The Choate News

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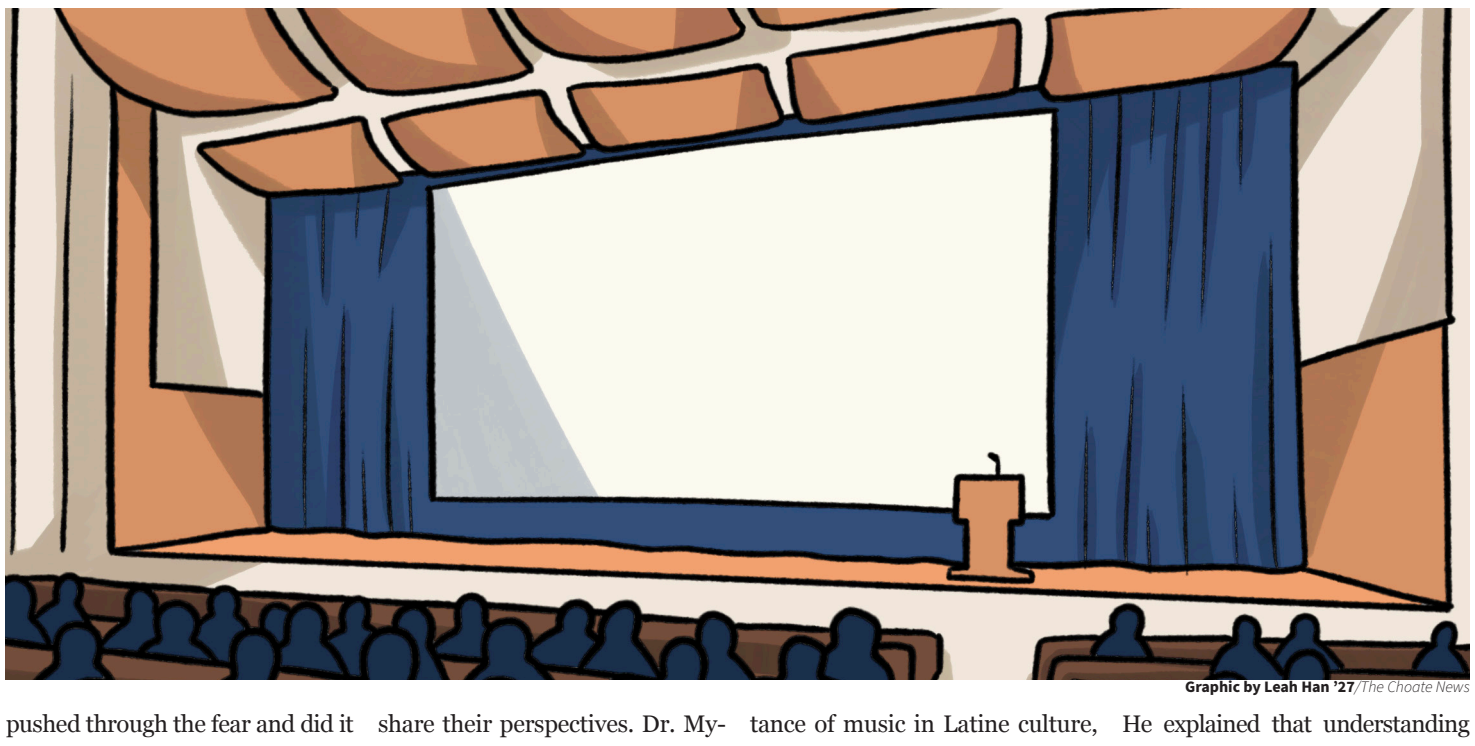
ROLL BOARS BEAT ~~B~~OORS

Highlighting Hispanic and Latine Identity on Campus

By **Leela Curry '29**
Copy Editor



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

On October 30, Choate invited students and faculty members to reflect on Hispanic and Latine identity, culture, and belonging within the School. The event created an opportunity for community members to share personal experiences and consider perspectives beyond their own. Both faculty members and students who participated in the event emphasized the importance of representation, cultural identity, building empathy and understanding, and the need for conversations to extend beyond the event itself.

For fifth-former Ayllen Espejo '28, speaking at the conversation was an opportunity to address what she sees as a largely ignored part of Choate's diversity initiatives. "It is very overlooked, the way Hispanic people are treated here at this institution," she said. "I feel like Hispanic people don't get as much recognition as we should. We aren't acknowledged as much when it comes to diversity here at Choate," she added. She hoped that speaking up at the Community Conversation would "help bring light to [their] existence here at Choate." Espejo also wanted students to recognize the importance of their everyday interactions with others, explaining, "I want [the Hispanic community] to know that their voice matters. That their perspectives are just as valid as anybody else's." Although she admitted to feeling nervous about sharing her experiences in front of the student body, she felt that speaking was important. "I pushed through the fear and did it because I knew if I hadn't, I would regret it," she said.

Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers, who organizes the Community Conversations with the Equity and Inclusion team, explained that the purpose of these events is to help community members better understand one another. The idea for a Hispanic and Latine identity topic was submitted through a community topic suggestion form last year. According to Dr. Myers, the School also considers when a topic was last discussed. The most recent discussion on Hispanic/Latine identity took place during the 2021-2022 academic year. Dr. Myers emphasized that speakers are not chosen beforehand by the Equity and Inclusion Office. Instead, students, faculty, and staff who identify with the topic are encouraged to volunteer to share their perspectives. Dr. Myers also hopes that conversations encourage students to listen, ask thoughtful questions, and challenge assumptions. "I hope people leave feeling more connected to one another and more aware of their role in making Choate a place where people feel real belonging," she said.

For sixth-former Ale McBoyle '27, the conversation provided an opportunity to reconnect with an aspect of her identity that she felt she had not fully explored during her time at Choate. "I think that the Latino community has grown a lot, especially this year," McBoyle said, noting that she had heard more Spanish spoken around campus. As a senior, she saw the event as an opportunity to engage with her identity and share experiences that could be meaningful to newer students. McBoyle spoke about the importance of music in Latine culture, hoping that other Latine students would feel comfortable playing Spanish music around campus and that students outside the community would recognize its significance. "I think that music is one of the most beautiful things that the Latino community has, and I would love for everybody to take as much advantage of it as possible," she said.

Dr. Myers highlighted the importance of discussions that continue after the event. She noted that Community Conversations have prompted conversations in advisory groups, clubs, affinity groups, and classrooms. "A single Community Conversation can open a door, but continued engagement depends on what we do afterward," Dr. Myers said. Dean of Students Mr. Pat Dennehy also emphasized the importance of listening to experiences different from one's own. He explained that understanding every aspect of another person's identity is not necessary to approach them with empathy. "Comprehension is not a requirement for compassion," he said.

However, both students identified subjects they felt deserved further attention. Espejo wished there had been more discussion about the pressure students may feel to change certain aspects of their identities to fit into Choate's environment. She felt that the idea of "Choate changes who you are, or you have to change who you are to fit in at Choate" was raised, but not explored enough. Meanwhile, McBoyle hoped the conversation would have addressed how current political events in the United States affect Latine students. "I think that it affects different people in very many different ways," she said, explaining that people can be affected regardless of their political views. She also expressed concern that Choate sometimes avoids sensitive subjects, arguing that students should be able to handle difficult conversations.

Dean of Students Mr. Pat Dennehy acknowledged that Community Conversations take place within a limited period of time and cannot address every underlying issue. He suggested that the School could create additional opportunities for students to continue discussions and explore topics in greater depth. He also pointed to the influence of previous conversations on residential life, advising, and curriculum development as evidence of their longer-term impact. Both students supported maintaining advisory discussions following each event. Espejo described advisory conversations as sufficient for acknowledging what was discussed, while McBoyle suggested optional, smaller-group workshops for students personally connected to the topic.

Ultimately, Community Conversations are intended to do more than introduce students to different identities and experiences. The conversation about Hispanic and Latine identity highlighted both the value of creating space for personal stories and the importance of ensuring those stories lead to engagement. Building a more connected community requires not only listening when experiences are shared, but also making an effort to understand and acknowledge them after the conversation ends.

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WILD BOARS JOIN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM IN JAPAN

By **Jaime Chen '29**
Reporter



Photo courtesy of Ava Cadett '29/*The Choate News*
Cadett and Velasquez share matcha with fellow students in Japan.

Two Choate students traveled to Osaka, Japan, from October 27 to November 4 to participate in the annual global symposium "Think For The Future" through the Seifu Nankai program. Alongside local students and other exchange students from different schools, Ava Cadett '29 and Noah Velasquez '29 engaged with the question, "How can we live a good life in an uncertain world?" This program also provided them with an opportunity to participate in classes at Seifu Nankai Senior High School and to directly experience Japanese culture by staying with host families.

The symposium encourages students from different cultural backgrounds to share their perspectives. Participants were divided into two groups: a discussion panel and a presentation team. Cadett participated in the panel, where she recognized differences between Japanese and American values: "I feel like the Japanese students talk a lot about striving for more. My personal values revolved around being content with where you are in life. I talked about the expectations put on us as American citizens." Comparing these ideas inspired her to share her perspective with the panel on how personal values can be shaped by a country's broader values, while tying back to the main idea of what it means to live a good life.

With one group on a discussion panel, Velasquez was placed in the other group, working with a different medium. Although the goal, to showcase everyone's unique cultural perspectives, was the same, Velasquez's job was to turn the team's ideas into a presentation. He recalled the structured format, which required members to elaborate on their answers ahead of time, unlike the panel's spontaneous discussion. Velasquez recalled being interested in how different cultures approach marriage: "The Filipino students told us the northern regions are not allowed to divorce because of religion. That was a big shock and shaped a very big talking point about what love meant."

Outside the symposium, students experienced classes with their host students. Cadett followed her host, a Seifu Nankai senior named Yuri, through a regular school day. She described the classes at Seifu Nankai as more lecture-centered than the Harkness method she was accustomed to at Choate. "I wondered how it would be actually growing up in that system rather than growing up in this system," she said. Velasquez also valued attending these classes and communicating with friends, as he learned how to communicate despite the language barriers by breaking down abstract ideas into simpler explanations.

For both students, the relationships they formed became a defining part of their trip. Cadett recalled feeling especially close to other peers after the symposium. Velasquez enjoyed the commute from the school to his host family's house because it gave him an extra hour to talk with friends before returning home: "You don't really spend much time in between classes walking with friends. But when we were in Japan taking the train, it felt very special because it was that last time of the day to talk to your friends before you all parted ways."

In Japan, the group also explored the Namba district in Osaka and the city of Uji in the Kyoto region, enjoying activities such as shopping and whisking matcha with their host families. Ms. Ashley Sinclair, director of Global Engagement, shared the importance of this moment: "[Students] learn quickly that every family around the world is a culture unto itself, with different rules, expectations, and ways of doing things."

Although the trip lasted just over a week, the program's impact continued after the students returned back to Choate. Cadett encouraged applicants to look for similar opportunities in Student Notes. Velasquez claimed the experience is definitely worth the temporary challenge of catching up on his schoolwork. "This will be an experience that I will never forget for the rest of my life," he said.

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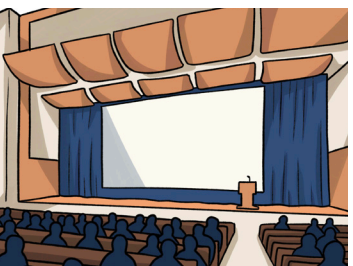
An Ongoing Dialogue
Students Share Stories on Latine Identity
School News • P1





Crazy for Confetti
Wallingford Welcomes New Shop
Local News • P3

What A Novel Idea!
Rethinking Reading Beyond the Excerpt
Opnions Campus • P4





A Rivalry Remembered
Looking Back on Blue and Gold
Features • P6

What's Inside

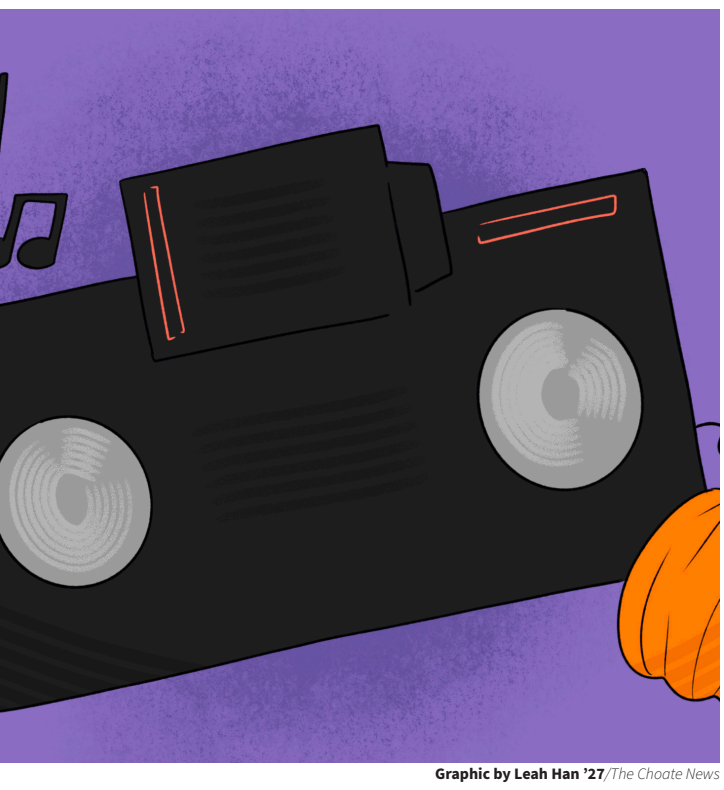
School News.....1-2
Local News.....3
Opinions: Campus..... 4
Opinions: Nation/World.....5
Features..... 6
Arts and Leisure.....7
Sports..... 8

Read it, then recycle it.



SCHOOL NEWS

STUDENT DJS SPIN AT SAC HALLOWEEN DANCE



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

By **Elliot Sun '28**
Copy Editor

As students celebrated Halloween weekend on campus, music filled the Student Activities Center (SAC) as student DJs took over the booth for the annual Halloween Dance. While Halloween festivities on and off campus competed for students' attention, the dance offered an opportunity for students to gather, socialize, and enjoy a night of music chosen by their peers.

The event featured DJs Jayden Chen '28, Theo Sahawat '28, and Roman Lacgalvis '29, who brought a student-driven component to the night. For Chen, the opportunity came after Sahawat approached him about performing at the event. Sahawat, who has been DJing for three years, said he wanted to bring a different sound to campus. "I saw a serious lack of underground music representation at Choate," he said. Although he had previously hoped to DJ a larger dance with a friend, the Halloween Dance offered them a chance to gain experience in front of a live audience.

"I was just happy to be there," Chen said. "It's fun to play music, and the speakers are really loud, so it's really fun."

Prior to the dance, Chen did not spend hours creating playlists. Instead, he relied on the experience he had already built through DJing in his free time and playing music for friends in his dorm. Throughout the evening, Chen and Sahawat adjusted their music choices based on the students who attended. "If people jumped, we kept playing," Sahawat said. "If people stopped moving, we immediately shifted the vibe and BPM accordingly," he added, and the biggest reaction of the night came "when we played something people actually recognized."

Even though attendance was lower than expected, Chen was grateful for the enthusiasm of those who came to the dance. "There were very few people there," he said. "But I think the people that were there were very nice ... So we just tried to play songs that we thought they'd like."

The smaller crowd presented one of the biggest challenges of the night. Chen admitted that it could be difficult to maintain the energy without a packed dance floor. However, he viewed the experience as a valuable opportunity to prepare for future performances.

"There wasn't that much of a crowd, so it was hard," Chen said. "But I'm really excited for the next one because it gives you confidence."

While the dance offered students the chance to celebrate Halloween, it also highlighted the role student-led events play in campus life. Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar explained that the event grew from a desire to create a fun and engaging way for students to celebrate Halloween.

According to Ms. Kazar, student-led events add a unique dimension to campus programming. "Student-led events bring a different kind of energy to campus because they give students an opportunity to share their interests, talents, and ideas with their peers," she said.

Ms. Kazar noted that student DJs have become a welcome addition to many Choate dances. "It's a great way to showcase students' talents and give them an opportunity to contribute to the event in a meaningful way," she explained.

Looking ahead, Chen hopes this will not be his last time DJing for the Choate student body. In fact, when asked whether he would perform again, he eagerly answered, "100%."

Although the Halloween Dance may not have drawn the largest crowd, it demonstrated how student talents like Chen and Sahawat can help bring the community together. Through music, creativity, and their willingness to step behind the DJ booth, both Chen and Sahawat helped create a memorable addition to the Halloweekend celebrations.

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Stickers, Sweets, and Succulents Galore!

By **Seth Weerasuriya '29**
Reporter

Three student organizations held fundraising sales outside the dining hall in late October, offering students stickers, baked goods, and succulents while raising money for causes affecting those both on and off campus. The Art Club's Arts Drive opened the series on October 23. Choate X Wallingford Common Canvas followed with a bake sale on October 28, and the Environmental Action Coalition Club (EAC) closed it with a succulent sale on October 30.

The Arts Drive, a long-standing Art Club tradition, sold posters and stickers featuring student submissions between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. According to Art Club member Kiki Wenren '28, the club received a large number of submissions this year, which made the final selection process difficult. "Each submission has its own charm and character," Wenren said. The club selected work it believed would have mainstream appeal to the student body, since a central goal of the event is sharing student art with the community.

Posters were printed directly onto poster paper, but the stickers required Arts Club cabinet members to cut each one by hand. Among the most popular designs was a series of boar stickers by Emmy Jones '28, showing boars doing different activities, eating different foods, and representing individual class years. All Arts Drive proceeds went to charity. The club has previously donated to the YoungArts Foundation, but this year it plans to support local nonprofits. "We hope to make a bigger impact in the community around us at Choate," Wenren said.

Common Canvas, a community service project that aims to connect the Choate and Wallingford communities through art, held its bake sale in front of Hill House during both lunch blocks. Wallingford resident Maya Abeles '28 started the project after noticing a disconnect between the two communities. She also felt that Choate students sometimes take their access to art supplies for granted. "So, I figured, why not create a project where Choate and Wallingford students can connect through art?" Abeles said.

Abeles did all of the baking herself, choosing recipes she thought would excite buyers, while Ms. Carol Jones, the faculty advisor, contributed gluten-free muffins. The pumpkin spice cinnamon rolls were a particular favorite. The sale raised over $300, all of which will go to the student art budget of the Spanish Community of Wallingford (SCOW).

EAC's succulent sale ran from 11:15 a.m. to 1:10 p.m., with plants priced at $5.50 each. The club sold 71 succulents and raised $394.50, all of which will go to the Quinnipiac River Fund. According to Proud Tangkaravakoon '27, EAC chose the fund because human activity has severely degraded rivers and the ecosystems they support. She hoped that the donation would help improve the river's environmental quality.

Ethan Yu '29, who helped run the stall, said the succulents drew interest because they were "really aesthetically pleasing," crediting the EAC volunteers who planted them. Sales picked up once the second lunch block began. "It was a bit chaotic, but we ended up selling a lot more succulents," Yu said. He spent much of the sale explaining to buyers how easy the plants are to care for.

The sale continued an ongoing tradition from previous years. EAC purchased the succulents online and grew them in the greenhouse last year, then held a repotting event this fall after the plants outgrew their original pots.

Though the three events differed in what they sold and whom they supported, each gave students a simple way to contribute to important causes affecting the local community.

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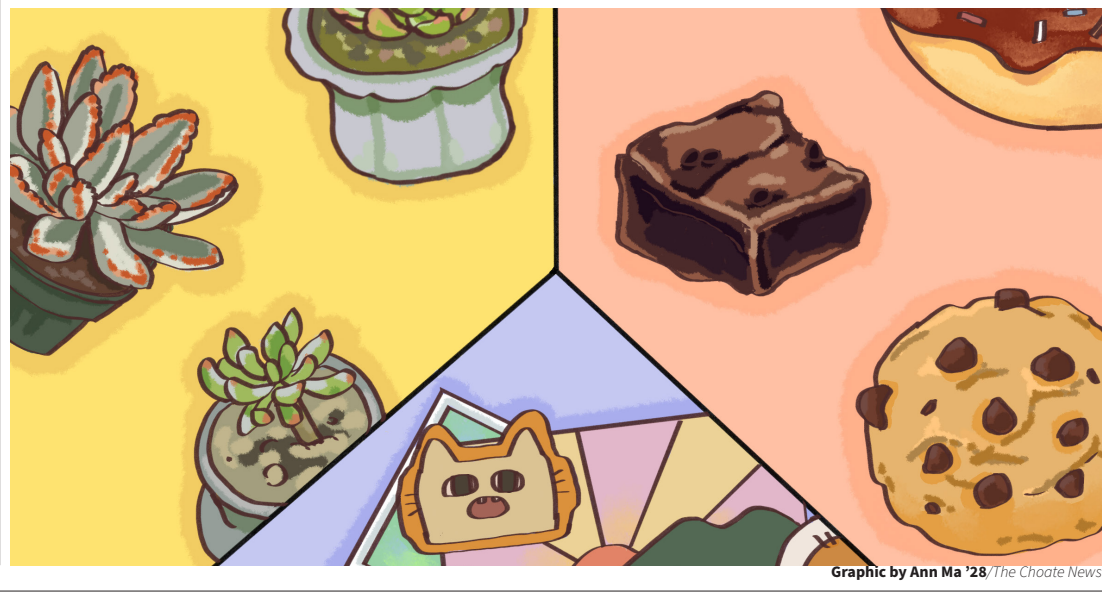
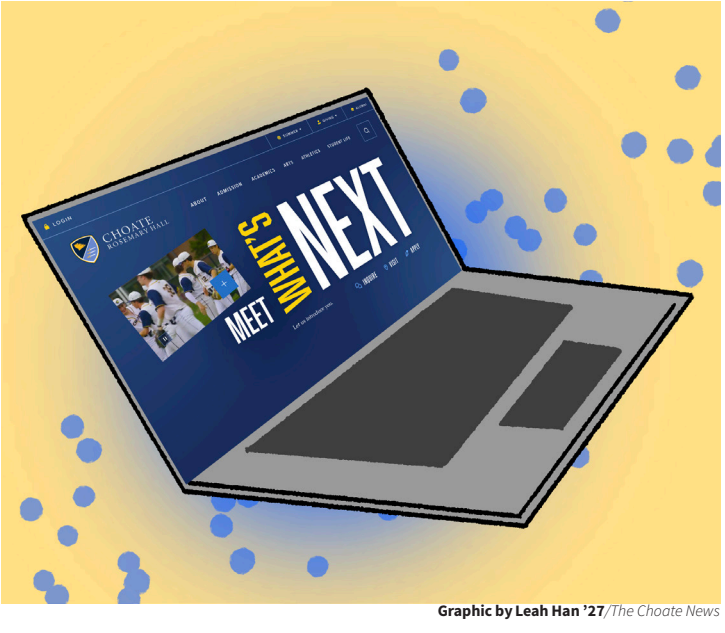


Graphic by Ann Ma '28/*The Choate News*

Is the New Website "Meeting What's Next?"



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

By **Taeyoung Kim '28**
Reporter

Choate launched a redesigned website for the 2026-2027 school year, introducing updated visuals, graphics, and text to refresh the School's online presence. The new website features the tagline "Meet What's Next," replacing the previous "Be Undefinable," a hallmark slogan for the Admissions Office in previous years. The redesign aims to emphasize Choate's academic and extracurricular opportunities while giving prospective students a better understanding of the community.

The website was developed as part of a broader branding initiative that took place throughout 2025 and 2026. "We usually do this every three to five years just to keep our messaging fresh," Mrs. Alison Cady, Chief Communications Officer, said. Working with educational branding agency Creosote Affects, Choate aimed to identify qualities that distinguish its educational experience. "We actually interviewed three different firms for the project, and they spent two days on campus with us doing discovery and research. They look at our current materials, of course, they talk to stakeholders across the community, they talk to students, they talk to parents, [they] do some peer school analysis to look at what schools are doing like us," Mrs. Cady said. Mr. Todd Jaser, Website and Electronic Communications Manager, explained that the website was one component of this effort. Since families often first encounter Choate through its website, he explained that its main purpose is to "attract and engage prospective families who are the right fit."

One of the most visible changes is the introduction of the tagline "Meet What's Next." Mr. Jaser said that the new tagline reflects the "boundless opportunities and the celebration of individuality that are integral to a Choate education." The redesigned pages also incorporate updated imagery and layouts to communicate these qualities.

Thus far, students have responded positively to the changes. Gage Hakim '28 described the new website as "a good improvement," noting that the website "seems a lot more modern." He also appreciated features that allowed for streamlined navigation of daily student life.

Polaire Chow '29 similarly welcomed the redesign, saying that the new website "fully encapsulates Choate's mission" and makes information about Signature Programs, academics, athletics, and global engagement opportunities easier to locate. Chow, whose younger sister is currently undergoing the boarding school admissions process, also noted that the website provides a helpful resource for students exploring the School. Among the new features, Chow particularly enjoyed the introductory video, which includes footage of students participating in athletics, attending classes, and celebrating Family Weekend. Having appeared in the video herself during tennis practice, she claimed it "really nicely captures Choate's liveliness, community, and school spirit."

Looking ahead, Mr. Jaser anticipated that the website would evolve "to deliver more personalized experiences and content" and serve as a digital platform with improved quality for user experience. He hopes future updates will allow prospective families to engage with Choate through different formats, including videos and interactive media, in ways that best suit their interests.

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Symposium Opens Academic Doors for Students

By **Eliza O'Neill '27**
Staff Contributor

On October 18, students gathered in Getz Auditorium for the first annual Science and Society Symposium. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., five professors from Yale University and the University of Connecticut (UConn) presented their work on a range of topics from sports analytics and ranked-choice voting to DNA-based disease treatment. A 15-minute question-and-answer session followed each 45-minute talk, and the conversations continued over lunch at Hill House, where 30 students had the opportunity to learn more about and from the professors.

Katherine Zhou '27 organized the event and received support from the Choate Talks club. Zhou shared that her inspiration for the idea stemmed from her concern about declining trust in academia and the "growing distance or gap between people producing knowledge and the people who can benefit from it." The symposium was a way for Choate to narrow that gap. "Why not bring professors and students into the same room where ideas could be questioned, challenged, and discussed?" she said.

To recruit lecturers, Zhou cold-emailed about 20 professors. She received responses from 17, but only five agreed to come, as many had scheduling conflicts. She deliberately contacted professors from various disciplines to attract students with diverse interests. On campus, she had to identify who could approve the symposium and who could help run it. "I think the hardest part of starting anything is overcoming the initial inertia," she said. Once the symposium had approval, Choate Talks helped put the event to fruition.

This past summer, Choate Talks President Victoria DeVito '27 was conducting research in Boston through the Science Research Program (SRP) when Zhou reached out to her with the proposal. "It seemed like such a cool opportunity," she said. Back on campus this fall, they worked out logistics with Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar, and Choate Talks promoted the event on ClubHub. While the club typically helps students research and write, this was its first event to feature outside speakers. For DeVito, the symposium was a way of "sharing passions and starting conversations." As a senior, she encouraged younger students to ask professors questions that she might once have hesitated to ask herself.

Attendees like Aiden Angier '28 appreciated the chance to better understand the resources available at these institutions. "I would say my biggest takeaway was that lots of professors ... are willing and excited to help out students," Angier said. DeVito expressed a desire for students to take away a greater appreciation for research from the event: "I hope students understand that there are many different ways to engage in research. While research is sometimes viewed as solitary and narrowly focused, it can be an active, collaborative process that allows people to explore fields as varied as business, sports reporting, medicine, politics, and more."

For Zhou, the highlight was hearing the thoughtful questions students asked during lunch, demonstrating their continued curiosity. Afterward, she received an email from a UConn professor, who shared that the level of engagement she witnessed surpassed what she sees among her own undergraduates. Zhou called it an "extraordinary compliment to our student body."

Several juniors who attended have already told Zhou that they would like to carry the symposium forward. Looking ahead, she hopes to establish an official committee and make it an annual or triannual tradition. "I think the conversations we started creating at the symposium are really worth continuing," she said.

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Photo courtesy of Katherine Zhou '27

Students attend the first Science and Society Symposium.

WALLINGFORD HOLDS RECOUNT FOLLOWING BALLOT SHORTAGES IN MIDTERM ELECTIONS

By **Anna Park '29**
Copy Editor



Photo by Steve Lee '30/*The Choate News*

Paul Cicarella runs for re-election to the Connecticut State Senate.

On November 3, unexpected volumes of voters at the polls deciding Connecticut's congressional seats caused ballot shortages across the town. Wallingford Registrar of Voters Ms. Joan Ives-Parisi reported that all but one of the town's polling locations ran short of traditional ballots. This forced the change to printed paper ballots, which were mandated by law to be counted by hand. However, this change ultimately caused a ballot-processing error: officials reported 100 paper ballots were mistakenly fed into a tabulator instead of being counted individually. As a result, a "discrepancy recount," or recounting of all ballots cast to verify the election results, was held in Wallingford on November 6.

Though there were no machinery issues, officials flagged the problem as it diverged from the required processing procedure for paper ballots. According to NBC Connecticut, after the error was reported, Wallingford officials moved forward with planning a discrepancy recount after recommendation from the Connecticut Secretary of State.

Under Connecticut law (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 9-311), Connecticut's official state website highlights that election moderators have the authority to call for such a recount within three days after an election to investigate and resolve discrepancies in vote totals. "This is exactly why Connecticut uses paper ballots. We don't guess. We check. We're committed to ensuring every ballot is counted fairly and accurately," Secretary of the State of Connecticut Stephanie Thomas said.

This unexpected error has significant local implications: Wallingford is part of the 34th State Senate District, where the race between Democrat Brandi Mandato and Republican incumbent Paul Cicarella was exceptionally close, with Mandato leading by only 25 votes. An unofficial report from the Secretary of the State showed her lead had grown to 231 by November 6, or 0.597% of the 38,691 votes cast. With such narrow margins, even small counting discrepancies, such as the one in Wallingford, have a crucial role in the race. "Logistical issues like these sometimes happen, and with the full recount, I believe Wallingford handled the issue rather well," Thomas Lovse '27 said, after voting for the first time.

The recount started at Wallingford Town Hall on November 6, but as of November 10, the official certification of the results has yet to be released. "We're very careful about each vote that's been recorded on the ballot, so that every person and every voter worked hard to get to [what] they vote for is counted correctly," Ives-Parisi said. The Wallingford Registrar's response has sent a clear message, ensuring that every single vote matters, ensuring that each person's say is reflected in the race to the state government.

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Community Calendar

Nov. 13, 9:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m

Pep Rally
Bring your energy and school spirit to the Fall Sports Pep Rally as we celebrate teams before Deerfield Day.

Nov. 14, ALL DAY

Deerfield Day and SAC Dance
Wrap up Deerfield Day with music, dancing, and a celebration of Choate spirit at the Blue & Gold Dance.

Nov. 15, 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Walmart Shuttle
Need to pick up dorm essentials, snacks, or school supplies? Take the weekend shuttle to Walmart.

Nov. 19–Nov. 30

Fall Break
Enjoy Your Thanksgiving Break!

Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m.

Thrifty Boar by CProctors
Purchase clothing for only $1.00, or trade in your own clothing for something new!

Dec. 5, 8:00 p.m.–10:30 p.m.

Gingerbread House Comp.
Show up with your 5-person team ready to design your gingerbread house.

A Sparkling New Opening Downtown

By **Oola Breen-Ryan '29**
Copy Editor

Strolling down Center Street, one can find a variety of places to grab a coffee, take a walk with friends, and embark on culinary adventures at Wallingford's various restaurants. Despite the wide array of restaurants and shops, however, downtown Wallingford has always lacked one crucial business: an outlet for people's deep and primal need to play with confetti. Thankfully, this void will now be formally addressed. The Confetti Bar, a store set to open later this fall, combines a retail shop, art studio, and community space that centers around creative expression and joy.

The online Confetti Bar, as the name suggests, sells confetti products, including custom confetti blends, confetti sold in unique containers, biodegradable confetti, seasonal confetti, scented confetti, and Sproutfetti, which contains plantable wildflower seeds. In addition to the "Emergency Confetti Box" and "Random Acts of Confetti" bags, shoppers can buy apparel, decor, and other gifts. "At the shop, we'll have a mix-your-own confetti bar, too," Ms. Jessica Serra Huizenga, founder of The Confetti Bar, said.

The in-person location will also include more DIY elements for customers eager to express their creativity. Ms. Huizenga plans to "participate in as many downtown events as we can, and ... collaborate with other small businesses on various projects." The storefront, at 210 Center Street, is projected to open in late November or early December, although the exact date has yet to be announced.

Ms. Huizenga described confetti as the "symbolic throughline" of the store's products. She hoped the store would be a positive reminder of the joy of mess-making. "Our purpose is really to encourage you to make and embrace beautiful messes. Confetti can be the physical medium for this, of course, but it's also the metaphor," she said.

Ms. Huizenga chose to open her store in Wallingford because of her longstanding personal connection to the town. Having lived in Wallingford for most of her life, she and her husband met, settled down, and are now raising their daughter here. "It just made sense to want to invest back into the place we call home," she said. While this is The Confetti Bar's first in-person location, Ms. Huizenga has been running the business for 13 years.

Ms. Huizenga explained that the inspiration behind The Confetti Bar came from an unexpected source of comfort during a difficult period in her life. "After experiencing a few hard things in life, I used to collect these mixed bags of sequins and metallic confetti and sort them as a kind of meditative therapy. One day it hit me that confetti is supposed to be the ultimate symbol of celebration, but nobody was making really fun and unique styles of confetti," she said.

The Confetti Bar has expanded its horizons. Ms. Huizenga hopes to shower Wallingford with creativity and happiness. "We still occasionally indulge custom orders, but over time we transitioned more to the lifestyle of confetti, where our mission is to redefine confetti as a lifestyle and an art form," Ms. Huizenga said. "More than anything, I want The Confetti Bar to be Wallingford's new happy place, a space where people can come and feel inspired to seek their own version of joy."

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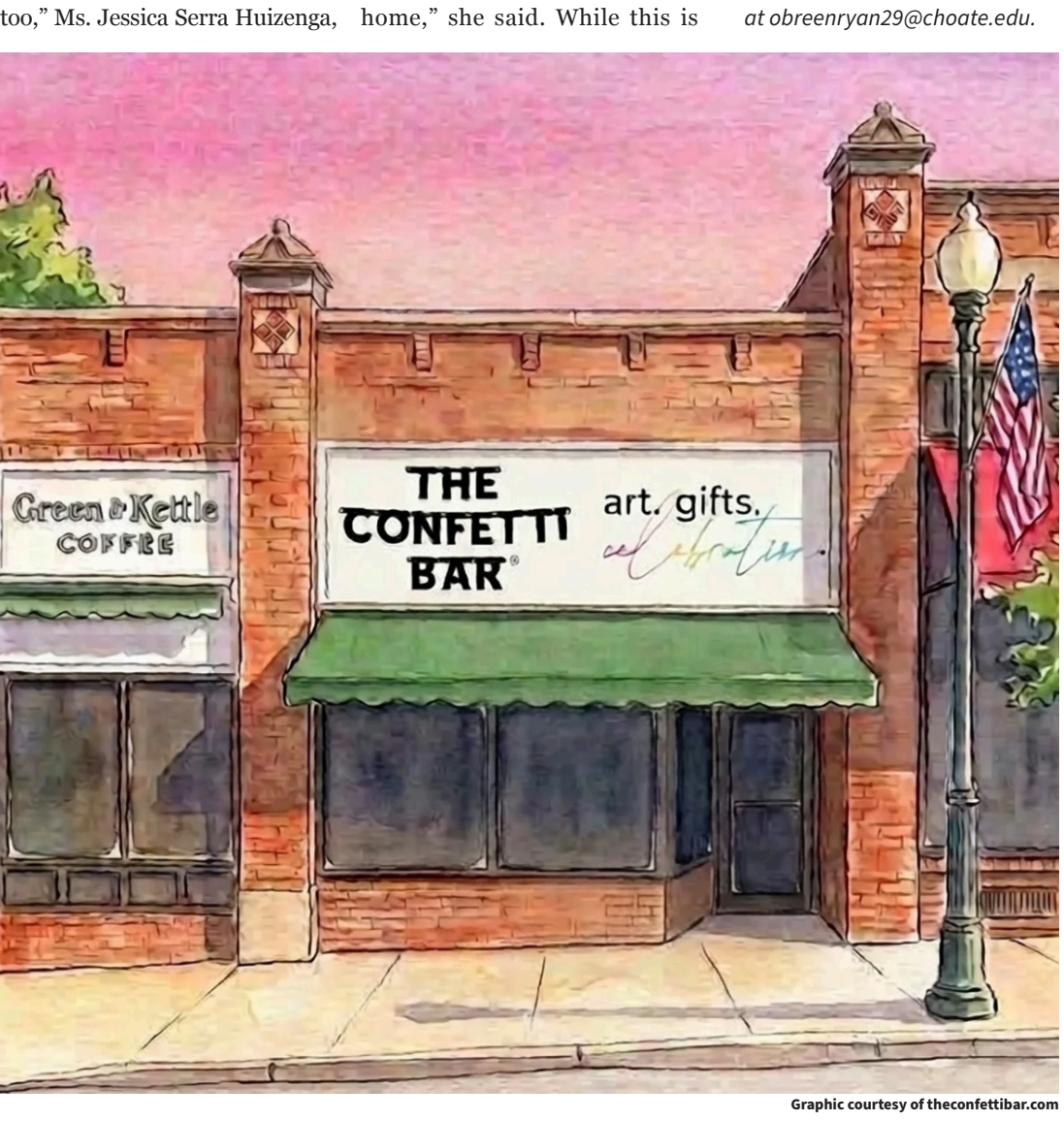

Graphic courtesy of theconfettibar.com

Striking Star Sightings at Gunpowder Creek



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/*The Choate News*

By **Emily Chen '30**
Reporter

On November 4, clear autumn skies turned Choate's Gunpowder Creek Field into an open-air planetarium. Organized by the Wallingford Public Library in partnership with NASA Solar System Ambassador Mr. Geoffrey McLean, the stargazing event attracted approximately 90 attendees from children to local retirees.

Before becoming a NASA Solar System Ambassador, he was already involved in public outreach, particularly with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Today, he organizes approximately 20 astronomy events annually, sometimes exceeding 40, to share his knowledge with communities across the state. As a NASA Solar System Ambassador, Mr. McLean also has opportunities to learn directly from NASA scientists and engineers, incorporating their expertise and the latest developments in space exploration into his presentations.

Originally planned for the summer, the event was rescheduled to the fall for more favorable conditions for viewing Saturn's rings. Mr. McLean explained that Saturn had recently passed the stage of opposition, a point in its orbit when Earth lies directly between Saturn and the Sun. This positioning, combined with the angle of Saturn's rings, allowed observers to view them in a particularly clear image through the telescopes.

Using a range of equipment, including an eight-inch Newtonian telescope and advanced real-time imaging technology, Mr. McLean introduced participants to the wonders of the night sky. He explained that real-time imaging works by taking and stacking multiple exposures, revealing details of distant celestial objects. "Deep sky objects, especially nebulae and galaxies, are no longer faint fuzzies but awesome colored structures," Mr. McLean noted.

Attendees had the rare opportunity to view several celestial objects throughout the evening. Fascinated by Saturn, with its bright rings encircling the planet, the crowd also enjoyed views of the Andromeda Galaxy and NGC 457, commonly known as the Owl Cluster, whose star configuration resembles an owl with outstretched wings.

For many attendees, the event was memorable. For Mr. Chris Carrizala '76, the event was an opportunity to reconnect with the community and to meet others who shared his enthusiasm for astronomy. Alongside the conversations, seeing Saturn reinforced his lifelong passion for space. The experience also prompted Mr. Carrizala to reflect on humanity's small place in the vast universe.

Mr. McLean described these moments of wonder as the "Aha! Moment." He recalled that first-time viewers are often so astonished by the clarity of planets like Jupiter and Saturn through the eyepiece that they suspect he has placed a sticker or photograph inside the telescope. "Looking at the Andromeda Galaxy with its hundreds of billions of stars, you realize that we are just one tiny speck in a vast universe," Mr. McLean said. "It really hits home that we do indeed live on a small, blue planet."

Beyond introducing participants to celestial objects, Mr. McLean hopes that these experiences will inspire a lasting interest in astronomy, particularly among younger attendees. Through continued partnerships with Choate, the library hopes to hold similar stargazing events in the future, as part of a wider effort to bring learning beyond the desk and connect community members. In the meantime, community members can keep an eye out for the library's upcoming programs, which offer new ways to explore the world around us.

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The Choate News

120th Masthead

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Don't Skip Student Notes



Graphic by Sienna Kim '28/*The Choate News*

By **Jinx Hartong '27**
Staff Contributor

At Choate, communication is key. With our 460-acre campus and students always in motion, it can be easy to miss the fine print when it comes to campus activities. We are constantly facing mountains of homework, hours of practice, and, of course, grueling laundry.

Still, the fast-paced environment means there is always something going on. We are surrounded by exciting club events to attend, opportunities to learn from, and social gatherings at which to relax.

Our calendars are stacked, and it can be difficult for students to manage and keep track of all the events happening around campus. That is exactly why we have Student Notes — and why it is important to check them. For many Choate students, Student Notes have served as a way to keep track of weekend events. "I love the live arts," Michael Quintero '27 said, "but I often overlook the show dates. Student Notes have helped me keep track of the dates of our theater performances." Quintero's view of Student Notes describes the communication format exactly as it is meant to be. However, not all students feel the same way.

While Student Notes provide a centralized location for student information, opinions on its success differ amongst students. Some have complained that Student Notes are a hassle to view due to Microsoft's multi-step authentication process. Some argue that the sheer amount of emails students receive makes it easy for important information to get buried.

However, none of these objections outweigh the importance of Student Notes. For one, the information they provide is necessary. Student Notes share details on events happening across campus, and without them, important information and opportunities can be lost or overlooked. And while multifactor authentication can feel like a mild annoyance, it is a standard security protocol that can be completed in just a few seconds. Also, for those unaware, Student Notes are also displayed on the front page of the Choate Student Portal.

In a community as fast-paced and expansive as ours, having a central area for announcements is essential. Students must become more proactive about checking Student Notes. Instead of dismissing Student Notes because of minor inconveniences, students should check them weekly so as to not ignore the rich experiences that define life at Choate.

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Setting the Tone of School Meeting

By **Anna Park '29**
Copy Editor

Picture this: a touching commemorative speech celebrating the legacy of an honored Choate alumnus who served in the military. As the applause faded, the audience allowed a reflective atmosphere to sink in. Suddenly, a colorful crowd of actors in striking costumes burst upon the stage with an exciting song. They chorused, "Come watch *Be More Chill*!" Confused by that abrupt transition a few weeks ago? You are not alone.

Every Tuesday, faculty and the entire student body gather in Colony Hall to listen to upcoming club announcements, celebrations, and updates affecting the Choate community during School Meeting. Such a large platform allows the whole community to discuss and engage with a wide range of issues. An audience that large also demands special attention to how a message is conveyed and how it affects the listeners. Multiple factors, including the order of announcements, can shift the tone of a message and how it is perceived by the audience. In this way, intentionality is vital when sequencing school meeting announcements, especially when transitioning from serious addresses to more lighthearted announcements.

Presentations covering serious topics should be followed by a moment of reflection so the community can really take in the weight of the message, instead of proceeding directly to jovial acts.

The original objective of lighthearted performances to entertain the crowd could likewise be undermined by uneasy reception. "A lot of people told me that that transition specifically felt pretty abrupt, but it was kind of frustrating for us because we couldn't decide that and we didn't really have a say in when we were going," *Be More Chill* cast member Kate Wai '28 said. "Because [we went] straight into the dance number ... the abrupt [transition] felt really awkward for us, especially because the crowd was still processing what happened before."

Of course, logistical constraints such as time and the need to determine where to place last-minute announcement requests must be considered. Typically, Dean of Students Mr. Pat Dennehy organizes the order of the announcements and, ideally, finalizes the meeting agenda by the prior Friday so Sound Technician and Assistant Technical Director Mr. Michael Abbatiello can put together the slide deck ahead of the School Meeting. In practice, it may not always be so smooth. "This is challenging because I receive requests all the way up until the night before a meeting," Mr. Dennehy reflected. According to him, longer announcements are usually placed toward the end of the meeting for overall timing and structure.

The occasional mismatched message does not mean that fingers should be pointed at anyone: it is simply not feasible to control every aspect of each presenting group's time on stage to the finest detail. "It can be difficult to predict how a particular message may land for different members of the community," Mr. Dennehy said. "Our goal is to be proactive and thoughtful in those moments and to make sure we are considering not only the content of an announcement, but also the experience of the people who will be hearing it."

While easier said than done, having a concrete understanding of the general message for each announcement and seriously considering what could feel jarring can help avoid awkward moments. For serious and heavy topics, it is worth considering presenting them near the end so that audience members can leave Colony Hall reflecting on their implications after the gravity of the situation is fully registered by everyone. If the School wishes to address serious issues directly during School Meeting, the intentionality behind the sequence of announcements cannot be overstated.

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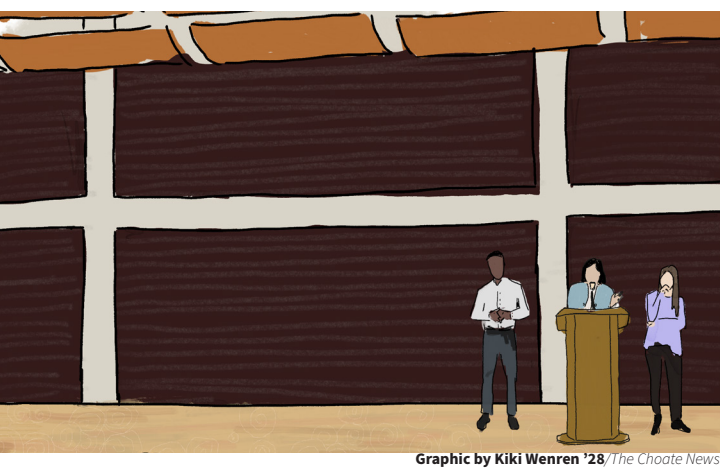


Graphic by Kiki Wenren '28/*The Choate News*

Bring Back the Whole Book!



Photo by Scarlett Park '27/*The Choate News*

By **Ivy Yu '29**
Opinions Writer

Recent news headlines discuss how reading less has turned into a full-fledged literacy crisis. During our English class discussion, my classmates echoed this sentiment: our generation has a shortened attention span, and we read fewer full books both inside and outside of school. I believe that Choate should require students to read more full books, because we lack the incentive and the opportunity to do so ourselves.

Longer reading helps students develop cognitive resilience, emotional intelligence, and structural thinking — important skills for future careers that shorter excerpts cannot train. A full book contains a complexity not present in short excerpts, and following a plot over hundreds of pages builds cognitive endurance and elongates attention span. A 2023 study involving 829 participants found a positive correlation between longer literary texts and cognitive patience. Analyzing a long story requires the student's ability to comprehend and dissect a nuanced plot in a logical way. Reading full books compared to excerpts has also been shown to strengthen empathy and cognitive tenacity by activating one's ability to attribute mental states to oneself and others. These skills prepare students for future jobs or assignments, because students can analyze and digest complex research and academic texts with more resilience and depth.

When reading a longer text, we are less confined to a single theme because of its immense complexity; this stimulates more independent thinking than reading a collection of stories on a single theme. Last year, when I read *The Odyssey* in my freshman year English class, I could see every line in the context of the entire work. We could examine the story from multiple perspectives — the gods', Odysseus', the suitors'. If we read only one chapter, our opinions would be limited to the context our teacher provides, rather than to our own analyses. This year, when we read a short story after being given a common theme, it was easier to interpret the text, which allowed us to focus on the details. However, I found that the conclusions I drew from the text and our class discussions often reduced to the same few points about the same few themes — it was very hard for us to consider different perspectives when we focused too intently on one or two.

Students' enjoyment should play a part in the design of the English curriculum. When I asked my classmates whether they preferred full books or short excerpts, many said they enjoyed full books because they felt a sense of satisfaction in following a story over a long period of time and becoming fully immersed in the plot. Chloe Yeung '28 said, "I think reading full books allows me to evaluate the experiences of a character on a deeper level, and makes me step into the character's shoes and experience the topic from the lens of this character." Enjoyment fosters a student's eagerness to learn. After reading *The Odyssey*, I felt I was able to appreciate the story even more because of its length, its nuanced language, and its thematic complexity; discussing the book with my classmates felt more like a debate, an exchange of ideas, than a mutual agreement.

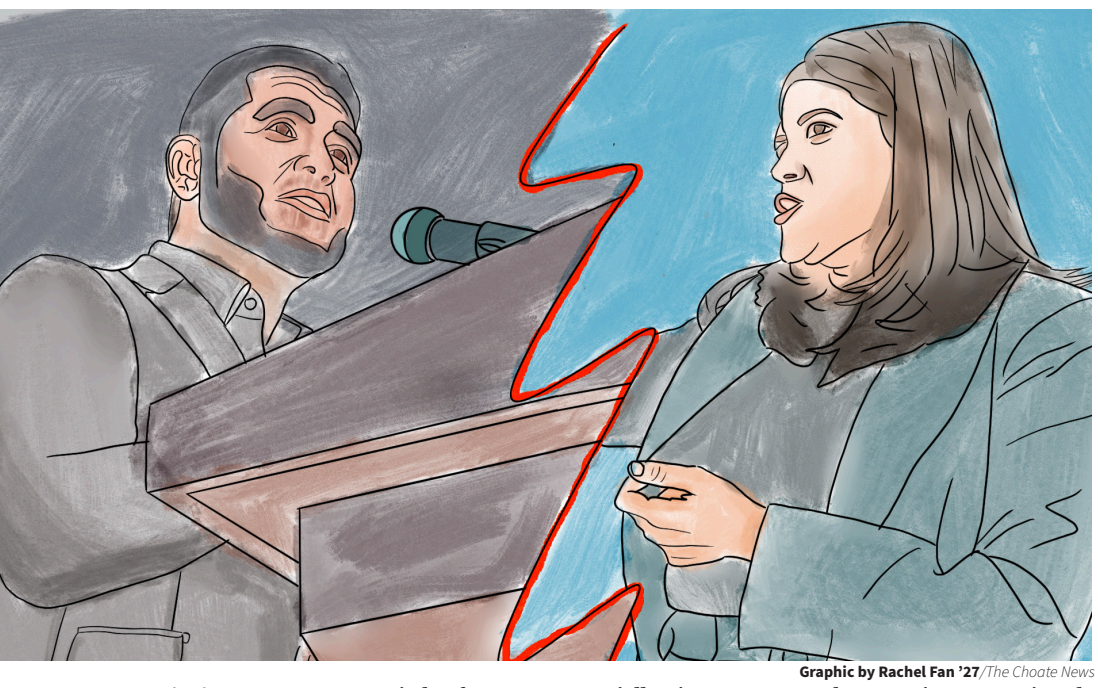
Many of the skills used in short excerpts can be applied to reading full books. English Department Head Dr. Sarah Hancock views reading full books as "a broader study of plot, context and cultural references," while in shorter stories, because of their length, students can "pay [closer] attention to small details ... and see how all of those details are working together to create an effect." In my own experience, the skills practiced in shorter readings can also be applied to reading full books. When reading full books, it is not inherently harder to analyze small details like word choice or sentence structure; in fact, I believe a longer work provides even more context for these details, allowing for more in-depth analysis.

Dr. Hancock noted that a major reason for choosing excerpts over full books is practical constraints, such as limited time and students' busy schedules. She pointed out that studying shorter works "allows teachers to expose students to more material." Though it is true that short excerpts allow students to be exposed to a wider range of material, I believe that, in addition to providing students with information, there should be more time in the curriculum for students to digest each piece of material and formulate their own thoughts. After all, it is in this independent contemplation that important analytical skills are developed. I believe that deep reflection is more effective than broad exposure alone.

Ultimately, the English curriculum should incorporate more full books, as depth is more effective than breadth. It would encourage busy students to find more interest in immersing themselves in in-class texts. Allowing students to suggest books or choose focuses brings back some of the appeal and enjoyment. After I started reading full books in the summer, short-form content gradually became less of a habit for me. This is the effect that I think our school curriculum can and should have.

Ivy Yu *is a fourth-former from San Carlos, CA. She may be reached at iyu29@choate.edu.*

Internal Disagreements: Parties Start to Faction



Graphic by Rachel Fan '27/*The Choate News*

By **Kaashvi Mittal '29**
Opinions Writer

It is often of tradition that a politician is able to disagree with their party on almost anything, provided that they still support the party they represent. This expectation makes sense when officeholders have similar beliefs — i.e., when they are in the same party — but American political parties have become so ideologically divided within themselves that belonging to the same party should not guarantee support.

A great example of this is the recent Senate race in Michigan. Just days before the election, Democrat Haley Stevens decided to endorse Republican Mike Rogers after losing the Democratic primary to Abdul El-Sayed. As politicians begin to tact towards the edges of extremism, disagreements over topical issues spurred cracks in support and fostered further disagreement. In this case, beyond personal issues, they had disagreed over Israel — an issue that has now divided many Democrats. Naturally, many Democratic leaders took issue with this switch of support, especially given that Stevens had promised to support El-Sayed if she were to lose the primary election.

Let's consider the ideological disparities within the Democratic Party. The party includes moderate democrats who seek to manage the capitalist state and democratic socialists who seek to overhaul the entire system. The same is true of Republicans. Traditional conservatives advocate for free trade and limited government, while MAGA conservatives support economic nationalism. These differences involve fundamentally different ideas about how the country should be governed, yet all of these groups belong to their respective party bases.

Political parties need not have the same ideology. That would be an absurd expectation. Some disagreement is inevitable, and common principles can exist even among people with opposing views on individual policies. However, there needs to be some agreement on how much disagreement there can be before a party's affiliation loses significance. If someone can support the opposite economic policies of another person in the same party, how useful is that affiliation in explaining their political beliefs? The party base is still an important factor during elections, but it does not necessarily represent a common set of beliefs.

Americans often associate people with their party base, and hence the policies of that base, rather than the policies of each individual politician. When people in the same party disagree on basic political issues, it is hard to tell what the party stands for. Eventually, the definition of the party becomes so broad that being part of it doesn't tell us much. If the only real agreement between members is that they are willing to support the same party, then the idea of having a united party base is lost. Americans should ask for clear answers as to what their parties actually stand for and if their members truly agree on these principles.

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Masculinity As Misogyny

By **Alex Wexler '29**
Opinions Writer

At this point, we've all heard about looksmaxxing, red-pilled influencers, and the seemingly endless supply of podcasts dedicated to explaining what makes a "real" man. One question seems to get considerably less attention: who pays the price when struggles with masculinity quickly turn into misogyny?

When online masculinity movements turn men's personal struggles into resentment toward women, women bear the consequences. Men searching for answers to shifting gender expectations can be drawn into online communities that blame female empowerment for male suffering. By framing women as the source of a man's problems rather than addressing the pressures men face, these movements transform insecurity into misogyny. Vulnerable men, grappling with genuine feelings of inadequacy are offered a comforting binary. Instead of navigating the nuanced, often uncomfortable realities of a world moving toward gender equality, they are given a scapegoat: women. The narrative suggests that male suffering is not a byproduct of a changing global economy or rigid patriarchal expectations, but a direct result of female empowerment. Consequently, the valid pain of isolation is weaponized into a lucrative industry of resentment.

It manifests in the casual harassment that clutters social media feeds, the normalization of misogyny, and, in its most extreme forms, physical violence. During the 2014 #GamerGate controversy, women in the video game industry faced coordinated harassment, rape threats, and doxxing. Yet, focusing solely on the direct effects obscures the broader societal damage taking place. By allowing the struggle for male identity to dissolve into systemic misogyny, society trades collective progress for fractured communities, ensuring that everyone ultimately bears the cost.

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The Future Protests

By **Leela Curry '29**
Copy Editor

Across Europe, Gen Z is taking to the streets to demand change, and governments should be paying attention. From students in Serbia protesting government corruption to young people in France speaking out about education, these demonstrations reflect a shared frustration with the conditions younger generations are growing up in. Many young people feel that their futures are being shaped by governments that do not take their concerns seriously. Gen Z should not have to accept financial insecurity, limited opportunities, and a lack of political representation — they deserve a say in the decisions that will directly affect their futures.

One of the main concerns motivating these protests is the growing difficulty of financial independence. Across Europe, young people are dealing with rising housing costs, expensive necessities, and a loose job market. In Portugal, for example, housing affordability has become a major issue, with many young people struggling to find places they can realistically afford. In Italy, students have raised concerns about poor school conditions and limited opportunities after graduation. For a generation that has grown up being told that education and hard work lead to success, it is frustrating to feel that these things might not be enough. Governments need to recognize that these are real problems rather than dismissing them as complaints from an impatient generation.

Another important reason for these protests is that many young people feel ignored by their political leaders. Serbia provides a particularly strong example. In November 2024, a railway station canopy collapsed in the city of Novi Sad, killing 16 people. The incident sparked widespread anger over government accountability and alleged corruption. Students organized demonstrations that continued for months, eventually becoming a major political movement. In October 2026, the student movement achieved a significant breakthrough in the parliamentary elections, of school funding, teaching grants, and the abolishment of Parcoursup, the opaque French college admission system. Clearly, young people are capable of doing more than just expressing their frustration.

In France, students have protested underfunded schools and a lack of resources, while demonstrations in Germany have included opposition to rising living costs and the possible return of compulsory military service.

Ultimately, these protests are about more than individual policies or political leaders. They represent a generation that wants to have a voice in decisions that will affect it for decades. Protesting alone will not solve problems like housing affordability or economic insecurity, but ignoring these demonstrations will not make those problems disappear, either. Gen Z is not simply complaining about the present, it is demanding a better future and a role in shaping it.

Leela Curry *is a fourth-former from Darien, CT. She may be reached at lcurry29@choate.edu.*

We Deserve the Right to Remain Unknown

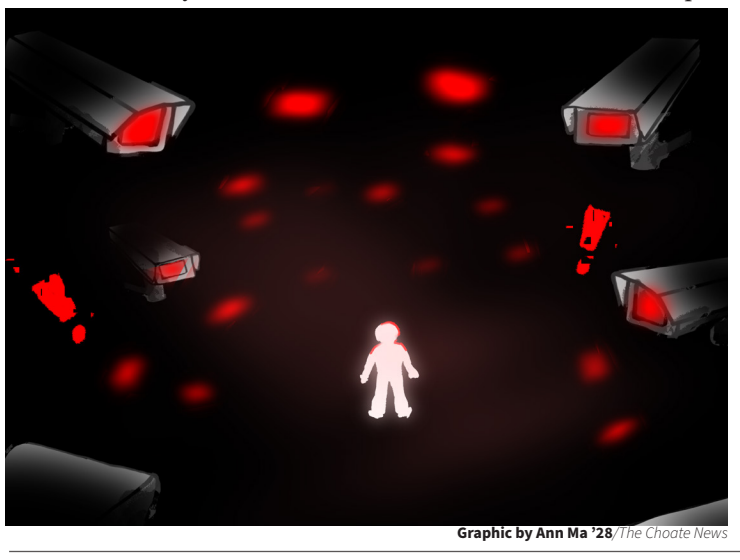
By **Eva Tumanyan '28**
Opinions Writer

In October, a New Mexico judge ordered Meta to pay $25 billion after a jury found it had misled Facebook users about privacy. Meta says it will appeal. That number alone is staggering, but perhaps more unsettling is how unsurprising the case feels. Because we have become conditioned to using these platforms as core elements of our everyday lives, we deserve more autonomy over our data.

In a 2023 Pew Research Center survey, 73% of U.S. adults said they had little or no control over what companies do with their data. And 56% said they often or almost always clicked "agree" without reading privacy policies. Companies have given a binary: no means being left out, while yes means giving up privacy.

The answer to this problem doesn't ask everyone to become an expert in privacy settings. Companies should have to collect less data, delete information sooner, and explain what they actually need. Governments should face real limits on tracking ordinary people, too. I don't object to technology knowing enough to do its job. I object to treating our entire lives as information available for future use.

More concerning is what gets collected without any explicit consent. A 2024 Federal Trade Commission (FTC) report found that major social media and video services gathered extensive personal information, sometimes even about nonusers, and could keep it indefinitely. The FTC called companies' data collection and retention practices "woefully inadequate." It also alleged that a data broker, Kochava, sold precise location data from hundreds of millions of mobile devices, despite a 2026 order restricted the sharing of sensitive location information. We don't need to post our lives publicly for someone to build a record of where we've been.



Graphic by Ann Ma '28/*The Choate News*

That record matters beyond advertisements. Knowing that everything may be saved changes what people are willing to do. A 2026 study published in the Journal of Communication found that information about data surveillance reduced participants' comfort with sharing opinions and seeking information online. Think about that: we are not only giving up secrets. We may be giving up the freedom to ask embarrassing questions, consider unpopular opinions, or change our minds without being defined by a digital trail. I don't want a careless search from when I was 15 used as evidence of who I am at 30.

Surveillance doesn't stop when we lock our phones. Cameras that read license plates can collect the time and place a car passes, then store that information in searchable databases. This can help investigations, but convenience for institutions isn't automatically a reason to document ordinary people. The fact that technology can record something does not mean it should. People should be free to go about their lives without being treated as potential subjects of investigation.

Privacy is not a reward for having nothing to hide. It's the right to decide how much of yourself the world gets to keep.

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Saving Daylight or Saving DST?

By **Alessandra Pagnani '30**
Opinions Writer

Time travel exists. Well, at least for an hour each fall and spring. For most people, the end of daylight saving time (DST) in the fall is simply an extra hour of sleep and school days that end with the sun already going down. Beyond that, DST offers few clear benefits and multiple drawbacks. Permanent standard time is a great alternative to DST, as it is a more natural and consistent system that better supports society's overall well-being. It is closer to humans' natural sleep patterns than DST, and more morning light has been linked to improvements in both mental and physical health. Because of this, the U.S. and other nations observing daylight saving time should eliminate the practice and adopt permanent standard time.

Contrary to popular belief, daylight saving time was not created to help farmers. In fact, many farmers oppose the biannual hour-long shift because it disrupts their typical harvest routines. So if DST doesn't benefit farmers, why does the U.S. continue to use it? During World War I, many European countries and the U.S. began using DST to save energy. However, this effort was short-lived, and by the end of the war many countries had returned to standard time. In World War II, daylight saving time was reintroduced as an energy-saving measure, and after that, it has stuck around.

Today, many countries across Europe and nearly every U.S. state observe daylight saving time DST forces people to adjust their clocks and routines twice a year. Although this practice was originally intended to conserve energy, modern research suggests that the energy-saving benefits of DST are inconsistent. In addition, the time change disrupts the body's natural circadian rhythms, leaving many people feeling groggy and irritable. Research has linked the springtime clock change to slightly increased risks of cardiovascular events, including heart attacks and strokes.

During the winter months, shorter days already limit exposure to natural sunlight, making the timing of daylight hours especially important. This lack of sunlight has been linked to seasonal depression and other mental health challenges. Sleep deprivation and disrupted routines may contribute to this heightened risk. When considered alongside the other downsides, does DST benefit or hurt the population?

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Leaning Left

By **Leah Whittingham '30**
Opinions Writer

American politics have always been characterized by a degree of unpredictability. However, the 2026 midterm elections offered a striking reminder of just how quickly the political landscape can change. What initially felt like a regular mid-term election became a nationwide shift in voter sentiments that disrupted the Republican Party's hold on power.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these elections was not the number of seats the Democrats gained but the geographical breadth of their movement. Republican support declined nationwide, with vote share declining in 99% of the 2,100 counties examined. Historically red states, such as Texas and North Carolina, turned blue, in both governor and senate seats. Everywhere from conservative communities to suburban cities swung left; the movement toward the Democratic candidates is difficult to overlook. The scale of this shift suggests heightened voter dissatisfaction that was not confined to a couple of competitive districts or isolated disagreements.

Such a shift raises a more important question: what exactly were voters responding to?

Midterm elections have historically been an opportunity for the electorate to reconsider the party occupying the White House. These elections marked a 30% increase in Democratic support from Hispanic voters and a 33% increase in the support among people between the ages of 18 and 29, reflecting the current administration's lack of delivery on promises that had initially shifted youth to the right during the 2024 elections.

It would be premature to interpret these results as a permanent transformation of American political identity. A shift in voting patterns does not necessarily represent a complete change in ideology, nor is a Democratic victory evidence of belief in every stance held by the party. Voters may be expressing discontent with the present rather than making a definitive statement about the future.

Nonetheless, the results should not be downplayed. The midterms proved that political support is neither guaranteed nor indefinitely transferable from one election to another. Electoral victories can establish political authority, but maintaining public confidence requires something more sustained.

History, suggests that dramatic reversals are not unprecedented. In 1972, Richard Nixon secured an overwhelming presidential victory, carrying 49 states, only for the Republican Party to suffer significant congressional losses two years later amid the Watergate scandal. More recently, George W. Bush's 2004 reelection was followed by a Democratic takeover of both chambers of Congress in 2006. These elections, despite their varying circumstances, demonstrate a recurring feature of American politics: electoral victories do not necessarily translate into lasting political loyalty but are fragile wins that can be lost with something as simple as a scandal.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons of November 2026 is how the political pendulum can swing even further than anticipated. For the Republican Party, the results present a significant challenge to reassess priorities and a reminder that political power ultimately remains contingent on constituents.

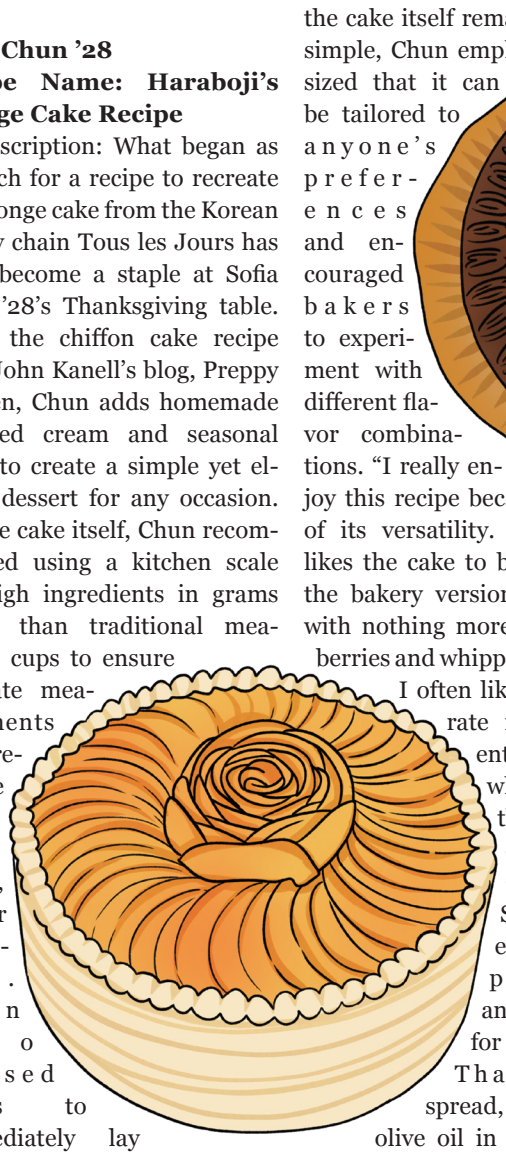
Leah Whittingham *is a third-former from Kingston, Jamaica. She may be reached at lwhittingham30@choate.edu.*

The Sweet Taste of Nostalgia: Choate Community Shares Thanksgiving Recipes

By **Nick Aston '28**
Copy Editor

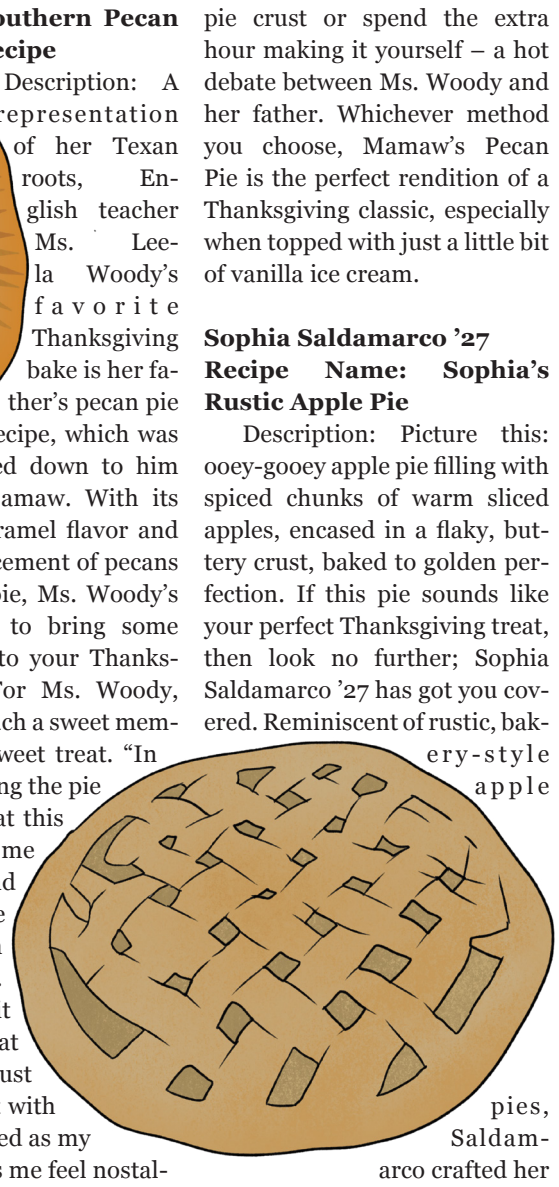
Sofia Chun '28
Recipe Name: Haraboji's Sponge Cake Recipe

Description: What began as a search for a recipe to recreate the sponge cake from the Korean bakery chain Tous les Jours has since become a staple at Sofia Chun '28's Thanksgiving table. Using the chiffon cake recipe from John Kanell's blog, Preppy Kitchen, Chun adds homemade whipped cream and seasonal fruits to create a simple yet elegant dessert for any occasion. For the cake itself, Chun recommended using a kitchen scale to weigh ingredients in grams rather than traditional measuring cups to ensure accurate measurements and preserve the cake's soft, tender texture. Chun also advised bakers to "immediately lay the pan upside-down on a wire rack so that it does not collapse downwards," to avoid the cake collapsing in the center. While the cake itself remains rather simple, Chun emphasized that it can be tailored to anyone's preferences and encouraged bakers to experiment with different flavor combinations. "I really enjoy this recipe because of its versatility. My grandpa likes the cake to be as close to the bakery version as possible with nothing more than strawberries and whipped cream, but I often like to incorporate new ingredients and flavors when I bake this for other crowds," Chun said. So, whether you add pumpkin and fall spices for this year's Thanksgiving spread, or citrus and olive oil in the summer, this cake is sure to leave your guests begging for a second slice.



Ms. Woody
Recipe Name: Mamaw Woody's Southern Pecan Pie Recipe

Description: A representation of her Texan roots, English teacher Ms. Leela Woody's favorite Thanksgiving bake is her father's pecan pie recipe, which was passed down to him from his Mamaw. With its classic, rich caramel flavor and meticulous placement of pecans on top of the pie, Ms. Woody's recipe is sure to bring some Southern flair to your Thanksgiving table. For Ms. Woody, this pie is as much a sweet memory as it is a sweet treat. "In addition to loving the pie itself, I love that this recipe reminds me of my dad and that it feels like a tradition from my childhood. Even though it is too sweet to eat too much of it, just getting to see it with the pecans placed as my dad does makes me feel nostalgic," Ms. Woody said. The hardest thing about this pie is deciding whether to use store-bought pie crust or spend the extra hour making it yourself – a hot debate between Ms. Woody and her father. Whichever method you choose, Mamaw's Pecan Pie is the perfect rendition of a Thanksgiving classic, especially when topped with just a little bit of vanilla ice cream.



Sophia Saldamarco '27
Recipe Name: Sophia's Rustic Apple Pie

Description: Picture this: ooey-gooey apple pie filling with spiced chunks of warm sliced apples, encased in a flaky, buttery crust, baked to golden perfection. If this pie sounds like your perfect Thanksgiving treat, then look no further; Sophia Saldamarco '27 has got you covered. Reminiscent of rustic, bakery-style apple pies, Saldamarco crafted her own recipe using a roux-based sauce to create a thick, flavorful apple pie filling. "Food has always been something that I have found comfort in making and giving to other people, and I always enjoy testing out new recipes," said Saldamarco, reflecting on the experience of developing her very own pie recipe. As a less-than-enthusiastic fan of the traditional Thanksgiving meal, Saldamarco has focused on producing desserts to fill the gaps left by her turkey, stuffing, and cranberry sauce. Whether you're looking for a show-stopping dessert to add to your Thanksgiving table or simply to satisfy your craving for that oh-so-classic apple pie, Sophia's Rustic Apple Pie recipe is sure to do the trick.



Dr. Davis
Recipe Name: Dr. Davis's Ginger & Curry Carrot Soup

Description: If you're looking to add something unique to your traditional Thanksgiving meal of turkey, stuffing, and green bean casserole (that you unfortunately know no one will touch), English, Greek, and Latin teacher Dr. Scott Davis's Ginger & Curry Carrot Soup is the perfect addition. Made from cashews, coconut milk, and warming spices, this carrot soup is 100% vegan, an added plus to its already vibrant flavor profile. "I like my Thanksgiving meals to be as inclusive as possible, so this dish is an obvious choice," Dr. Davis said. Dr. Davis noted that this recipe can be personalized by adding new spices and encouraged chefs to experiment with flavor profiles. "The nice thing about soup is that you can change the spice flavor as it cooks. I suspect adding extra curry, cayenne, or cinnamon would add some complexity for those with a bolder palate," he said. Whether you're looking to add some color to this year's Thanksgiving or simply come up with something delicious to offer your vegan Aunt Betsy, this carrot soup is the perfect choice for you!

Nick Aston *may be reached at naston28@choate.edu.*

Graphics by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

Forever True To Gold & Blue: The History of Deerfield Day

By **Slater Boms '29**
Reporter

It is a familiar time of year — the leaves are turning, the students are getting settled into their dorms, and fall activities are underway across campus. Students return to their routines, sports begin to conclude, but one event stands out. It is marked on calendars across campus in blue and gold: Deerfield Day. This longstanding rivalry has remained an integral part of Choate's community and continues to bring students, alumni, and faculty together through athletic competition.

Deerfield Day was quite different around the 1920s. Choate used to compete against Kent before they withdrew from the rivalry. Without a longstanding rival, the administrators set out to find another school to compete against, which was Deerfield. The games themselves were quite different, especially because Deerfield became a co-educational school much later than Choate, yet one thing that has not changed is the community's enthusiasm for the rivalry.

Many alumni cherish their memories of Deerfield Day and recall it as one of the most memorable days of the year. Alumna Ms. Sue Sirlin '88, who competed in lacrosse, remembered having a spring version of Deerfield Day filled with school spirit. When asked about the spirit of the day, Ms. Sirlin said, "everyone was in a spirited mindset" and "the rivalry between Deerfield and Choate was always intense and cutthroat — across all teams." Another alumnus, Mr. Kane O'Neill '93, particularly remembered the football game and the hollering through bullhorns. Mr. O'Neill was a varsity football player and enjoyed the competitive atmosphere both on and off the field. "There seemed to be a special atmosphere of excitement around the campus," he said.

Several alumni also shared memories of traditions that are no longer part of Deerfield Day. Ms. Sirlin recalled "some special meals served for those visiting," a tradition that some current students might welcome bringing back. The most prominent of these traditions was the annual bonfire lighting at the pep rally. Recalling one of his favorite memories, Mr. O'Neill said, "bonfire tradition was always a lot of fun and set the tone for the weekend." The history of the bonfire tradition can be traced through past issues of *The Choate News*. In an article from 1965, a big bonfire on the quad is mentioned. The reporter wrote, "The football field would not offer such a good platform for the speakers, but could, perhaps, have a bonfire" in a discussion of the pep rally and pregame activities. This provides evidence of the bonfire's place in Deerfield Day celebrations. Another article from 1954 called the rally a "surge of school spirit." Together, these accounts suggest that the pep rally has held importance through the bonfire days and beyond.

Deerfield Day has changed significantly since its origins in 1922. While the teams used to travel by train alongside the marching band, the current tradition has lost both of those main components. Buses fill with hundreds of students and travel to Massachusetts to compete against Deerfield. The day continues to feature cheers, chants, and displays of school pride, with blue and gold throughout campus. Today, the thirds, JV, and Varsity teams all take part in the day's competition. The day has continued to evolve amid major historical events, including wars, the Covid-19 pandemic, and technological and leadership changes. One thing will stay "forever true" — Deerfield Day is a longstanding tradition that will be cherished by generations of Choate students.

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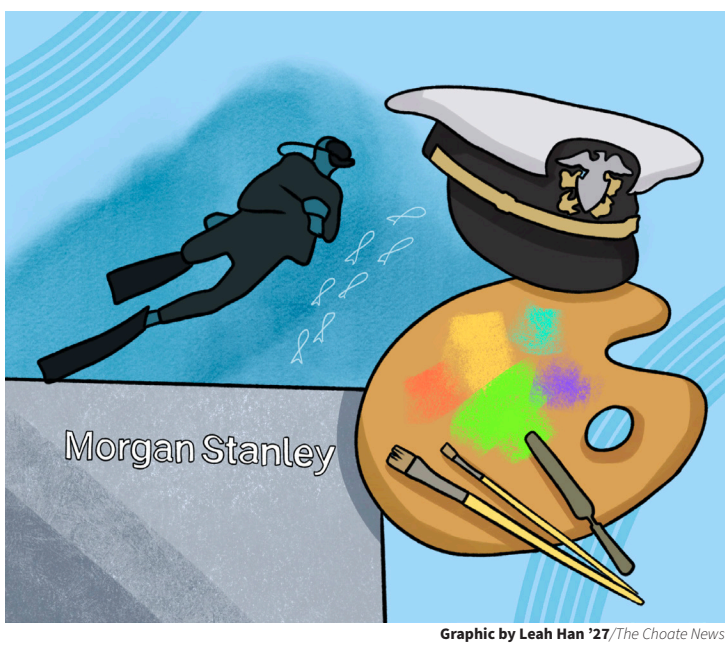
Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

Before the Classroom: Careers That Shaped Choate's Faculty

By **Aiden An '30**
Reporter



Graphic by Leah Han '27/*The Choate News*

For many years, Choate has been supported by a dedicated community of teachers, coaches, and staff. Although students know these individuals for their work in classrooms, on athletic fields, and throughout campus, they may know less about the experiences that brought them to Choate. Before entering education, faculty members spent their days serving in the Navy, working at Morgan Stanley, and even pursuing careers as professional artists. Today, these experiences continue to shape their perspectives and influence the ways they teach, coach, and interact with students.

Third-form Dean Mr. Jonas Akins spent six years as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy. Today, he also teaches history and government, coaches football, squash, and golf, and serves as the head of Logan Munroe House. His time in the Navy taught him lessons about teamwork and community that he continues to apply at Choate. "In some ways, being in the Navy is a little bit like the fall term here," he said. "You deploy somewhere around Labor Day, you get a little bit of a port call at Family Weekend, and then you come back to the pier at Thanksgiving." He added, "You are living where you work. You're working where you live. You're surrounded by a thousand of your closest friends, and it's not dissimilar to an aircraft carrier in that it's a pretty self-contained operating environment."

This shared sense of community has shaped Mr. Akins' approach to teaching. In the classroom, he tries to create an environment in which students can build relationships and work together. "You really try to create people who know each other and have the chance to work both hard and well together," Mr. Akins said. He explained that "it's hard to work well with people you don't know," a principle he learned in the military that has remained central to his approach to education.

Science teacher Ms. Mallika Beach-Mehrotra, known to students as Ms. M, found inspiration from her previous work in marine science and outdoor education. Before coming to Choate, she worked as a research marine ecologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. She also worked at the Ocean Institute, where she combined science with education through field trips and outdoor learning. These experiences shaped her approach to science education, particularly her appreciation for learning beyond traditional classroom settings.

When discussing the skills she carried over from her previous careers, Ms. M emphasized the value of "informal education" and learning "outside the classroom." Rather than focusing solely on textbook instruction, she prioritizes hands-on learning and gives students opportunities to explore the natural world.

Art history and studio art teacher Mr. Willard Lustenader brings years of experience as a professional artist into his teaching. A painter since his teenage years, Mr. Lustenader studied art history in college and graduate school before expanding into education while continuing to pursue his own artistic work. His background as an artist allows him to approach art history from both historical and practical perspectives, teaching students not only about the works they study but also about the materials and techniques behind their creations. "You can't teach art history effectively without having done the actual production of art," he explained. Throughout his career, Mr. Lustenader's own work has shifted between realism and abstraction, with each style informing the other. This willingness to experiment and explore different approaches to art is also reflected in the perspective he brings to his students.

Math teacher Ms. Stephanie Neul worked at Morgan Stanley as an analyst in internal consulting, focusing on finance and wealth management, after studying mathematics and English in college. Though she initially viewed the position as an opportunity to apply her analytical and communication skills, she eventually realized that this work did not suit her interests or desired lifestyle. She instead sought a career that would allow her to engage more directly and meaningfully with others. Having attended St. Paul's School, Ms. Neul was always familiar with the boarding-school environment. Her career in finance also taught her valuable skills in professional communication, presentations, and networking. She first joined Choate as a Summer Programs teacher before transitioning into her current role as a Statistics teacher and rowing coach.

Although their paths to Choate differ, these faculty members share the experience of bringing lessons from previous careers into their work with students. Their journeys demonstrate that a career in education does not always begin in a classroom. Instead, the experiences faculty members accumulate before arriving at Choate continue to shape the perspectives, skills, and opportunities they bring to the School community.

Aiden An *may be reached at aan30@choate.edu.*

Curtain Closes on Fall Productions: Be More Chill and Sense and Sensibility

By **Regina Choi '30 and Miya Aoki '29**
Reporters



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

The cast of *Be More Chill* poses together at the ending scene.

This fall, Choate's Theater Program presented two distinct productions that introduced various themes of navigating through social worlds. The musical *Be More Chill* delved into the pressures of high school popularity, while the play *Sense and Sensibility* brought Jane Austen's comedy of manners to the newly renovated Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC).

What if fitting in at high school were as easy as taking a pill? In *Be More Chill*, Jeremy Heere gets his hands on a pill containing a quantum supercomputer called SQUIP, which promises to help make him popular. Through humor, music, and dance, the musical explores the pressures of social hierarchy in high school and the length people are willing to go to "be more chill."

Describing the production as "about high schoolers for high schoolers," Director Mr. Bari Robinson (Bari) highlighted the musical's relevance for the Choate audience. He observed that, as the performers became more confident, "they start[ed] to see more possibilities in their characters," experimenting with vocal riffs and behaviors that encapsulated their characters' personalities.

For actors, getting into character meant adopting personalities far removed from their own. Ali Switzen '29, who played Chloe Valentine, said that her role allowed her to explore an unfamiliar persona. "My character is risque at times, and experimenting with a personality that is so different from me felt like an escape," Switzten said.

Benoit Bracey '28, who played Jeremy Heere, was initially skeptical of his character's quirky personality. However, exploring Jeremy's perspective allowed him to empathize with the role. "There's a reason he feels the way that he does, and diving deep into the character helped bring it to life," Bracey said.

Not every rehearsal went smoothly. Head Choreographer Samia Mowafi '27 shared how teaching the choreography for the upbeat Act Two showstopper "The Smartphone Hour (Rich Set a Fire)" was a lengthy process. However, through many rehearsals, the cast was able to master the number.

Between rehearsals, performers even studied backstage to balance the demands of the production with their coursework. Bracey said the cast's enthusiasm kept them motivated. "We have a pretty decent workload for the musical, but at the same time, we love what we do, and I wouldn't rather be doing anything else," Bracey said.

And then there was "Pink Bari." What started as a humorous line from the musical where Brooke urges Jeremy to join her and Chloe on a ride to eat Pinkberry frozen yogurt turned into the cast's biggest inside joke — a picture of Bari with a pink backdrop. Technical crew member Sophie Eliades '27 was later inspired to design T-shirts and a cake that commemorated the meme. These silly moments became what made the production memorable. "A hundred productions of *Be More Chill* will never be this production of *Be More Chill*," Switzen said. Bari echoed her sentiment, adding, "If you were to make the same production all over again, but with different people, it would be completely different because everyone contributes their own interpretation and style onstage."

Despite its comedic tone, the musical carried serious themes and messages. Mowafi said that the musical "directly addresses [issues] we avoid talking about as a society," including identity, mental health, and technology, adding how the discomfort it created was what encouraged audiences to truly pay attention. Olivia Bingham '29, who played Christine Canigula, hopes audiences left feeling happy and hopeful despite the heavier moments. Bari cautioned "that trying to belong at any price is a fool's errand." In the play's finale, Jeremy discovered that no technological upgrade can replace an understanding of his own identity.

On November 5, the *Sense and Sensibility* cast successfully kicked off their first performance in the newly renovated Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC). As the curtain rose, Jane Austen's tale of love, family, and entangled relationships came to life on stage, marking the new beginning for the Choate arts community.

Selecting the first production for the renovated theater required careful consideration. "We weren't sure initially ... if we would be in the Arts Annex or here," Director Ms. Kate Doak said, "so I tried to pick something that could go in either space." She also wanted to select a production that would bring "positive energy to open the new theater."

Behind the richness of the stage, cast, tech, and costume members worked for weeks practicing their lines and coordinating with one another in order to create a cohesive performance. Through rehearsals, the entire crew worked closely to prepare the show. "In the first tech rehearsal, we had a lot of stopping and starting ... but it was really, really fun," cast member Rosie Tao '30 said.

However, there were multiple challenges throughout the preparation of the play. Since the production was an adaptation of a novel, it had many lines and more than 40 scenes. The Little Theater's proscenium stage also created greater distance between the actors and the audience. "We had to figure out how to move from scene to scene very quickly in proscenium," Ms. Doak said. "We had less time [to prepare] than usual." Stage manager Erika Santamaria '27 also elaborated on her experience overseeing the play. "My biggest challenge was that I was the only person on the stage management team ... but [with the help of] everyone ... it's not impossible."

Offstage, the technical crew contributed an essential role to shaping the production. "[Audiences] won't be able to directly see the tech people," Zachary Brenner '29, the lightboard operator, said, "but without [technical elements], it would look like a bunch of people standing in front of plywood walls." Santamaria shared a similar sentiment, noting, "the lights set and costumes and sound ... didn't look as good as when we had everything," she said.

Together, *Be More Chill* and *Sense and Sensibility* offered Choate audiences two very different examinations of belonging and social expectations. Although one unfolded in a contemporary high school and the other in Regency-era England, both productions reflected the dedication of casts, crews, and directors who turned weeks of rehearsal into nights of performance.

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Ms. Andrea Miller '00 and Ms. Clare Byrne Join Dance Faculty



Photo courtesy of Ms. Clare Byrne

Ms. Clare Byrne smiles in a dance studio.

By **Thad Tieanworn '30**
Reporter

Arts at Choate would be incomplete without dance. From ballet to hip-hop and lyrical to contemporary, dance brings passionate performers together through synchronicity and nonverbal choreography. The bonds formed during sessions often help students acclimate to a new and unfamiliar environment. This fall, Choate's dance program welcomed two new instructors: Ms. Andrea Miller '00 and Ms. Clare Byrne. Drawing on their careers as performers and educators, both instructors hope to help students build confidence and grow as artists through movement.

Ms. Miller returned to Choate as a dance instructor and fall guest artist. She is a lecturer in acting at the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale and manages her own dance company, GALLIM, where she is the founder and artistic director. "I'm teaching my methodology of contemporary dance," Ms. Miller said. "I'm having a blast, and I love working with my students."

Rejoining the Choate community in a different role has allowed Ms. Miller to rediscover the collaborative joy she experienced as a student while developing a new perspective as an instructor. However, with new responsibilities as a Choate faculty member came the need to recognize that students also have their own commitments both inside and outside of school. "Time is probably one of the hardest things to find at Choate because everybody is so committed to many parts of their development and their growth as a person," Ms. Miller said.

Ms. Byrne, who began dancing when she was six years old, teaches at Emerson College and Sacred Heart University. She also works with the Neighborhood Music School and leads dance sessions for people with Parkinson's disease at a health center. Reflecting on her first experiences at Choate, Ms. Byrne said she was "struck by the skill level of the students" and described them as "really focused and intelligent dancers." Of course, the Choate dance program is not complete without the facilities Choate provides for its dancers. "The dance studio is beautiful. It's fantastic to have such great live music accompaniment for class, too," she said.

Both instructors hope to create an environment in which students can experiment and produce meaningful, authentic art. "I feel like [the boarding environment] sets up for real magic in a way that might be harder to create in other places," Ms. Miller said. "It's a perfect environment for exploring and growing as an artist." Ms. Byrne similarly encouraged students to be honest to themselves in their work. "Bring your most authentic self to the dance studio — to your whole education!" she said. "It can be hard to be vulnerable in this day and age, but dance — and all art — is most magical when we share exactly what is so special and unique to each of us."

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A BEHIND-THE-SCENES TECH WEEK DIARY

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

There are many hurdles to overcome when performing in a theatrical production, but perhaps the most arduous aspect is tech week. For Jordy Miller '27, an Arts Concentration student who played Fanny Dashwood in Choate's fall production *Sense and Sensibility*, tech week meant seven days of early mornings, late nights, and sustained concentration from October 31 to November 4 in the newly renovated Little Theater.

During the weekend before opening night, the cast and crew were called from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday. Miller's alarm went off at 7 a.m. and arrived at the theater by 9 a.m., where she grabbed bagels and coffee before getting into her mic. During the sound check, all actors recited dialogue from the show so the sound crew could adjust the microphone levels. "I usually pick this really long chunk [of dialogue] I have ... and then my character does some screaming. So I do a scream call," Miller said.

Following the mic check, the cast rehearsed scenes "cue-to-cue," moving between technical cues rather than performing every scene in full. Miller described the process as involving "a lot of starting and stopping." During rehearsal, faculty members or Stage Manager Erika Santamaria '27 sometimes called "Hold!" to pause the rehearsal when some aspect of the performance went wrong. "Holds can be long, and they can be gruesome, but we have to respect that there is someone who is trying so hard to get us right back on track," Miller said.

During the rare moments when Miller was not rehearsing onstage, she spent time searching for plays for Student-Directed Scenes, for which she will serve as one of the directors. However, she emphasized how little free time the cast has, as they are responsible for scene transitions in addition to acting onstage. After rehearsal Sunday night, Miller returned to Nichols House for prefect duty.

Even after two nine-hour rehearsals over the weekend, the cast returned to the Little Theater at 6 p.m. for six more weeknights to run the show in full costume. "When you start doing dress rehearsals, there is no real downtime ... you have to be locked into the show," Miller said. "Because we don't have rehearsal in the afternoon, I try to get most of my stuff done then, and then when I'm doing my transitions or doing my scenes, I'm [focused] in that moment."

Miller said people outside the Theater Program do not always recognize how demanding the undertaking of a production can be. "I wish a lot of people recognized how much of a commitment being involved in theater is, whether you're acting or costuming or teching or managing," she said. "It's not something that you can be willy-nilly with. It's something that you're really dedicated to."

Despite the intense time commitment and expectations of this strenuous experience, Miller has some strategies she uses to maintain her well-being. "My biggest piece of advice is to try to get as much stuff as you can done before [tech week] and don't be afraid to ask for extensions. Teachers are usually really understanding." She later added that "you have to prioritize you and your health because you want to make sure that you're ready to do the show for an audience. Making sure you're getting enough sleep, drinking enough water, eating good food is really important."

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Photo courtesy of Mr. Joey Avena

Jordy Miller '27 plays Fanny Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*.

The Choate News

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SPORTS

Friday, November 13, 2026



FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

103 - 49 - 13

Varsity Games

Girls' Soccer (8-7-1)
vs. Hotchkiss, 3-1

Boys' Football (6-2)
vs. Hotchkiss, 55-14

Girls' Volleyball (14-3)
vs. Hotchkiss, 3-0

Boys' Soccer (9-0-7)
vs. NMH, 4-0

Girls' Field Hockey (7-8)
vs. Hotchkiss, 1-2

Boys' Cross Country (2-5)
vs. Hotchkiss, 28-27

Girls' Cross Country (4-2)
vs. Hotchkiss, 28-27

Boys' Water Polo (11-3)
vs. Greenwich High School, 6-11

J.V. Games

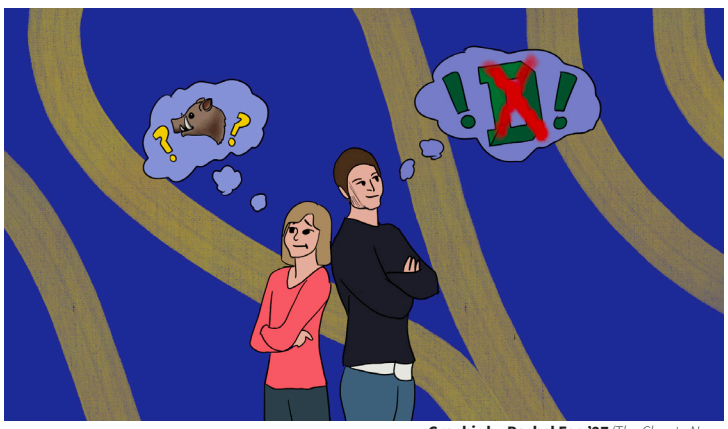
Girls' Cross Country (3-1)
vs. Hotchkiss, 15-47

Boys' Soccer (10-1-1)
vs. Hotchkiss, 2-0

Girls' Field Hockey (6-5)
vs. Hotchkiss, 1-3

Boys' Cross Country (3-3)
vs. Hotchkiss, 29-28

Firsts, Farewells, and Fanfare: Choate Freshmen and Seniors Anticipate ~~Deerfield~~ Day



Graphic by Rachel Fan '27/*The Choate News*

By **Norah Wang '27**
Staff Contributor

For some Choate students, Deerfield Day is a tradition they have been anticipating since the moment they stepped foot on campus. For others, it is an event they have already experienced multiple times, with each year adding more cherished memories. This year, freshmen will experience Deerfield Day for the first time, while seniors prepare for their last.

For freshmen, much of Deerfield Day is still built on expectation. Many first-year students have only stories from older students and alumni to draw on. Cross Country athlete Dylan Chum '30 said, "My mom used to attend Deerfield Day ... [so] I assumed it was a long-standing tradition that happened annually for the school, and it builds a lot of hype for ... everyone." Chum also said he was looking forward to "a really good way to build and show school spirit."

For freshmen athletes, that excitement also comes with intense preparation. Competing against Deerfield adds another level of meaning to an already important game, race, or match. Owen Messing '30, a member of Boys Thirds Soccer, said his team is preparing for their match against Deerfield with "intra-team scrimmages," and expressed his excitement to "seeing all of [his] friends" during the game. Moreover, many students plan to spend Deerfield Day supporting other teams and participating in as much of the tradition as possible.

The Pep Rally is another part of Deerfield Day that freshmen are entering with expectations shaped mostly by what they have heard. From the energy in Colony Hall to the chants and traditions passed down each year, it is often one of the first moments when new students get to see the entire school come together around the rivalry. Chum said, "I've heard [Pep Rally] is a way ... to hype up the school, show school spirit, and for every team to ... to contribute to the atmosphere." For freshmen, Deerfield Day represents a chance to compete against their rivals for the first time, and it is also one of their first opportunities to contribute to school spirit and feel fully included in a Choate tradition.

For seniors, the same day carries a different weight. After years of attending games, cheering from the sidelines, and in many cases competing themselves, this Deerfield Day comes with the knowledge that it will be their last as Choate students. Sophie Chung '27 said, "I always go and watch the [Pep Rally and Deerfield Day] celebrations, and it's always been super fun." This year, Chung wants to "connect with people ... and just appreciate that all the seniors are together." Marianna Mata '27 also expressed her wish to become more involved with the Deerfield Day celebrations in her final year at Choate. "I think I'm going to try to go to every single game this year," she said.

Some Deerfield Day memories have stayed with seniors throughout their time at Choate. Chung recalled her favorite moment during last year's Deerfield Day, where Choate students "stormed the football field," waving banners and celebrating the Boys' Varsity Football team's win against the Doors. Mata also recalled a similar experience during her sophomore year, when the Girls' Varsity Soccer team won against Deerfield: "Everyone ran on the field after [the game] ... I remember everyone cheering, and I saw the [Choate] flag waving while people were running. It was amazing," she said. Whether that memory came from a close game, the pep rally, or simply spending the day with friends, Deerfield Day becomes less about one specific event and more about the collection of moments surrounding it.

Freshmen and seniors may enter this Deerfield Day from opposite ends of their Choate experience, but both groups are focused on many of the same things: supporting their teams, spending time with friends, and being part of something larger than one game. One group is seeing the tradition for the first time, while the other is trying to take it in one last time.

"Really, it's about the people more so than the sports," Messing said. To him, the upcoming show of school spirit on Deerfield Day will be a "deeply important and vital part to the community."

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COLLEGE BASKETBALL TIPS OFF

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

College basketball tipped off on November 1 with an international doubleheader between the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and the Villanova Wildcats in Rome, Italy, marking the opening game of the 88th National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) season. In the men's game, Notre Dame overcame a six-point deficit in the final four minutes of the game to defeat Villanova 74-72. The Notre Dame women's team also completed the sweep by defeating Villanova 99-75, led by guard Hanna Hidalgo's 32 points. The Eternal City Tip-Off was held in Rome, inspired by the election of Pope Leo XIV, a Villanova alumnus, and the shared Catholic heritage between the two universities. As the new season begins, several Choate students and faculty have been following their favorite teams and players.

Unlike the NBA, NCAA basketball games are played with parts. The men's games consist of two 20-minute halves, while the women's games are made up of four 10-minute quarters. Both seasons culminate each spring in the NCAA tournaments, commonly known as March Madness. Beginning in 2027, the men's and women's tournament fields will expand from 68 to 76 teams, giving more schools the opportunity to compete in this historic event. However, the regular season also features notable match-ups, whether it be between schools from different coasts or longstanding rivalries. One of the most storied rivalries is between the Duke Blue Devils and the University of North Carolina Tar Heels, a rivalry in which Duke most recently secured a 76-61 home victory on March 7.

Zoe Chen '30 is an avid Duke fan, a passion she shares with her family. This season, she is particularly looking forward to watching sophomore guard-forward Dame Sarr. "He is very dramatic and a floor-slapper," Chen said, referencing the Duke tradition of players slapping the court floor in unison to fire up the Cameron Indoor Stadium crowd. "He's also really good as a player, and also he's just really jolly, and it feels very entertaining to watch jolly basketball players," Chen added.

Chemistry teacher and Girls' Junior Varsity Basketball Coach Ms. Zoe Milazzo '16 is a University of Connecticut (UConn) women's basketball fan, but also loves to follow her previous students and advisees' careers, including those of Bryce Dortch (Notre Dame), Andre Mills (University of Maryland), and Quinn Neilson (Boston University). "[UConn basketball] was always a staple in [my] house each winter," Ms. Milazzo said. "Connecticut doesn't have a ton of teams that are powerhouses in the athletic world, so it was naturally the team to root for."

For Girls' Varsity Basketball player Marley Boyce '27, the University of South Carolina women's team is where her heart lies. "Go Cocks! I love [South Carolina] for Coach [Dawn] Staley; her confidence and coaching style [are] so fun to watch, and she's honestly transcending the game for women's college basketball," Boyce said. Like Chen and Ms. Milazzo, Boyce also connects college basketball with family memories. "My favorite memory surrounding college basketball was watching Markquis Nowell play for Kansas State and win against Michigan State during March Madness," Boyce said. "I remember my mom and I being glued to our TVs and becoming K State fans."

Looking to the season ahead, Chen hopes to see Duke build on last season's performance and make another deep tournament run. "[They should] try not to focus on past losses and [instead] focus on what's in front of [them] ... They can always look at what might have went wrong. I think focusing on what could go potentially right is more important than looking back at losses or a certain bad play," Chen said.

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SPENCER HOUSE TO SOUTH BEND

By **Henry Laurans '30**
Reporter

Choate alumnus Will Black '25 earned national recognition before even making his first collegiate football appearance. Black was named to the 2026 Shaun Alexander Freshman of the Year Award watch list, which honors the top freshman in all of collegiate football. "I was pretty excited about it, but at the same time, it was kind of a reminder that ... all that really mattered was [that] I did my best in [the] game," Black, Notre Dame's starting left tackle, said.

Black credited his time at Choate and the guidance of his coaches with preparing him for college football and early success with the Fighting Irish. "The coaches there did a fantastic job at coaching me at a high level, and the players on the team, the culture we had in practice, going up against good players in practice, made me a lot better," Black said. Head Football Coach L.J. Spinnato recalled how Black consistently pushed himself beyond typical team practices. "It was maybe his senior year in the off season during a nasty winter rain [and] snow, and I sat down at 8 o'clock on duty in his dormitory at Spencer House, and he came in at 8:15, sweating, soaked, and he had been working alone in the freezing cold," Coach Spinnato said.

Black's work ethic continues to influence and inspire current Choate players who have trained alongside him. "I would show up to practice. He was always there first," Boys' Varsity Football Captain Cole Cormier '27 said. "Everyone was walking right back inside after practice, and he would stay out there, getting in work on his own, extra work every day." Black's character has also shaped Cormier's own approach to leadership. "He always brought everything he had, and that's something I wanted to take with me when I became ... a leader on the team," Cormier said. "I wanted to follow in his footsteps."

Black's coaches also praised the stark contrast between his kindness off the field and competitiveness during games. "He [is] ... a wonderful human being ... but until the whistle blew, he was just your worst enemy," Assistant Football Coach Jonas Akins said.

With his eyes set on goals for the remainder of the season, Black hopes that Notre Dame is able to remain consistent through the rest of the season. "A team goal we have is winning every game, going one and zero every week, and then winning the national championship," he said. As of November 8, the Fighting Irish are ranked No. 3 in the AP Top 25 with a record of 8-1 this season, with Black starting at the left tackle position.

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~~Deerfield~~ Day Photos from the Archives



Photo courtesy of Choate Archives

The Boys Varsity Football Team storms the field after a game in 2000.



Photo courtesy of Choate Archives

Choate students cheering on Deerfield Day, 1980.



Photo courtesy of Choate Archives

Choate students cheer for classmates, 1978.