 with a loss away at Choate, Girls Basketball bounced back to win in a tight two-point victory against Brewster at home on Wednesday. Away at Choate, Andover suffered a tough loss despite a strong second half. However, Andover managed to narrowly beat Brewster to start off a three-game week with a win.

Captain Emerson Buckley '25 said that though the team started on the wrong foot against Choate, they came back strong in the second half of the game. She acknowledged that playing hard in both halves is a place for improvement.

"We had a rough first half but came back strong in the second half, so our goal has been to be a two-half team. We can't just play our game in one half; we need to play two halves, so that is how we have been approaching the next few games," said Buckley.

She added that the team showed improvement in their match against Brewster. Securing a narrow 48-46 victory, she remarked that this win was an excellent way to kick off their three-game week.

Buckley said, "Following our game against Choate, we focused on playing hard from the get-go, and that is how we started. We were able to stop them in transition, and we are really happy we got this win in order to set the tone for the next two games that we have this week."

Similarly, Co-Captain Sophia Dandawa '25 added that the team had to rework their momentum to prepare for the game against Choate. She also noted her hopes to push toward having a full-game team by dedicating energy and effort consistently, especially towards the first half.

Dandawa said, "I think that we fought really hard against Choate. It was our first game back from break, so there will always be some kinks to work out. But there was a lot to be proud of in the first game of the year. One of our goals is to be a two halves team. We have had a history of playing our hardest in the second half. So we are trying to focus on starting off the first half strong so that we don't have to catch up and setting the tone early. "

Dandawa highlighted the team's rapid improvement in their match against Brewster. She added that the victory served as a strong confidence boost for the second half of the season.

Dandawa said, "We did so many things well. I am really proud of every single person. Just seeing how much we improved over the past few days, we can see how we have worked both in and out of practice, and seeing the confidence that people had made me feel really good about our game today."

Dandawa touched on a few notable performances from Alani Rodriguez '27, Laney Cafua '27, and Ava Davey '25. She described Rodriguez's half-court buzzer-beater and Laney's three-pointers as pivotal moments during the Brewster.

"I think that Alani Rodriguez hit a buzzer-beater shot from half-court, and that got our game going. Laney Cafua had a great three towards the end to help us. And my co-captain Ava Davey helped a lot with some really important steals," said Dandawa.

Looking ahead to the season, Buckley shared her excitement about some of the upcoming matchups. She noted that their game against Governor's Academy this Friday promises to be an exciting one.

"Obviously [with Phillips] Exeter [Academy], but this Friday at Governor's, Friday night games are always really fun, and we have had a great back-and-forth game with Governor's, so I think it will be a very exciting game," Buckley said.

Buckley ended by mentioning some goals the basketball team has for the season. She added that playing with a good attitude and strong effort from the start are important goals moving into the second half of the season.

E.CHEN/*THE PHILLIPIAN*
Ava Davey '25 clashes against her opponent, shooting the ball to the hoop.

"We are following suit with what we have been working on, our non-negotiables, with attitude and effort. We have a really special group, and we are really close to each other and building off of that. Of course, we want to keep winning, but we also want to ensure we are playing hard every time," Buckley said.

Cafua echoed Buckley's remarks, noting that they need to play their best from the very start. She also added that the team hopes to trust their shooting instincts going into the second half of the season.

"I think that being a first and second-half team, not starting slow and bringing out the energy as soon as we step on the court. Another thing is giving everyone the green light to shoot the ball. Confidence is a big thing for us. When we shoot the ball, we normally score, so shooting the ball will be a great way to get our energy up. We are looking forward to it as we have one win down and two more to go this week." said Cafua.

Girls' Basketball will play Governor's Academy next Friday.

Girls Swimming & Diving Makes Waves in First Away Meet, Dominating Against Choate

EMILY NEY

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	110
Choate	75

Andover Girls Swimming and Diving (1-0) opened their 2025 schedule with a commanding performance on Saturday. With a final score of 110-75 against Choate, the team secured a win at its first away meet of the season.

Katherine Feng '27 recounted the team's practices leading up to the meet, focusing on preparing for specific events and refining their techniques. The team hoped they could use practice to help make every swimmer feel confident in their events.

"We did a lot of IM, which is an individual medley; a medley is butterfly, then backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle. Because a lot of swimmers were swimming the 200 IM that weekend, we also did some relay starts at the very end [of practice] on Friday to prepare for the meet the next day," said Feng.

Caroline Romano '26 highlighted the performances of swimmers Hannah Song '27, Aimee Qi '27, and Madelyn Esposito '27, who excelled in the competition with impressive races in the long-distance events.

"They all swam really well, and they [swept] in the [200-meter freestyle]; they went first, second, and third, so that was really great. They definitely stood out because that was the first individual event [of the meet], so it set a good tone for the rest of the meet," said Romano.

Feng described the relays as an exciting opportunity for the team to show their individual skills while also working together. The collaborative relays, along with the crowd, pushed them through the water with strength.

"Definitely the relays and because everyone was still tired from practice before, so the relays were a fun time where you don't have to put all the pressure on yourself, and the whole team could come together and carry each other into the finish," said Feng.

According to Chloe Ru '27, Choate welcomed the team, upholding a positive atmosphere with encouraging sportsmanship.

"[At] Choate, their team [and] everyone was really supportive of each other. We had really good sportsmanship, and Choate would congratulate us, and we would talk and say 'good job' to each other," said Ru.

Feng also highlighted Choate's coach and a wholesome conclusion to the meet.

"The atmosphere was very friendly because the Choate coach was very nice. He would yell out 'Good job team!' every time someone swam and at the end of each heat. At the end of the whole meet, [each team] got into a line, and we high-fived the other team," said Feng.

Ru highlighted the team's initial concerns upon arrival: the Choate pool was measured in meters, as opposed to the yards that the team was accustomed to training in at Andover. The team had to conform to this challenge quickly.

"I think it was just really hard for us because Choate has a different type of pool than what we usually train in. So we needed to adapt a lot," said Ru.

Looking ahead to upcoming meets, including the Eastern Interscholastic Swimming and Diving championship, Romano explains that small details can make all the difference during a race. Coming back from break, technique will continue to be a focus for the team, along with building up fitness.

"We're definitely going to continue building our fitness, and that will also start by emphasizing turns more because we all know that's something we can all work on to help our performance as a whole. But yes, we are working on kind of just getting back to it," said Romano.

Andover will host a tri-meet on Saturday, competing against Suffield Academy and Loomis Chaffee.

Girls Hockey Wins Three Games in Five Days, Furthering Winning Streak

ALEX GODSEY & ALISTAIR FRITZ-GRUBER

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	2
Choate	1
MONDAY 1/13	
Andover	8
Brooks	0
WEDNESDAY 1/15	
Andover	11
K.U.A	0

Girls Hockey (7-1-1) took on Choate on Saturday (2-1), Brooks on Monday (8-0), and Kimball Union Academy (KUA) on Wednesday (11-0). The team was victorious against all three teams, now on a seven game-winning streak.

Kimberly Duplessis '27 noted the pace and shifts in the game that helped increase the intensity on the ice.

"Our game against Choate was fast-paced and aggressive. They came up on us 1-0, the first shift into the game. So that definitely increased our intensity. We fought hard throughout the game and ended up tying it up [1-1]. Then we made it 2-1 with about a minute left in the third period and snuck away with a W," said Duplessis.

Despite a lack of penalties called on Choate, Duplessis commended Molly Driscoll PG'25 for her unwavering composure.

Duplessis said, "Molly Driscoll played well. There were a few times where [Choate] was hitting her and [the referees] should have called penalties. They didn't, but she didn't like to retaliate and she got back, and was working hard all game."

Following its game against Choate on Saturday, the Girls Hockey team took on Brooks on Monday. According to Vanessa Hall '28, the style of play had a distinct change from Saturday to Monday, despite no practice in between.

"We played well, and this game was much different than our last game, Choate, which was on Saturday. We didn't have a practice in between, because it was Friday and we don't have Sunday practices, but we didn't play well at Choate, so we knew that we had to play well today to redeem ourselves. So, we just came out fast from the first puck drop, and scored quickly," said Hall.

Duplessis added on to Hall, highlighting the pacing and energy before the game and on the ice. The drive to Brooks was high energy, and once on the ice, the team managed to quickly get points within the first period.

"We came out with a lot of energy. It was a very fast-paced game to start. It was three nothing going into the second period, so we were excited and we came out fast. We all played really well as a team," said Duplessis.

She continued, "We had to drive to show up, so we weren't trying to drive there to go lose. We wanted to go down there and play well. Our game was the last one of the day, so we wanted to make sure that we won and closed out the day well. Everyone was super excited to go. [The bus] was pretty fun. We had the music going, and it was a good win."

The team beat KUA on Wednesday, ending in an 11-0 shutout. Keira Bruen '26 acknowledged the slow start to the same, along with a shift in the second period, where the team scored seven points.

"We won 11-0 yesterday against Kimball Union and almost everyone was back in the lineup...t was great to have such an awesome game. We had a slow start after only scoring one goal in the first period, and our opponent definitely gave it to us. We were able to grow from this throughout the second period, we scored 7 more goals, and we were able to stick to our game for the second half of the game. Overall, we carried over the energy from our previous game at Brooks, where we won 8-0 and everyone in the lineup was able to contribute. It was really great for our two [Junior] goalies to step in for this game as well," said Bruen.

Bruen reflected on the team's style of play in comparison to previous games. Bruen noted that the slow start worked for this game, but in the future, this is an area of improvement.

"This game stood out in particular, because of how we grew from our slow start in the first period. Everyone in the lineup contributed which was great to see. For future games, we will definitely keep in mind that we cannot start out slow, especially when we play a more competitive team, but knowing that we can still bring it together is good to know," said Bruen.

Girls Hockey will face St. Pauls away on Saturday.

A Determined Boys Swimming & Diving Takes Down Choate, Setting Two Pool Records Along the Way

ALEX GODSEY & ALISTAIR FRITZ-GRUBER

SATURDAY 1/11	
Andover	114
Choate	70

Boys Swimming and Diving teams earned a resounding victory against Choate, marked by strong performances individually and across the team. Captain Daniel Seong ’25 and Brian Lee ’25 broke Choate pool records, Seong for the 100-Meter Breaststroke, swimming 1:05.17, and Lee for the 100-Meter Butterfly swimming 57.27.

According to Seong, one of the highlights of the meet was a thrilling 100-Yard Backstroke race, where three different Andover swimmers all finished within 0.2 seconds of each other.

“In the 100[-Yard] Backstroke event, the top three were Woori Lee, Oliver Stabach, and Oliver Feng, all on our Andover team, and they all came within 0.2 seconds of each other to round out the first three places. It was a great race to watch. It was awesome to see how three people who always push each other during practice have such a great race, and they were able to push each other during a meet context as well, outside of practice, and finish with great times, considering that it’s only mid-season,” said Seong.

Another critical race came during the 200-meter Freestyle Relay, taking place near the midpoint of the meet. Seong noted that the race came down to the last second, but Ben Zhou ’25’s last second push managed to aid the team in finishing on top.

“During the 200[-Yard] Freestyle relay, it was a really close race with the Choate team. It came down to the last couple of meters, but Ben Zhou ’25, our anchor, had a strong finish to take the win for our team, and that was halfway through the meet. With that win, the atmosphere was really good too, because everyone was cheering through their race. That helped set the tone for the final events for me,” said Seong.

David Frahm ’26 described the diving team’s training regimen of weekly dives. He noted that the theme of the meet was inward dives, a skill he had been consistently working on building up to the competition.

“Each week focuses on a different kind of dive. This meet was inward, so I really focused on keeping my dives inward instead of pushing them out. The further out from the board you go, the more points that get deducted, so you want to stay pretty close to the board.” said Frahm.

Cale Barker ’28 pointed to team spirit as one of the main contributors to the success at the meet. He noted an increase in camaraderie and cheering among the swimmers, which helped keep the energy high.

“We were strong at swimming really fast, and the boys came to cheer for each other more and give each other some motivation to keep going. The atmosphere was very loud with a lot of energy and excitement,” said Barker.

In the days before the meet, Coach David Fox stressed maintaining focus and intentionality during practices. Seong emphasized how these practices helped directly improve performance in both practice and races.

Seong said, “Coach Fox talked to us before the meet about staying focused during practices, being intentional with everything that you’re doing and practice because that’s what’s going to translate into your races and in the context of schoolwork and the other thousand things that you have to juggle. It might be easy to lose sight of that, but I feel that after Coach Fox helped remind us that, everyone was able to have a couple of really good practices.”

He continued, “Applying those things of really focusing on the intention of helping everyone out or helping each other on the team during practice. We had some good practices that helped to lead to a good performance at the show.”

Boys Swimming and Diving will compete against St. John’s Prep at home this Friday.

PLAYER HIGHLIGHTS

BY ETHAN LY AND KATE RODGERS

CUYLER SPARKS ’27

Scoring six three-pointers against Groton on December 20, Girls Basketball player Cuyler Sparks ’27 set a new school record for the most three-pointers made in a single game. Beyond her impressive three-point shooting, Sparks totaled 20 points, seven rebounds, and one steal, helping lead her team to a decisive 56-42 victory. Shooting from various spots around the three-point line, Sparks displayed her versatility and scoring range. This season, Sparks has averaged 2.1 three-pointers per game and 8.1 points per game, solidifying her place as one of the team’s top scorers.

JULIAN RIOS ’26 AND DANI NUGENT ’25

Recently, USA Wrestling updated its national rankings, positioning Andover Wrestling Co-Captains Danielle Nugent ’25 and Julian Rios ’26 among the top ten in their weight classes. Nugent is now ranked third in her weight class (140 pounds) while Rios is ninth among 113-pound boys U.S. wrestlers. Their rankings follow the Beast of the East Tournament, where Nugent won first place and Rios finished in the semi-finals at third in their respective weight and gender divisions.

BOSTON GLOBE’S ALL-SCHOLASTIC LIST

In light of the 2024-25 season end, “The Boston Globe” named four Andover athletes to its All-Scholastic list: Girls Soccer Co-Captain Emily Mara ’25, Boys Soccer Co-Captain Jack Alexander ’25, Boys Cross Country Co-Captain Tam Gavenas ’25, and Molly Boyle ’25, Co-Captain of both Girls Field Hockey and Ice Hockey. The award commends New England’s top-performing high-school competitors in Fall athletics.

EMILY MARA ’25

In her last season at Andover, Mara has proved a crucial member of Girls Varsity Soccer (GVS), both as a player and Co-Captain. She broke the GVS record for best single-game performance when she scored four times and assisted three goals against Tabor on September 28. She also led her team to a sixth-seed position in the New England Preparatory School Athletic Council (NEPSAC) Girls Soccer playoffs. Additionally, Mara was selected as a United Soccer High School All-American, United Soccer All-Region, All-State, and NEPSAC All-Star. Mara is currently set to play Division I soccer at Boston College.

TAM GAVENAS ’25

Gavenas certainly shone in his final season of high school cross country, capping it with a championship win against the 40 top U.S. high school runners at the 2024 Foot Locker Cross Country Nationals. He has also placed amongst the top performers at various other national-level track and cross country competitions. Towards the end of his 2024 Outdoor Track season, Gavenas placed third at New Balance Nationals Outdoor, a highly regarded national track competition. He currently holds a Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) deal with COROS, a sports watch brand. Since concluding his 2024 Cross Country, Gavenas won the 2-mile race at The Winter Beantown Classic, finishing with a time of 9:04.03. Next year, he will be running Track and Field and Cross Country at Harvard University. He is currently entered in the GBTC invitational at Harvard and will race this Sunday.

MOLLY BOYLE ’25

This fall, Boyle led Girls Field Hockey (PAFH) to an undefeated season and a NEPSAC championship. Over her four years at Andover, Boyle has already earned numerous accolades: in 2024, she was named NEPSAC Class A Player of the Year; in 2024 and 2023, NFHCA All-Regional, and 2023 Max Field Hockey All-Regional. Additionally, she led PAFH in goals in 2024 and 2023. Next year, Boyle will continue her athletic career playing Division I Ice Hockey at Yale University.

JACK ALEXANDER ’25

In his senior year, Boys Soccer Co-Captain and goalkeeper Jack Alexander was named All-NEPSAC. He will continue to pursue soccer at Grinnell College, a Division III program. As a starting goalkeeper for the past three seasons and a Co-Captain during the 2024 season, Alexander helped lead his team to an impressive record.

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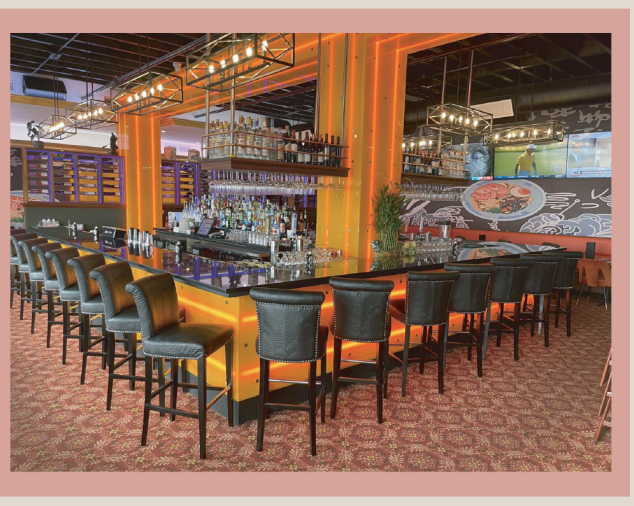

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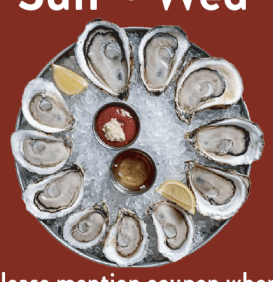

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Arts & Leisure

The Phillipian

Winter Wardrobe Essentials

MAGGIE SHU & ALEXANDRA LIN

As Winter Term approaches, students prepare for the cold by layering on their favorite winter essentials. This week, we asked Andover students about their most beloved pieces of winter clothing. Whether it be a cohesive outfit or a specific piece of clothing, there is more to clothing than what meets the eye.

DORIS LU '28

"I was just shopping with my mom, and I actually wasn't shopping for [this scarf] specifically, but I came upon it and I'd been looking for a scarf that's kind of chunky and had non-neutral colors... My mom has worn a lot of scarves since I was little but I never wore them. And now after I've gotten closer with her, I think I've gotten more evolved with her style as well... I think the material is very nice and it kind of absorbs heat so it's very good for cold weather... and it adds a lot more to an outfit, especially in the winter when you can only wear a coat."

BRONWYN CROWLEY '27

"I have two Super Puffs, and I wear mine every day because it's very warm and it's also stylish because it enhances my outfits... I like my cropped one because the pockets are higher for me, so it's easy for my hands to go in. I also feel like because it's shorter it adds to the look... I feel like my personal style is kind of just plain, you know what I mean? I feel like because you can get Super Puff in a bunch of different colors and you can get it shiny, I feel like it can represent anyone's style."

JULIA SONG '26

"I did a lot of research on what color would look good... I'm from the area, so I'm pretty used to the colder weather. On a day like today, which I thought wasn't too cold, I was fine with just [this] essentially. But there are definitely some days, especially when it's windy, that you would need a thicker puffer... I feel more confident wearing something that I think looks good. And it represents my personality in a sense... I think a leather jacket is one of the more timeless pieces of clothing you could have. It definitely is coming back into style right now. And I think it's more popular with the current fast fashion. But I do think it's pretty timeless."

ANYA CASEY '28

"Right now, I have on a Berkley sweater, with a T-shirt underneath, sweatpants, a jacket, scarf, gloves, thick socks, and winter boots. The coat was a gift from my mom's work, the scarf I got at World Market, the shirt was a gift from when my dad was travelling, the T-shirt I got at 5-below, the sweatpants is a mystery, the boots I ordered on Amazon before a came here, and I believe I stole these socks from my brother. I think it's always good to have a T-shirt and a sweatshirt and a jacket, so then your torso is warm."

Academy Symphony Orchestra Collaborates With Cornell University Orchestra in Joint Rehearsal

ANNA TSVETKOV & NINA TORRENS

On Monday, the Phillips Academy Symphony Orchestra collaborated with Cornell University's orchestra, performing repertoire for each other and then partnering up for a joint rehearsal of around 150 total students in the recently-opened concert hall in Falls Music Center. The students from Cornell's orchestra visited Andover as a part of their Boston tour, marking the start of touring again after being shut down for the past few years.

Derek Jacoby, Conductor of the Phillips Academy Symphony Orchestra and Instructor in Music, explained the process of organizing this collaboration. As Cornell searched for collaborations around the Boston area, they found Andover to fit their needs.

"When they contacted us originally, they were putting together their tour. They were trying to think about things that would work well for them, and they watched a Boston Symphony concert and had master classes with some Boston Symphony musicians. And so they were looking at schools in the area that seemed to match the profile of Cornell. They wrote [to us] and asked if we'd be interested in doing anything [with them]," said Jacoby.

The preparation for the large rehearsal required logistical planning from both schools. From setting up rehearsal spaces to coordinating the schedule, Jacoby emphasized the different personnel and efforts that went into the collaboration. Considering how recently Falls Music Center was opened, using the new concert hall for the event took careful preparation.

"[The Office of Physical Plant] and the custodial staff were hugely helpful [in] making a lot of the things possible. They gave a lot of support. The custodians, electricians, and [the] people who had built the building, everybody came together to make the logistics for it work. It was challenging to use the concert hall in a way that it hadn't been used yet for the first time, which is a way that it was designed to be used and capable of, but everything was new, so everything was a process of making sure this works, figuring out how to get it to happen and then and then making it happen," said Jacoby.

The musical preparation for the rehearsal was also challenging, especially for the student musicians. The Andover orchestra was given the piece before the Winter Break, and each rehearsal was critical to learning the challenging repertoire. For Allison Lee '28, it was difficult to quickly learn the music over break to prepare for the rehearsal.

"[The orchestra] only rehearsed two or three times before collaborating with Cornell. However, I'm sure a lot of our fellow musicians practiced individually, on their own time, and put a lot of effort into this very important event that we all looked forward to. I personally practiced a lot over Winter Break since I was really excited for this event," said Lee.

A.BAETEN-RUFFO/*THE PHILLIPIAN*

The combined orchestras comprised of over 150 people.

Overall, the collaboration was a success, as many members of Andover's orchestra appreciated the rehearsal, seeing it as an enjoyable and memorable introduction to symphonic orchestras outside of Andover's. With a lot of interaction between musicians from both schools, Andover students were able to learn more about how college ensembles perform. For Matthew Wei '28, a violinist, talking with another violinist from Cornell was the highlight of his experience.

"My stand partner was this one girl, I think her name was Abby, and she was so good at violin, I cannot believe how good she was. And the collaboration was so nice because not only were we able to rehearse with them we also got to have deep, meaningful connections with these people and understand how life as a musician goes beyond high school," said Wei.

Upon consideration, Jacoby added that the event turned out better than he had expected. He reflected that it was particularly beneficial for Andover students as they got to hear an experienced group perform in Andover's very own concert hall. Working alongside Cornell musicians in the rehearsal and learning from Cornell's conductor allowed students to hone their musical and social skills.

"We did everything that I would hope for and then more. Getting to watch part of their rehearsal helps us see how other orchestras work, having them specifically perform for us was great. I mean they were a wonderful group and it was good for us to hear what a really strong orchestra sounds like in our own hall. I think the collaboration in terms of the joint rehearsal went very well and hearing the 150-person orchestra all really together and playing well was amazing," said Jacoby.

Arts & Leisure
The Phillipian

POTW: Songs to Alleviate the Winter Blues

SIENNA RODRIGUEZ & CHARLIZE SOW

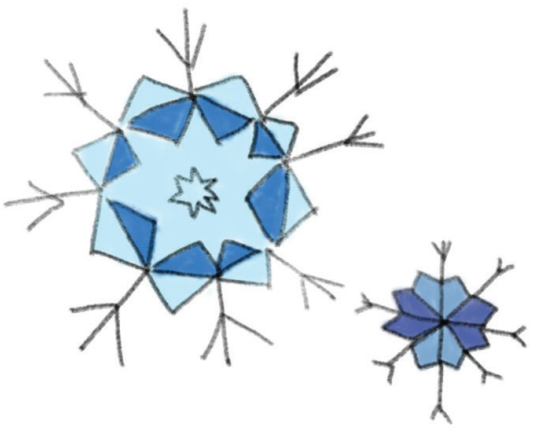
With the days getting darker and the temperatures dropping, Andover students are bound to feel some form of winter blues. In these times, many students turn to music as a form of solace and comfort. Here are the songs that Andover students are listening to during the winter season to keep their spirits up.

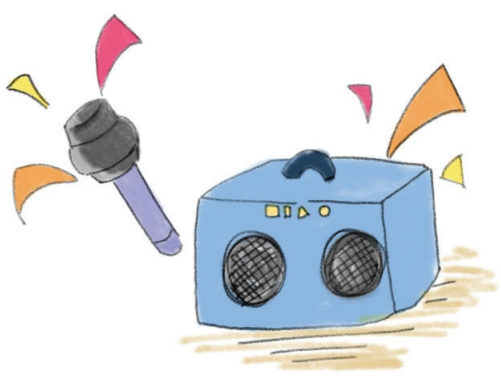
ANTHONY YANG '25

"'Dreæm Girl' by No Vacation. This song has a pretty upbeat vibe, which has helped in the winter months. I especially like the guitar instrumental, and paired with the softer vocals, it sounds really nice. I can listen to this song when doing anything, from homework to brawl stars."

YUMI LAI '27

"My favorite song is 'About You' by The 1975. I really like the calm voice and sound. Especially when it's snowing outside, it makes me feel sort of like the main character and even when it's gloomy it makes my day feel more cinematic. It's also comforting and cozy because of the instrumentals, it helps me get through the long days and darkness."





MAGDALENA MERCADO '26

"My favorite song is 'Honey' by Troye Sivan. Winter means I need to listen to upbeat music, and this has a melody I can never get tired of. It's one of the happier songs I've been listening to. Listening to it on repeat has pushed me through Winter Term."

GEORGE RICHARDSON '27

"My favorite song is 'Coming Down' by The Weeknd. It's kind of depressing and the lyrics remind me of snowfall because it's 'coming down.' I really like the lyrics in the chorus and some of them are about friendship. I think making connections with friends and enjoying bonding during winter when it's really dark... [is] important."

CORINNE SPADE '27

"I like Christmas music throughout the winter. My favorite is 'Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer.' I listen to it every day instead of just during Christmas time because I like keeping the cheer and hype energy up when it's cold. I love [the] Christmas season so I carry it through with me, even during January."

Exploring Identity Through Performance: THD910's Kintsugi - Beauty in the Broken

ANNA TSVETKOV & NINA TORRENS

This Sunday, in preparation for their performance on Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) day, the Theatre & Dance 910 class performed their production of "Kintsugi: Beauty in the Broken." Directed by EV Heck '25 and co-taught by Linda Carter Griffith, Associate Head of School for Equity, Inclusion, and Wellness, and Allen Grimm, Instructor in Theatre & Dance, the performance included student monologues about personal experiences with aspects of their identity including race, class, gender, sexuality, body image, and more.

Heck performed in the Identity Show earlier in her Andover career, and this year, she had the opportunity to direct it. To put together the performance, she first gave her performers prompts to help them open up about their own experiences and generate genuine, heartfelt stories. Drawing on these exercises, they then revised thoroughly before crafting the final product.

"We had set prompts that we gave the performers to write about on their own, and when they came to class, they would share it [with] the class. We went through a lot of editing sessions and did a lot of workshopping. But we really wanted it to be from the heart, so we did those open prompts. Then I put together what I wanted in the show,and what pieces I thought were integral to telling these...stories," said Heck.

Heck also used her experience in theater to support the cast, especially those who were newer to performing. She fostered an environment that encouraged them to be open and share their experiences, something that became a highlight of the directing process for her.

"My favorite part was teaching the group how to turn their own identity into theatre and to share their stories... A lot of the people who were participating weren't really in theatre beforehand, so it was nice to bring that expertise and kind of work with people and learn about their stories," shared Heck.

One of the performers, Billie-Christine Colmar '27, shared how the rehearsal community also played a large role in shaping her preparation process. The more relaxed, welcoming setting allowed the cast members to bond, work together efficiently, and have a more constructive experience overall.

"It was really fun. We would meet during second period and we had one assignment every week and it was just a writing assignment. They were really free; you could write whatever you want[ed]. I'd say my favorite part was getting to know everyone else that I was performing with. I'm not really much of a theatre kid but I really enjoyed putting together this production. I auditioned with my friend originally because she was a bit nervous and I ended up loving it," said Colmar.

The performance and its writing process left a mark on performers and facilitators alike. Colmar commented on what she learned about herself, and others, through the main themes of the show.

"The major takeaway is to be easy on yourself. We're all struggling with different things, we're all going through life as best we can. It's inevitable: there [are] setbacks for everyone in life... We just need to focus on love, focus on supporting each other, and be easy on yourself," said Colmar.

Similarly, co-facilitator Grimm shared how his experience growing up differed from what he learned about the younger generation's childhoods. Through this performance, he was able to gain insight into being raised during the digital age, and thus better understand his students.

"I have a lot of mixed feelings. You all have a really tough time growing up. It's a different era with all the digital media and the 24-hour-a-day cycle that just does not stop that wasn't there 35 or 40 years ago. So the veracity of that wears on the teenagers, and I feel for them," explains Grimm.

Heck and Grimm described what they considered some of the most impactful scenes of the performance. The opening, being a collaborative piece, incorporated multiple experiences centered around anxiety.

COURTESY OF EV HECK '25.

Freshman will attend the performance as a part of MLK programming.

"[The intro] is one big anxiety piece with the entire group. It also talks about body image. I really enjoyed that piece just because we got together through those quick transitions, and I felt like the whole group came together in one piece, even though they had all written about anxiety and body image separately. It was really cool to see," said Heck.

Grimm was similarly captivated by that scene in the show, "I don't know if there's one part [that resonated with me]. I will say that the 'Black Girl' piece is actually spectacular. All the pieces are really heartfelt and I appreciate Jorge's willingness to dig in and really bear some truth."

Arts & Leisure
The Phillipian

William Ge: Striking the Keys of Passion and Purpose

ANNA TSVETKOV & NINA TORRENS

At the beginning of January, William Ge '25 placed fifth in the National Chopin Piano Competition — an event often regarded as the "Olympics of piano." Simultaneously, he is a vital member of the Andover music community, partaking in chamber music groups and joint performances with Andover's orchestras.

Placing in the competition was no small feat. With a repertoire spanning three hours and encompassing 17 works, Ge knew that technical mastery alone wouldn't suffice. He recalls the support that kept him going and the conditioning it took to endure the performance rounds.

"At this level of competition, technical problems and notes and phrasings and all of these different aspects of physical play are no longer enough... It's really about thinking [about] the details, reading Chopin's letters, and looking into the source notes on the score. I actually did a lot of that... I was actually doing some jogging [and] some bodyweight training to make sure that I could physically make it through one round. Because it's one thing to just get through 20 minutes and a piece, but it's another thing to really bring together a 50-minute program," said Ge.

For Ge, the emotional toll of the competition was palpable. He described suspenseful nights spent refreshing the competition website, nervous to receive results. Despite his doubts, Ge advanced, driven by anxiety and determination.

"After every round, I was sure that I was going to go home... I would have this sinking feeling and thinking I really don't want it to be over for me, but I feel that my performance might have not been enough to make it to the next round... But without fail, every single time, it was both a reassurance of sorts because, of course, there's a side to me that thinks, I've got to make it to the final round, and it's not over; you cannot rest, you have to keep going back to the practice room and prepare the next round and prepare the next round," said Ge.

Amidst the pressure, Ge found joy in camaraderie with fellow pianists. While sharing a meal with another finalist, Nathaniel Zhang, the two spent time reflecting on their journey to professional competition.

"Nathaniel Zhang, my good friend, was the bronze medalist. I have known him for a couple of years, and he was actually the [only] other 17-year-old in the finals, so I got hotpot with him the night before the finals, and we were talking about how far we've come in the past year... When we were 16, and we had met at a prior competition... We were kind of nobodies. But now, [we are] in what is effectively our professional debut because this is a professional competition, not a junior competition. We broke through that initial level," said Ge.

COURTESY OF WILLIAM GE

William Ge '25 plays his pieces with focus and determination.

COURTESY OF WILLIAM GE

Against genuine and accomplished competitors, William Ge performed with grace and care.

Ge's success is not solely defined by competition; he claims that the vibrant Andover community has enriched his artistry. Unlike other pianists who spend hours alone in practice rooms, Ge has embraced the opportunity to engage with people, building connections not only as a musician but also as an individual.

"What blows me away is that these people are not only extraordinary musicians, but genuine, friendly, and extraordinary people. I think that at the heart of it is what has really driven me to be my best, not as just an artist or a musician, but as a person. And to be a whole three-dimensional person instead of just being a pianist, and putting myself into that box of what a pianist entails... Inherently, piano is a solo instrument by nature. I feel that having the experience of the community here and just connecting with so many extraordinary people, has definitely informed my artistry in a way that I don't think any other place could have," said Ge.

As a result of these meaningful connections, Ge has seen immense support in his musical journey. During the National Chopin Competition, his nerves were eased by encouraging messages from both friends and teachers.

"During the competition, after the semi-final round, I was feeling nervous... my friends, Cathy Ma and Tianyi Gu, rallied an absurd amount of my friends who all recorded encouraging messages, and it was compiled into this big long video... I knew that my friends were amazing people, but I was not expecting this level of support. it was not only that... [but] emails from my teachers, from faculty members, and from my piano teachers," said Ge.

Looking ahead, William aspires to participate in the International Chopin Competition. Yet, he remains grounded and realistic about the challenges of pursuing a music career. Regardless of the outcome, William has a goal to make classical music more accessible and impactful.

"The next immediate goal for me is the International Chopin Competition. But I do know one thing: I definitely want to be at the forefront of developments in terms of classical music... I definitely know that no matter what I do, I want to try and change the field for the better, make it something more accessible to a wider community, you know, encourage more people to partake in it," said Ge.

Editors Note: William Ge is a News Editor for The Phillipian.

Little White Lie: The Power of Telling Your Own Story

HLUMA MANGCU & ANYA CASEY

Last Friday, Lacey Schwartz Delgado was invited to campus for Mixed Heritage Week by MOSAIC — Andover's multi-heritage affinity group. Following her speech at the All School Meeting (ASM), Shwartz Delgado held a screening of her documentary, "Little White Lie," in Kemper Auditorium (Kemper). This event provided a unique opportunity for the community to gain a deeper understanding of Schwartz Delgado's personal journey, as well as a chance to engage with the speaker directly in conversation.

Schwartz Delgado spent the first 18 years of her life believing she was a white Jewish woman, unaware of her Black heritage until she reached Georgetown University. While many view Schwartz Delgado's story as an extraordinary one, she sees it as more nuanced, and in many ways, relatable.

"I feel like a good story is both a 'crazy story' but also a 'relatable story,' and when I was working through my own situation I realized that that was what it was. Even though I had what I considered to be a more extreme identity issue, I was looking out into the world, and I was seeing all these people who were still reconciling their relationships with their parents, or their racial background. They had still been working through these pieces of themselves. Overall, there were patterns that I was seeing out in the world that were really interesting, and I felt like I could talk about those issues through this film," shared Schwartz Delgado.

For Schwartz Delgado, the filmmaking process played an integral role in her acceptance of her racial identity and complicated family history. The act of sharing her story was deeply personal, ultimately leading her to choose a documentary format over other mediums.

"A lot of the projects I make are process-oriented... But what makes this unique is that this one was still ongoing. I started this project when I was living in what I considered to be a racial closet and I hadn't had the conversations with my family... A book is something you write in hindsight, but I wasn't writing in hindsight, because I was fully in it. I hadn't had any of those conversations so for me, the idea of documenting the process was something that helped motivate me to share my story, so a documentary was the right medium for this. There were different conversations about telling the story in different ways after that, but for me, I had to first go through the experience of uncovering my family's secrets."

Regardless of her family's decision to be involved, Schwartz Delgado was resolute in her decision to execute the project. She believed her story needed to be told, especially given the unspoken issues within her family. Schwartz Delgado approached her loved ones with a direct and honest request, prepared for any response.

"'I want to do a film about my life. I want to talk about things we haven't talked about... We are going to make this film, and I would like to ask you to participate,'" Schwartz Delgado said to her family.

She continued, "But I also made it clear to them that if they didn't want to participate in it, it was okay. I would just shoot it without them. It was also about getting to the point where I was going to make this project no matter who participated," said Schwartz Delgado.

Many attendees resonated with Schwartz Delgado's story. MOSAIC board member Francesca Dizon '26 shared her insights as a multiracial person. She reflected on the challenges of navigating her racial identity in a society that often categorizes people based on predefined labels.

"As a multiracial person, it's always been, 'How much agency do you really have in determining your racial identification?' and it was just so interesting... My biggest takeaway is just to embrace the way that you identify, rather than the groups that society pushes you into," said Dizon.

Schwartz Delgado's approach to filmmaking is the idea of direct, honest, and purposeful storytelling, avoiding tangents as much as possible. She advises aspiring students to determine which stories or moments truly serve the core narrative.

"In a lot of ways, the most important thing is knowing what story you're telling. Whenever I am working on any project, I always find that I start off a lot broader. Sometimes you have stories that you love or moments that you love, but then you have to really get to the point of really asking yourself, 'Does that moment, does that story really fit in with the story you are telling.' I really had to synthesize and get to, 'What is the story I am really telling?' which is of me and my identity, not about my parent's marriage. My parent's marriage affects my identity, which is why I included the parts of it that were relevant to telling the story. It's less about the breadth of the story, from a time perspective, and more about really being able to know what is the story that you're telling," said Schwartz Delgado.

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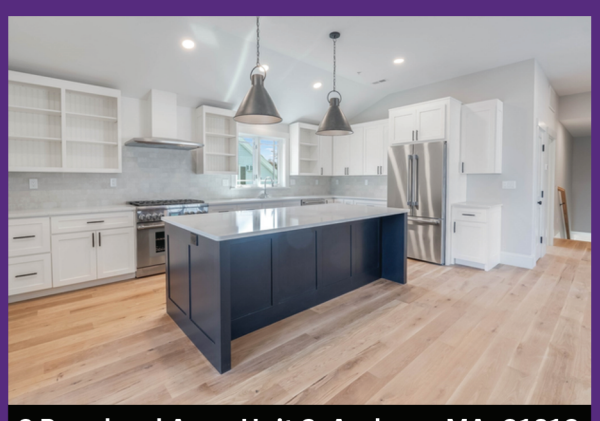

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