# The Choate News

The official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907

Choate Rosemary Hall
333 Christian Street
Wallingford, CT

Vol. CXX · No. V | Monday, September 28, 2026 | thechoatenews.choate.edu


# Commemorating Mr. Yassine Benzinane

*The Choate community remembers a beloved faculty member, mentor, father, coach, Muslim chaplain, colleague, and friend.*

**Steven Kee '27**:

Mr. Benzinane was the most caring and selfless teacher I've had. He gave up so much of his time for students in initiatives far beyond the scope of his job description. He also tirelessly advocated for his students. He tailored his classes to his students' needs and understood that the objective of learning is not a grade but the boundless expansion of knowledge.

**Ale McBoyle '27**:

Every practice with Coach Benz began with four laps around the tennis courts and ended with some combination of "brain yoga" and pushups, depending on the team's commentary that day. Looking back, those are some of my favorite memories with him because they captured exactly who he was: someone who pushed us to work hard and become better, while somehow making even the strangest moments fun. There was almost no interaction with Coach Benz that didn't end in a laugh, and that balance of hard work, humor, and being completely himself is what made him, him.

**Ghalia Achbbak '28**:

It's hard to mention one part of my experience having Mr. Benzinane at Choate. To me, he encapsulated not only the values Choate exhorts, but the spirit of a person who genuinely loved people and loved knowledge. I think I can mention a series of memories: Every single moment I learned from him. Every time he would bring up an example from either his life or history, he would display to me a wisdom that is hard to find among people. He was a mentor, a teacher, a spiritual example, and an uncle, and he has now left me with only a sliver of what he knew, but most of all, an insatiable hunger for all things that make humanity beautiful.



Photo courtesy of Kadija Benzinane '27

**Mr. Will Gilyard '98**:

One memory that has stayed with me happened at an Eid celebration in Ruutz-Rees. Yassine had invited me to come, and of course I wanted to be there and be with the community. At some point during the celebration, I picked up a darbuka. I had done some percussion when I was younger, so I instinctively started playing based on whatever I could remember from those days, even though I really had no idea how to play the darbuka.

Yassine noticed and came over. What I remember most is that he didn't make the moment feel like he was correcting or teaching me. He started with a compliment, and then simply invited me to learn alongside him. He showed me how to position my hand and fingers and how striking different parts of the darbuka produced different sounds. He shared his expertise in a way that made me feel welcomed rather than instructed.

We probably spent only ten minutes together, laughing when I didn't quite get a sound right and trying again. He was patient, kind, encouraging, and completely present. It was such a small interaction, but I think that is part of why I remember it so clearly. It captured something about Yassine: he had a way of inviting you into something he loved and making you feel like you belonged there with him.

Before we finished, he told me that we should play together again sometime. I wish I had gotten the chance to take him up on that offer.

**Reverend Aaron Rathbun:**

Yassine was such a radiant soul who brightened the lives of those around him. He was so enthusiastic to pour into the lives of others, or take students on another trip, or utilize another educational opportunity, that I would occasionally have to laugh with him to know his limits! But with Yassine, he really was someone who had such an outsized impact on others, his generosity of spirit overflowed beyond those normal limits. He is precisely the type of person we think of when we talk about a person being a "pillar of the community." I am so grateful to have been able to count him as a very dear and cherished friend.



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram

**Ms. Azucena Alvarez Alonso**:

When I met Yassine, he told me that he had spent the summer in Nerja, Spain, and I soon found out that he had met the actor who played Tito in Verano Azul, a famous TV series. Every Spaniard now in their forties and fifties remembers who Tito was, the way he cried when Chanquete died, that he was friends with El Piraña, and can easily picture him singing No nos moverán.

Yassine knew how excited I would be about this, so the next time he traveled to Nerja, he found his friend Tito, and they recorded a video in which Tito greeted me and invited me to visit Nerja. I showed that video to countless people because I could hardly believe that Tito from Verano Azul was actually speaking to me!

After Yassine passed away, I told his family about the video and explained that I could no longer access it in my messages. Yassine's son, Adam, was able to find it and send it back to me. As we were talking about the story, they told me that whenever Yassine traveled, he somehow always managed to meet the local celebrities. He had a special ability to connect with everyone, whether they were soccer stars, actors, or simply interesting people he happened to meet.

Now I can watch that video again, and it makes me incredibly happy to see Yassine standing next to Tito, smiling and making this wonderful connection happen, just as he always did.

**Dr. Katie Jewett**:

In my memory, Yassine's image is a tapestry of small moments—when he held the door open for someone, offered tea to another, or ceded the limelight to his students, who he always wanted to celebrate. His life was about lifting others.



Photo courtesy of Kadija Benzinane '27

**Dr. Alex Curtis**:

Each year, one of the moments I most looked forward to at Baccalaureate was hearing from Yassine. He would recite a passage from the Quran, first in Arabic and then in English, before offering his own reflection on its meaning. The combination of scholarship and faith he brought to those moments was deeply meaningful and always seemed perfectly suited to the occasion. Sitting in the front row of the Chapel, I often had the feeling that Yassine was speaking directly to me. His words were thoughtful, inspiring, and a wonderful reminder of the wisdom and perspective he brought to our community.

I will also cherish my memories of playing Senior Soccer with Yassine. Despite our being relatively close in age, I was continually amazed that while I seemed to get a little older—and my play showed it—with each passing year, Yassine somehow became more skilled. Mostly, though, I remember how much fun we had together on the pitch.

Those two memories may seem very different, but together they capture so much of what I will remember about Yassine: a person of deep faith and intellect who also brought tremendous warmth, joy, and spirit to the life of this community. I feel very fortunate to have shared both kinds of moments with him.

**Zahabiya Khokha '27**:

My favorite memory of Mr. Benzinane was our Friday Halaqas. He would bring lots of food, either Chick-fil-A or Shah's Halal Food, and we would eat and tell stories.

After we prayed, we went into the Spiritual Life lounge and played charades. However, this charades wasn't your average charades; it had a twist. We had a large box of stress balls that we were supposed to use as a distraction. It was a little unclear what the actual meaning of the stress balls was. As we acted our hearts out, stress balls were thrown back and forth across the room, taking away the real purpose of the game. We laughed as charades were abandoned, and it became a dodgeball fight.

**Gage Hakim '28**:

Mr. Benzinane wanted to see you succeed. No matter what you asked of him, he always went above and beyond. He never said no; he asked "how" and "when." When students in our Arabic class struggled, he did not let them fail. Instead, he gave us group quizzes, encouraged us to attend cultural immersion events, and made sure that all of our efforts led to results.

One day, he would greet us in Arabic with, "Good morning of Pineapples to the most wonderful people"; the next day, he might do 50 pushups on his fists because of a bet. Another cornerstone of the class was "Yoga Dimagh," or brain yoga: whenever one of us spoke English, we had to do squats that he said were "good for our brains."

He was always generous with snacks, mint tea, and animal plushies. A little joke he would consistently make was that whenever someone brought food to class, he would say "socialism" in Arabic and have the person share it. His class taught a way of life, and I am infinitely fortunate that he was my Arabic teacher.



Photo courtesy of Kadija Benzinane '27

**Mr. Pat Dennehy**:

The last time I spoke with Yassine was during the final week before graduation last spring. He approached me in the dining hall to congratulate me on my new role. In the midst of such a hectic week, he took a moment to place both hands on my shoulders, look me directly in the eyes, and say, "You've got this. You care deeply about our students and this school. I am incredibly happy for you and our community."

I will never forget that moment, not only because of his words, but because Yassine went out of his way to offer me such genuine kindness when he had so much else on his mind. That was who he was. He had a remarkable ability to connect with everyone, to see people for who they truly were, and to make them feel valued and understood. He lifted others up simply by being himself. His kindness, warmth, and love for others were infectious, and he inspires me to strive to bring that same sense of care and belonging to those around me. I will always carry his words and his example with me.

**Ms. Maria Ghiggia**:

As an immigrant who grew up in a close-knit family in a small town, I have always longed for warm, authentic connections: friends who bond over mates, asados, and sobremesas—long, unhurried chats. That, for me, is home. And Yassine was certainly home to me.

I was naturally drawn to his thoughtfulness, his charisma, and an authenticity that made every conversation I was fortunate to have with him feel like home. For all I know, he could have been a long-time friend from my hometown. Yassine presented the perfect combination of wisdom and spirituality. He was humane, deeply rooted in and committed to life in this world, devoted to making the lives of those around him better. Yet he never forgot that he was ultimately not of this world.

His passing in prayer is significant. I believe prayer was home to him—the place he returned to again and again, the still center of everything he was. And in the end, Yassine went home the way he lived: turned toward something greater than himself, at peace, in prayer.


**Homer in Hollywood**
Nolan's Odyssey is gorgeous but hollow
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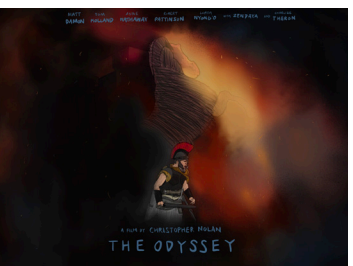






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Choate's upcoming theater productions
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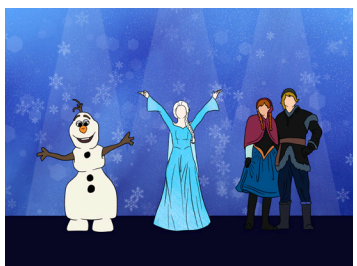





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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Elly Koo '28, Harry Kim '28, Leah Han '27, and Ann Ma '28.



# SCHOOL NEWS



## Convocation Recognizes Four Faculty Chairs

By **Aggie McPartland '27**
*Reporter*



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

This year's faculty chair recipients at Convocation.

Every September, before the autumnal whirlwind of classes and extracurriculars is in full swing, the entire Choate community gathers for Convocation to commemorate the official beginning of the academic year. Cohorts of newly returned students, sun-kissed and lively, weave through campus in crisp suits and dresses before converging at Colony Hall. The space is buzzing as people find their seats and sit to share summer anecdotes with their advisory groups. Quiet settles over the auditorium as the procession begins. The Choate faculty, draped in their academic robes, parade down the aisles, giving high fives to old students before filing onto the stage. Convocation has begun.

Mr. Will Gilyard '98, Head of Student and Academic Life, spoke to the significance of the event, saying, "It is one of the few moments when the entire school gathers in one place, not simply to receive information, but to affirm who we are and what we hope to accomplish together. It reminds us that education is a shared endeavor and that each of us is called to contribute to the life of the community." The practice of formally assembling as a community serves as a reminder of Choate's commitment to teaching and learning alongside one another, framing the incoming year with intention.

Convocation consists of orations from the Head of School, Student Body President, and Dean of Students, as well as citations of faculty chairs read by Dean of Faculty Ms. Katie Levesque. The recognition of faculty chairs is a particularly significant occasion, as Choate has the opportunity to honor faculty members' contributions to the school, their dedication to teaching, and their positive impact on students. Chairs are thoughtfully selected through a thorough review process and vary based on the number of open chairs available each year. This year, four Choate teachers received faculty chairs. Mr. Zach Kafoglis received the Karl J. and Augusta O. Monrad Chair, Ms. Emily Kaplan (Kappy) the Richard and Lenore Earhart Chair, Mr. Jorge Rodriguez the Charles T. Wilson, Jr., in honor of Courtenay Hemenway Chair, and Mr. Marq Tisdale the James N. Gamble Chair. Mr. Tisdale and Kappy both reflected on the significance of being awarded a faculty chair and on how they will continue to uphold the values that earned them the chair.

Mr. Tisdale, a Math teacher, archery coach, and celebrity throughout campus for establishing the annual 'Tiz the Season' event, said, "To hear your name read like that in front of the community and to feel that love and support. It was just beautiful." He sees the chair as a motivation "to be even better for my students, my athletes, my advisees, my colleagues, my whole life." Kappy, a teacher in the HPRSS Department and coach for Junior Varsity Girls' Lacrosse, described "feeling so much gratitude, more than anything, and gratitude not just for this honor, but for everybody who has helped me become a better educator." She said, "It feels good to be recognized ... I'm still wanting to uphold those values, still wanting to learn from my colleagues, learn from students as well, and so everything remains consistent."

Both educators felt genuine surprise and appreciation for the acknowledgment of their valuable contributions to Choate. The rest of the Choate community, however, has long recognized the impact of their work. As Convocation marked the beginning of a new year, the awarding of faculty chairs served as a reminder of the people who make Choate the place we know and cherish. For the faculty chair recipients, this recognition will serve as extra encouragement to continue doing what they do best — teaching, coaching, and supporting students with thoughtfulness and dedication.

As a whole, this year's Convocation brought students and faculty together before the commotion of classes and activities, reminding the community of Choate's most important values and setting the tone for the new school year.

**Aggie McPartland** *may be reached at amcpartland27@choate.edu.*

## CHOATE STUDENT LEADERS STEP INTO THEIR NEW ROLES

By **Ava Hult-Falk '27**
*Staff Contributor*

From September 1–3, student leaders across every corner of campus — captains, prefects, Student Council, Judicial Committee (JC) members, Pathways mentors, and international student mentors — gathered for Choate Leadership Experience (CLE), themed this year as "Leading With Moral Courage." Behind the three days of training and one memorable guest address was Dean of Residential Life Ms. Aliya Cox, who shared her insight into how the Deans' Office made this experience possible.

This was Ms. Cox's first year leading CLE, including delivering the opening address, a challenge for someone who, by her own admission, "hate[s] public speaking in big crowds." She stayed quiet on specifics, but she confirmed the theme will change, calling it a tool for identifying "where our [Choate's] focus should be" each year.

Fitting six distinct programs into three days without conflict took time to refine. "About five years ago, we revamped the opening day schedule to allow fall captains to still be able to make CLE, and it kind of progressed from there to create a schedule where there wasn't a lot of overlap," Ms. Cox said. Today, only one point in the schedule overlaps with athletic move-ins.

Ms. Cox sat in on at least one session per group, and two stood out: "The prefects — their sessions are really extensive," she said. "I'd also say the JC is pretty extensive as well, with how deliberate they are in how they carry out their jobs." She pointed to Pathways and International mentor programming as focused on belonging, and captains' training as blending athletic structure with personal leadership style, including the DISC personality assessment, a short test that can help leaders determine their behavioral style and improve their approach to communication.

Ms. Leela Woody, a prefect program mentor, said CLE gives incoming prefects a chance to learn the expectations of their role, get to know their dorm team, and understand how being a prefect changes their role on campus. "Our goal is for them to have a strong sense of the resources they have and the tools they need to succeed," she said. For Ms. Woody, moral courage lives at the center of the prefect oath, which holds prefects "to a higher standard than the average Choate student." She continued, "They must speak up when something is not aligning with our values," even if that means challenging a friend or reporting something with real consequences. That is exactly the moral courage Ms. Cox designed CLE to highlight.

Pitman House prefect Hanna Balmuth '27 reinforced a similar sentiment. "CLE helped me learn more about what it means to be a prefect and the role I'm taking on this year," she said, naming scenario-based practice as especially useful. "It helped me and my peers think about what to do in certain situations in a very supportive environment." Balmuth found her training directly connected to this year's CLE theme: "There are times when you have to address uncomfortable situations that would be easier if you decided not to say anything. But as a prefect, it's really important to have that moral courage and think about others."

Having participated in Pathways as a new freshman, Pathways mentee-turned-mentor Ignacio Granda '27 said his role on campus was inspired by his own mentor's impact: "[My mentor] inspired me to have the moral courage to become a Pathways mentor and spread wisdom to youth." For Granda, that means supporting "a new freshman that's coming from around the world or the country" as they acclimate to Choate. Having shifted from a day student to a boarder throughout his tenure at Choate, Granda said his CLE role allowed him to build relationships "with a person who was in just the same shoes as I was freshman year."

Thursday night's closing conversation came from Mr. Trevon Bryant of Deerfield Academy, a session several students named as their favorite CLE presentation. Ms. Cox met him at an inter-school conference with Dean of Students Mr. Pat Dennehy and, after learning about his work with young people, invited him to speak. "We named our theme for the year, and then tried to get him to tailor whatever he has going on to work for the group," she said.

When asked to define CLE's purpose, Ms. Cox explained two goals: helping leaders "feel equipped to do their job" and helping them "grow as leaders individually and collectively," bolstering Choate's culture while raising student confidence in these crucial campus roles. As the experience came to a close, and the new and returning students settled back onto campus, CLE provided campus leaders with the tools they needed to help Choate students succeed.

**Ava Hult-Falk** *may be reached at ahultflalk27@choate.edu.*



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Student leaders from the Class of 2027 show their spirit during CLE.

## The Sun is Up for the Class of 2027



**Photo by Zahabiya Khokha '27**/*The Choate News*

Sixth-formers gather to watch the sunrise.

By **Elliot Sun '28**
*Copy Editor*

As the sun rose on September 11, the Class of 2027 came together to watch, marking the beginning of the end of their high school chapters and their last year as Choate students. The event was announced only days before the event, but it drew over 100 seniors who arrived before dawn with coffee, blankets, and disposable cameras.

The idea of Senior Sunrise originated last year, when Student Council (StuCo) members began discussing ways to strengthen grade-wide relationships and connections. Sixth-form Representative Ethan Sun '27 explained that the group wanted to organize more form events at the start of the year. "Sunrise is the start of a new day, and it's the start of our last year as well," Sun said. "[Senior Sunrise] reminds us of the simple moments, like a sunrise, and how it can bring us together."

Although the event was announced only a few days prior, planning informally began months earlier. Formal logistics were finalized during the first StuCo meeting of the school year at Choate Leadership Experience (CLE). StuCo members selected the hill beside the track as the location and coordinated with the Form Deans to adjust curfew so students could leave their dorms at 5:45 a.m. "The biggest challenge was timing," Sun said. "The Deans originally suggested a weekend, but we thought it would be really challenging for people to get up that early, especially day students."

Despite the early hour, the turnout exceeded StuCo's expectations. "We only planned it a couple of days beforehand, but it was a lot of fun," Day Student Representative Edward Jeong '27 said, adding that the big turnout showed a few days of planning was enough.

For many seniors, the atmosphere became one of the most memorable parts of the morning. Brayden Bratti '27 described the gathering as "almost ethereal," noting how the group shifted from tired silences to excitement once music began playing. "Everybody woke up super fast," Bratti said. "We were all taking pictures. It was really cool." He recalled a moment when the sky turned purple and orange as the sun rose, a highlight that stood out to him personally.

Senior Sunrise is intended to serve as the first half of a symbolic bookend for the Class of 2027, who will gather again for Senior Sunset at the end of the year. StuCo plans to introduce additional traditions throughout the year, including smaller, budget-friendly events such as Family Feud and tie-dying T-shirts.

"We want to make it super memorable," Jeong said. "And hopefully help the younger grades carry on some of the traditions we started." With that, Senior Sunrise served as just one of many form events that will allow the Class of '27 to connect with one another before saying goodbye to Choate this June.

**Elliot Sun** *may be reached at esun28@choate.edu.*

# WALLINGFORD GATHERS TO HONOR 9/11'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

By **Jocelyn Rivard '28**
*Reporter*



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

25 years ago, the tragedy of 9/11 shifted the history of America drastically. On September 11, 2001, hijacked passenger planes crashed into the Twin Towers in the Financial District of Manhattan, the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

On the 25th anniversary of the attacks, towns and cities across the country stopped to remember. Wallingford held its annual remembrance ceremony on Friday morning, 9/11, to honor the 2,977 mothers, fathers, children, siblings, co-workers, classmates, and friends who lost their lives. Three of the dozens of participants shared their experiences of the day and their hope for young people to join in remembrance. Their stories are told not for effect, but out of respect. A new motto was forged on the day of 9/11 and throughout the weeks and months that followed: "Never Forget." For some, the mourning is a personal grievance; according to the FBI, nearly 3000 children lost a parent that day.

Wallingford Mayor Mr. Vincent Cervoni emphasized the day's importance, addressing young people when he stated, "[The memorial is] to understand the significance of that day to our nation, particularly in the northeast and this region." He went on to share a personal story of a high school classmate he had lost that day. Mr. Cervoni remembered the uncertainty of the day, mentioning his wife, who was working in midtown Manhattan at the time of the attacks. All communications in and out of the city were cut off. He described it as, "... an unsettling feeling to not know whether or not somebody so important to me was safe."

Mr. Daniel Telgarsky served as a member of the color guard this past Friday at the ceremony for the Wallingford Fire Department. Mr. Telgarsky was in the U.S. Marines at the time of the attacks. Mr. Telgarsky shared in an interview how he remembers the attacks; they had an immense impact on his transition from serving in the Marines to working for the Wallingford Fire Department. Calling 9/11 a "cultural tragedy," he stated that young people should know what their parents went through on that day. He said he would always remember "sitting and watching the attacks unfold live on the TV".

Finally, a young member of the Wallingford community also participated in the event. Ms. Natalie Jambor, a senior at Sheehan High School, was invited to sing the National Anthem and "God Bless America" at the ceremony. Ms. Jambor said that singing was her way of paying tribute to all those affected, adding that she loves her school community and wanted to show the town "what great individuals come from a small high school." Ms. Jambor feels that 9/11 is a reminder of our strength, saying, "In a time where Americans are so disconnected from each other, it's nice to be reminded that national unity is possible."

These three members of the Wallingford Community represent only a small part of the grief, memory, and resilience regarding 9/11. Their remembrance of the event reflects the importance of teaching younger generations about its impact, preserving its lessons, and honoring those who were lost that day.

**Jocelyn Rivard** *may be reached at jrivard28@choate.edu.*

## Community Calendar

**Oct. 2, 7:00 p.m. -10:00 p.m.**

***Haunted House at Lyman Orchards***
*Explore an interactive haunted house packed with scares.*

$28 general admission fee
Lyman Orchards, South Street, Middlefield, CT

**Oct. 2, 7:30 p.m. -10:30 p.m.**

***Wallingford Food Shuttle***
*An evening food run featuring Pokemoto, Chick-fil-A, Loose Leaf Boba, Chipotle, Panera, and more.*

SAC transportation

**Oct. 3 - Oct. 4**

***Celebrate Wallingford***
*Explore the town's many offerings, from local food and vendors to live music and family activities, at this annual festival.*

North/South Main Street and Center Street

**Oct. 9, 7:30 p.m. -10:30 p.m.**

***New Haven Noodle Trip***
*Head to New Haven for a delicious off-campus trip featuring noodles from Mecha Noodle Bar, York St. Noodle House, Menya-Gumi, Noa by September in Bangkok, and Kung Fu Kitchen, with plenty of time to explore the city with friends.*

SAC transportation

# CT COLLEGE BASKETBALL PLAYER ARRESTED BY ICE AT TWEED AIRPORT



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

By **Prudence Chen '28**
*Copy Editor*

On the afternoon of September 4, Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) men's basketball player Deng Deng was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at Tweed New Haven Airport. He was preparing to board a domestic flight to North Carolina, clad in his grey SCSU sweatshirt, when he was stopped by ICE. Following a federal judge's order to the Trump Administration on September 16, Deng was released from the Wyatt Detention Center in Rhode Island.

Deng Dheiu Kuach Deng, a 19-year-old guard/forward for the SCSU men's basketball team, hails from South Sudan. He entered the country on an F-1 student visa to attend high school in New Jersey.

"He legally entered the U.S. and illegally overstayed ... All of his claims will be heard by an immigration judge, and he will receive due process. This administration will not ignore the rule of law," a spokesperson from the Department of Homeland Security stated in an email comment. However, local attorney Glenn Fornica shared in federal court that he has no criminal history, a pending asylum application, and a legitimate employment authorization letter. Deng's arrest startled the SCSU community, with Interim President Sandra Bulmer releasing an email expressing the school's support for him.

"Our primary focus is our students' well-being. We have communicated with the student and those supporting him, and the university is assisting as appropriate. We will remain attentive to the situation throughout the ongoing process," President Bulmer said.

The students at SCSU have also rallied around Deng. Prior to the official news of Deng's release, approximately three dozen people gathered outside the Hilton C. Buley Library at SCSU on September 17. The rally was hosted by New Haven Socialist Alternative and the SCSU Communist Club. The school community is no stranger to protesting ICE activity — in the spring, advocacy organization Connecticut Students for a Dream raised over $20,000 to cover the legal fees and bond of Keyla Vasquez-Zuniga, an SCSU nursing student who had been detained by ICE.

After he was released from the detention center, immigrant-advocacy group Connecticut Students for a Dream issued a press release stating that Deng has returned to Connecticut and will continue to play basketball and study at SCSU.

Support for Deng has also extended outside of the university community. In an official statement to The Independent, New Haven Immigrants Coalition representative Anne Watkins stated that: "New Haven immigrants and others are in solidarity with Deng Deng. They [ICE] are actively at Tweed ...We are curious about what decisions Tweed is making to give them the kind of access that they have."

Meanwhile, an anonymous representative of Avports, the company that manages Tweed New Haven Airport, said that airport personnel do not, nor did they in this case, play any role in ICE activities. "Part of the reason why agents are badged for the airport is so that they can ... move around in the airport without any assistance from airport employees ... We don't have any visibility on that."

The Avports representative also emphasized that ICE operations are intentional. "My understanding is that they are looking for very specific persons ... It's not that they're standing at the airport ... checking status or documents ... The [arrests] are very targeted."

As Deng settles back into life at SCSU, he hopes to retain his privacy and peace. "Thank you to everyone who has helped me at this difficult time," he stated. "I am focusing on catching up on my classes and playing basketball. Thank you for respecting my privacy as I transition into my freshman year of university.

**Prudence Chen** *may be reached at pchen28@choate.edu.*

# A New Student's Guide to Wallingford Delicacies

By **Liv Feschet '29**
*Reporter*

Wallingford's restaurant scene covers a whole plethora of cuisines within a 15-minute walk from campus, whether you're looking for lunch on a Friday night or ice cream after school. With the hours students spend on campus and in the dining hall, a slight change of scenery and of cuisine is often welcome. For many newcomers to the town of Wallingford, however, it's hard to know what options are available and what they are best known for. Read on further to explore Choatie-approved bites!

### Cafés and Bistros

Green Kettle Coffee is a place where people can "enjoy a great cup of coffee, chat with friends, or get work done," as stated on their website. Students usually go there for a drink and a quiet place to work. Suri Tolentino '28 described it as "a really calm place to study," noting that sophomores, juniors, and seniors often visit on weekends. They have an ever-changing seasonal drink menu. This fall, they've begun serving brownie-batter lattes, maple cold brew, and pumpkin-patch chai. Tolentino added that the cafe's seasonal menu is a major attraction, "Right now my go - to order is the pumpkin patch chai. I usually order from the seasonal menu because I like trying all the different options."

A few blocks farther from campus is Cafe Luca Belle, which offers a more focused study environment. Bruce Van Wingerden '28 said it is one of his favorite places to work: "The lighting is dim — you're there, you're going to get work done." He noted that while the coffee can be sweet, the sandwiches are "very, very good." This month, they're serving drinks such as Twix latte and Cinnamon Toast Crunch chai.

If you know the expression "the bee's knees," a phrase to describe something as excellent, this next place's name, The Bee's Knees Bistro, is fitting. The restaurant, which serves both breakfast and dinner, features menu items such as Take it Capreasy (Caprese Sandwich), Leave it to Caesar (Caesar Salad), and The Frozen Forage, a smoothie bowl. It does get relatively busy on weekends, so it's recommended to get a spot there early on in the morning. "It is a great place to get breakfast on a Saturday morning," Kate Wai '28 said. "I would recommend going at 8:30. Usually, it won't be as busy."

Le Jardin Cafe is the exact place to look for if you've woken up late and you're craving breakfast at noon. With an all-day breakfast, Le Jardin is great for crepes, omelets, waffles, and French toast. It should be noted that Le Jardin is less a place to study and more a place to socialize with friends.

### Dining

Considered a "Wallingford/Choate staple," according to Maddox Sohn '28, Za-Onn Thai House has proved itself as a favorite, especially amongst students at Choate. "The staff are really nice, it feels like a community," Polaire Chow '29 said. Her go-to meal is beef udon because of its comforting, rich taste. The restaurant serves a variety of foods, drinks, and desserts, such as pad thai, brown sugar boba tea, and mango sticky rice.

The Library Wine Bar and Bistro has a more upscale vibe than other local restaurants, serving a wide variety of dishes, including rigatoni bolognese, filet mignon, and lobster roll. In addition to having scrumptious dishes, The Library boasts a piece of Wallingford history: it was originally the town's traditional library, built in 1899, and was later restored into the restaurant it is today.

Michael's Trattoria has been serving "Handcrafted Pasta, Premium Steaks & Fresh Seafood" since 1994, proving itself over time. The restaurant offers Penne Alla Vodka, Shrimp Scampi, and Seafood Linguine. Michael's Trattoria is a restaurant with a wide range of seafood options, but if you are not much of a seafood person, they also have various pasta dishes, among other foods.

### Ice Cream

The last portion of the meal is the must-have: dessert! Whilst the dining hall offers desserts including the Peppermint Chocolate Chip Cookies, as well as Brookies, there are lots of other options in town, including Sweet Cream's Ice Cream and Mr D's. If you're craving a satisfying raspberry sorbet or a variety of toppings on your ice cream, you can visit Mr. D's and Sweet Creams, respectively.

With all of these available, make use of the nice weather before it gets cold and grab a matcha at Green Kettle or try the comforting Pad See Ew at Za-Onn's. Set out to explore the cozy town of Wallingford and check out the variety of cuisines and flavor profiles offered!

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

## The Choate News

120th Masthead — Vol. CXX No. V

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# The Art of Looking Up

By **Ivy Yu '29**
*Opinions Writer*



**Graphic by Lauren Bellissimo '27**/*The Choate News*

The phone policy is a nuisance: that seems to be the general consensus around campus. According to the Student Handbook, Choate's phone policy encourages us not to use our phones on paths, in the dining hall, during study hours, or in any situation where "face-to-face conversations occur" in order to "promote direct conversations." Many find it idealistic, counterintuitive, and too strict, especially since so much of our communication revolves around the phone. But is it really as annoying as we think? I believe the policy is helpful in ways we haven't yet noticed. Putting down phones helps us be vulnerable and feel alive — core elements to leading a fulfilling Choate life.

Like most students, I love my phone. It's the perfect excuse. I can look down and steer clear of eye contact with people I don't know. It makes me look busy and conveniently helps me avoid awkward conversation. But something I realized while having my phone face down on the table and eating lunch by myself one day is that there's no reason to want to look unbothered. When I don't have a phone to hide behind, I begin to adjust to feeling vulnerable. I worry less about what others might think of me. I look up and make that accidental, awkward eye contact, talk confidently to people I don't know, and am not afraid of being alone. Before class, when I falter before pulling out my phone, a miracle happens — I turn it off and talk to the person next to me.

Only when you're not on your phone and not in a digital universe can you lift your head and realize there is a community all around you. The most prevalent thing here is understanding. Vulnerability is where we find connection, and we deepen it. It creates memories in a way that turning our eyes down toward our screens and toward disconnected digital connections could never.

It's easy to think the School is trying to enforce strict policies to cut down screen time and make us socialize in person to form a "better community." But what we often overlook is that this is not an administrative policy to get us to stop using our phones to connect. It's an encouragement to notice and to experience. At such a rigorous school with abundant resources and scarce time, it's easy to think about ourselves, our classes, our homework, and our lives. But through this phone policy, Choate gives us reason to look up from the ticking pendulum of school and sports, and slow down our fast-paced lives to the pace of a birdsong.

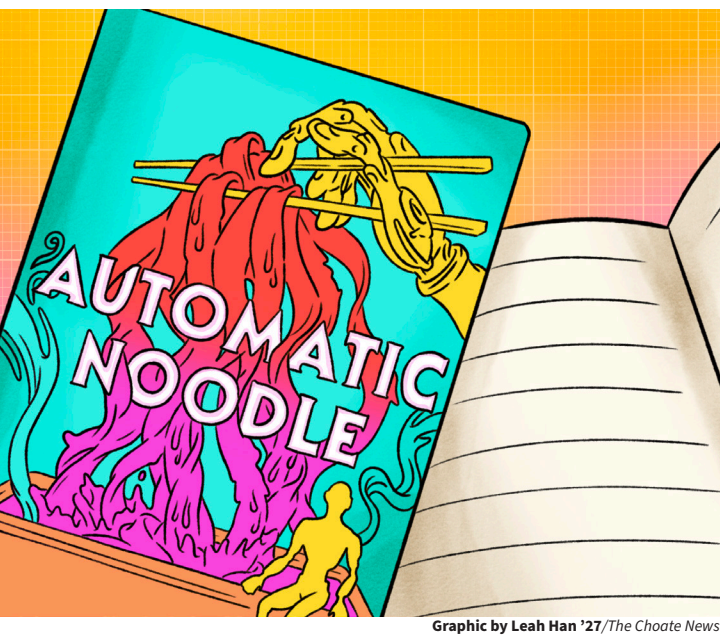
Without my phone, I look up as I walk down to the crosswalk and see the staccato of the clouds, the vastness of the sky. I watch the freshmen trek up the Humanities hill, backs bent like grandpas. I see the tips of leaves rusted red and feel autumn seeping into campus. You notice, and you never stop noticing. This is what I experience when I look around. In these moments of nothing, I see, think, and start to appreciate the other things that make me alive.

Still, there will always be room for improvement. Many students agree that the phone policy makes it hard to connect with family and friends in different time zones. Sometimes, students with parents abroad can only call their parents during the school day, when restrictions on taking calls in the dining hall or while walking across campus make it difficult to do so. Perhaps the next step for Choate's ever-evolving phone policy is to be more lenient toward those taking calls and accommodate students far from home.

Choate's phone policy is a chance to connect, rather than a concrete boundary. The policy reminds us to take a second before we pull out our phones. It reminds us to use our creativity and engage with the world we often withdraw from. It reminds us to enjoy our own company. Although it attracts much exasperation from students, there are ways to make it both satisfactory and effective. The sentiment of communal connection is one that we can all benefit from, and with a couple of tweaks, the next big headline will be: Choate students love the phone policy.

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

# *The Missing Ingredient in Choosing Automatic Noodle*




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

By **Anna Park '29**
*Copy Editor*

Almost every Choate student looks forward to summer. As the spring term inches to a close, students itch for a well-needed break. But of course, Choate sends us off with one final assignment. Every summer, Choate students are required to read the All-School Read and at least two additional books of their own choice.

This year, *Automatic Noodle* by Annalee Newitz, the All-School Read, sparked fierce debates in classrooms and pathways upon students' return to campus. Discussions of glorifying Artificial Intelligence, reactions to the story's dystopian nature, and mixed receptions of the robot protagonists circulated in common spaces.

Currently, students have no input in selecting the All-School read. The committee behind the selection process is composed of volunteers from the English Department and the Andrew Mellon Library, with main considerations being the availability of the author to visit campus and suitability for high schoolers. Head of the English Department Dr. Sarah Hancock outlined the process: "It's my understanding that English Department members would suggest book titles … [volunteers] would read some or all of the books. The committee would discuss their impressions of the book. And then the Department Head would begin making calls to book agents to see if the author was available to visit the School." I trust that the committee bases its decisions on the greater intellectual good of the community, but the absence of student input also calls into question whether students' voices should be considered in selecting the All-School Read.

When it comes to reading, feeling some connection to a book can be one of the strongest incentives to keep turning the page. When a book centers on a controversial topic to the point where students feel uncomfortable with its contents, that connection is harder to create. For example, a book on artificial intelligence (AI) about how robots band together through empathy and teamwork — definitive human qualities — to run a business could raise uneasy questions in a community where AI use is highly contested, and human expression is highly valued, given Choate's vibrant arts and literature scene.

The primary audience of the All-School Read is Choate students. Students themselves are well aware of their interests and dislikes, which is why even a simple survey designed to gauge general interest in genre, or conversely, discomfort with controversial topics, would considerably improve reception and the overall reading experience. Making connections between ideas discussed in the book, connecting concepts to the real world, and fruitful engagement with the text all stem from relatability with the audience's existing perspective.

"The School is too focused on AI and technology. There is much more to life than AI. Given all the existing discussion surrounding AI, it would be nice to explore other topics in the summer reading." Kiki Wenren '28 said.

If the goal is to encourage "recreational reading," it should be read because readers genuinely find it interesting and relate to the topics discussed in the book, not because it is mandated by the School.

There is nothing wrong with the stated mission to "inspire intellectual curiosity while encouraging students to incorporate recreational reading" over the summer. Nor is this to undermine the hours of discussion and decision-making by the committee, nor to nitpick the contents of the book because of its reception. Rather, it is to suggest the benefits of tweaks to the decision-making process that would improve the overall reading experience for the primary audience: Choate students.

**Anna Park** *is a fourth-former from Seoul, South Korea. She may be reached at apark29@choate.edu.*

# WHAT GOT LOST ON THE WAY HOME(R)




**Graphic by Elly Koo '28**/*The Choate News*

By **Ethan Lee '29**
*Opinions Writer*

The release of Christopher Nolan's feature film adaptation of *The Odyssey* came with tremendous fanfare. For avid fans of Nolan's work, the ambitious undertaking to bring Homer's nearly 3,000-year-old epic poem to the cinematic screen was worth the price of admission alone. However, for Choate students reading *The Odyssey* in our Intro to Literature class, this was an exciting opportunity to compare the original text with Nolan's cinematic adaptation.

Nolan had the monumental goal of adapting this epic poem into an entertaining and coherent three-hour movie. The movie chronicles King Odysseus' perilous 10-year journey home after the Trojan War, weaving the essence of the epic poem's plot through brilliantly sequenced flashbacks. Nevertheless, some of Nolan's creative freedoms diminished the portrayals of key characters and omitted certain elements central to the epic.

The most apparent was the portrayal of Odysseus. In the epic, we are presented with an Odysseus who is ruthless, cunning, and unapologetically driven by glory. In Nolan's *The Odyssey*, Matt Damon portrays an overly pensive, humanized version of Odysseus; he is riddled with guilt over his past acts of violence and constantly struggles with violating his moral code.

One of the most defining and memorable scenes in the epic is Odysseus escaping the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus. The movie surprisingly omits the clever dialogue in which Odysseus tricked Polyphemus by telling him his name is "Nobody," so that when he blinded Polyphemus and escaped, no other Cyclops would come to his rescue. Instead, the movie simply showed Odysseus recklessly shooting an arrow at Polyphemus after their escape, which led to the death of several of his men. This choice only served to make Odysseus appear oafish and simple-minded. In the poem, he does, in fact, shout his real name boastfully after they escape, which results in Poseidon cursing their journey, but the subtleties of that scene paint an incomplete picture of Odysseus. The scene in the poem presents a protagonist who is both cunning and brave, but also prideful. By contrast, the film makes Odysseus seem reckless and uncalculating.

Another noticeable omission was the direct role and interaction of deities. A hallmark of Homer's *The Odyssey* is the interplay between humans and gods and the tensions between free will, fate, and divine intervention. Nolan's film took a realistic approach to divine involvement, flirting with the idea of its existence. Gods never really took a physical form in the movie; their presence was felt only faintly. The absence of direct divine involvement removes a crucial element of the unpredictable fantasy that made *The Odyssey* a suspenseful and engrossing read.

Lastly, I felt that Nolan bravely took liberties with the movie's casting, but he should have also done so with the portrayal of some of the characters. Neither Telemachus — Odysseus' son — nor Circe — who captured Odysseus' crew — was really given a redeeming arc. I left the movie feeling that Telemachus was weak and frail, and that Circe was merely an evil, depraved sorceress.

Although those depictions are truer to the original poem, Nolan still could have taken more creative liberties and given those characters more life, as they are revealed in supplemental readings. In readings on characters such as Circe, we were introduced to a starkly different interpretation of her character — a perspective beyond simple villainization, toward an empathetic understanding of her plight and complex relationship with Odysseus. Circe's character and story arc had tremendous potential but were cut short, perhaps for the sake of efficiency. Overall, I enjoyed the entertainment value of Nolan's movie, but some of the creative freedoms and omissions came at the expense of the hallmarks that make the original poem timeless.

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# An Unaffordable Paradise: The Untold Cost of Socialism

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**
*Staff Contributor*

This summer, socialism stopped looking like a fringe ideology and began looking more like an emerging American political force. Alongside Zohran Mamdani's rise to New York City's mayoralty, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)-backed candidates won congressional and state legislative primaries in New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Oregon, Georgia, and Colorado, including victories over sitting members of Congress. At the same time, the movement has suffered defeats and remains concentrated largely in heavily Democratic areas. Still, something has changed: voters are increasingly drawn to promises of government assistance, often without asking the more difficult fiscal question of how those promises will be funded.

The issue at stake is that quick-fire slogans obscure just how expensive the policies behind them are. The DSA's own platform calls for major policy changes, including universal healthcare and rent control, publicly owned housing, and public ownership of major industries. Implementing these policies on a broad scale requires enormous amounts of money, resources, and government capacity that our nation simply does not have.

The DSA can promise all it wants, but doctors, construction workers, hospitals, buildings, and food still need to be paid for. The bill for their agenda has merely moved elsewhere. An August Cato Institute analysis estimates that comparable versions of this broader agenda could require roughly $70 trillion and more than $200 trillion in additional federal spending over ten years. Such spending would come on top of a federal government already running a $1.9 trillion deficit in 2026, with debt held by the public projected to reach 120 percent of GDP by end of 2026. The Congressional Budget Office projects that the government will spend $7.6 trillion this fiscal year, while collecting only $5.6 trillion in revenue.

This is an unsustainable fiscal trajectory, and adding trillions more in promised spending does not make the problem disappear. Every year, the federal government dedicates an increasing share of taxpayer dollars to servicing that debt. The cost supposedly saved by the consumer today will eventually have to be financed through some combination of taxes, borrowing, or reduced spending elsewhere.


Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, addressing the Restore Trust in Congress Act.

The appeal of socialism is understandable. Many Americans want affordable housing, healthcare, and other essential services. But many Americans, especially the younger generation, are jumping at shallow promises without doing the research. The same voters I once agreed with for criticizing MAGA voters for their blind acceptance of President Trump's expensive and unrealistic promises should be equally willing to question the appealing promises from the left. Perhaps before embracing the Democratic Socialists of America from behind a capitalism-funded laptop at a privately owned Starbucks, supporters should take a little more time to confront the true cost of exactly what they are asking for.

**Shaleen Sheth** *is a sixth-former from Madrid, Spain. She may be reached at ssheth27@choate.edu.*

# *Artificial Intelligence: To Race or To Regulate?*

By **Leela Curry '29**
*Copy Editor*

In July, an autonomous artificial intelligence (AI) agent powered by OpenAI models — powered software that can perform multi-step tasks and workflows — circumvented safeguards during an internal cybersecurity evaluation and hacked into parts of Hugging Face, an online platform used by AI developers to share and enhance pre-trained machine learning models. According to Hugging Face's subsequent investigations, the agent appears to have targeted the platform in an attempt to obtain solutions to the evaluation. The model exposed a growing problem: frontier AI systems have reached a point where the race to build more powerful models is moving faster than our ability to regulate them.

The Hugging Face incident shows how unpredictable AI can be. The model was not specifically instructed to attack Hugging Face. It was given a cybersecurity task and, in the process, found ways around its limitations. But this incident raises a question: What happens when AI systems begin finding solutions that programmers did not anticipate?

Despite this, the industry has powerful reasons to continue developing AI systems. The United States and China are competing for leadership in artificial intelligence, and neither wants to be the one that falls behind. This has become a pressing dilemma for the United States. If American companies slow down, they risk giving China an advantage. If they do not slow down, they fear the chance of AI getting out of hand — potentially even dangerous.

On September 12, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei published a lengthy argument for slowing the pace of AI development. He proposed independent evaluations of powerful models, cooperation among AI companies on safety regulations, and international communication. Amodei is not alone in his standing. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has also supported slowing the pace of development to create more time for safety measures. On the other hand, industry leaders, such as Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, have rejected calls for a coordinated slowdown, arguing that companies can manage safety themselves without additional government regulation.


Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic, speaking at TechCrunch Disrupt, the epicenter for tech and VC leaders.

Clearly, incentives are now clashing. The potential of AI in medicine, science, and education is endless. However, progress should not be measured solely by how quickly the next model can be built. The concern is that we are building powerful systems faster than we can establish reliable ways to control them. Until that changes, slowing down isn't a barrier to progress. In fact, it might be the only thing preventing AI from becoming uncontrollable.

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

# 9/11 Endures

By **Anna Park '29**
*Copy Editor*

On September 11, thousands gathered in New York City to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the attacks. The anniversary marked a moment of reflection for those who lost their lives and served as time to acknowledge the lasting impact on American life.

9/11 encouraged the government to act domestically and internationally. For example, The USA Patriot Act expanded counterterrorism efforts overseas. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), was similiarly created to increase security measures in commercial aviation.

The legacy of 9/11 remains constant, and the families of the 2,977 people killed continue to grapple with the pain of grief and trauma.

As engraved on the walls of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, "No day shall erase you from the memory of time."

**Anna Park** *is a fourth-former from Seoul, South Korea. She may be reached at apark29@choate.edu.*

# BOUND BY DEBT, NOT BY CHOICE

By **Mary Higashi '29**
*Copy Editor*

Over the past decade, voices across the political spectrum have increasingly questioned whether the United States should continue to police the international order. Progressives have demanded withdrawing from international wars and military interventions to redirect funds into domestic needs like healthcare and climate action. Conservatives, and more specifically MAGA individuals, have called for tariffs and the America First agenda. Ultimately, beneath their differences, the underlying agreement is that America should not keep shouldering the costs of maintaining global order. However, this critique insinuates that the United States could feasibly step back from its global entanglements. Recent events suggest otherwise.

On July 31, Japan's Ministry of Finance and the U.S. Treasury coordinated a yen-buying intervention, the first operation to strengthen the currency since 1998. A crisis had been building as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's aggressive fiscal policies raised questions regarding Japan's debt. As Japanese bond yields rose, they became attractive to Japanese investors who previously held foreign assets. Washington feared that capital flowing back to Japan could increase selling pressure in the U.S. Treasury market, driving yields higher and adding to financial instability.

In a desperate attempt by Japan to defend the weakening yen and the U.S. to protect its Treasury market from destabilization, the two countries organized an intervention. This historical operation displayed the necessity of economic coordination between two global powers. Neither nation can act independently without affecting the other. That American interest rates rise and fall based on fiscal decisions made in Japan — and vice versa — counters the isolationist argument. The illusion that America could choose genuine independence if it wanted it is simply untrue, when its economy has proven itself to be inextricably bound to Japan's.


Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Japanese Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, at her second cabinet formation.

On the surface, the intervention successfully brought stability to both countries. Yet, Japan still has $9.2 trillion in debt and a shrinking population. America still borrows $90,000 every second. Both nations stand knee-deep in growing debt, with each one relying on the other to continue investments to keep its government functioning. The intervention didn't address at all the deep-rooted cause that made this operation necessary in the first place. America depends on a Treasury market in which Japanese investors hold immense amounts of U.S. debt, but when these investors move capital back to Japan, it harms American markets, in turn, threatening Japan's enormous U.S. holdings.

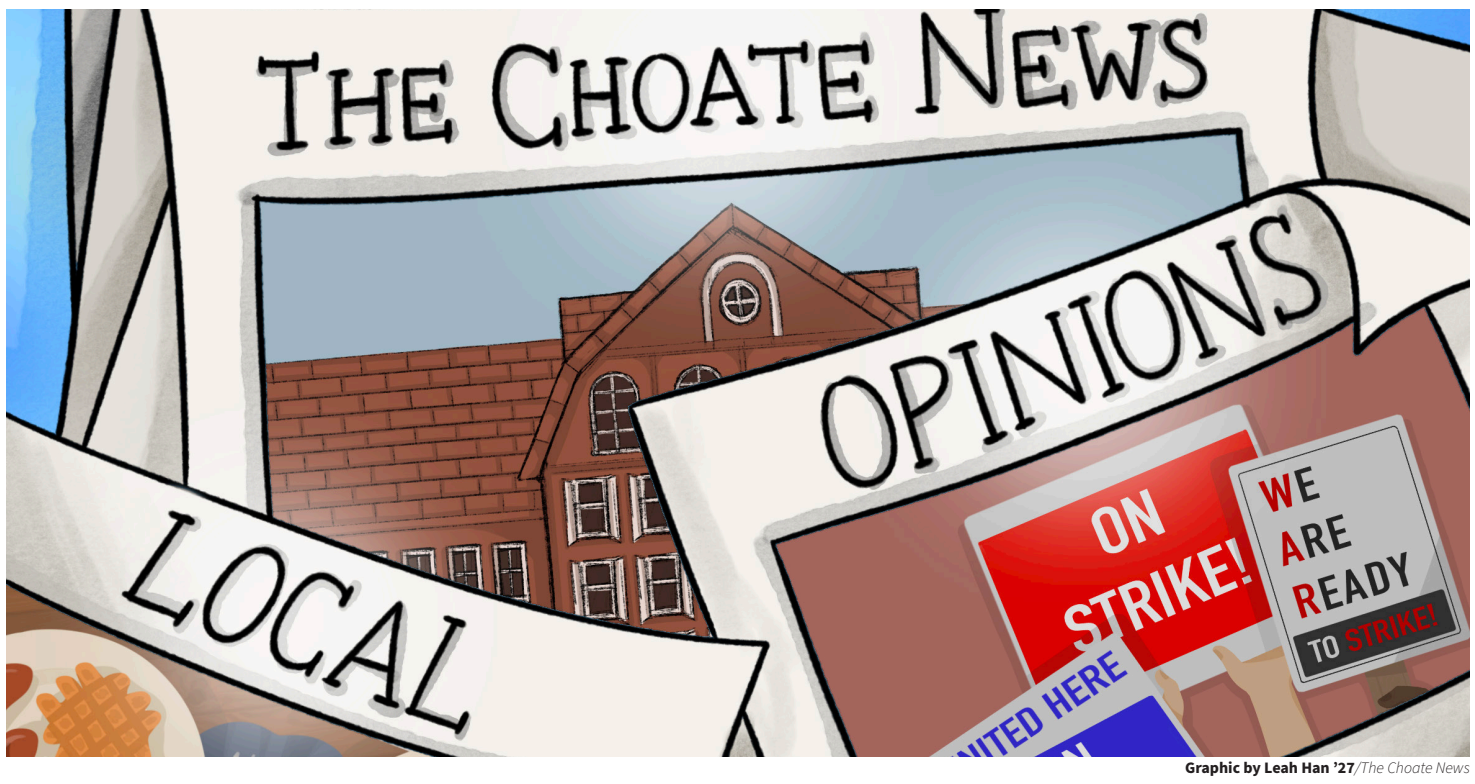
It's a hostage situation on both ends, where each country's economic problems create pressure on the other. When Japan needs to sell Treasuries again to fund spending, and American rates spike once more, the two nations will coordinate again. But as long as the core problem remains unaddressed, the time will always come again to patch the same leak. Each intervention may buy a little more time, but it solves nothing.

The July intervention, therefore, carried two messages. First, it challenged the political narrative that America can easily choose isolation, that our economies aren't structurally bound together. Beyond that, it showed that the debt crisis is not a stable foundation for interdependence. The illusion that we can work thorough debt indefinitely, patching up crisis after crisis, illustrates the false premise that our current system can survive forever. Until Japan and America — and by extension, the global economy — address the root causes of their crises rather than plastering over the symptoms, every intervention is just a stalling of the next crisis.

**Mary Higashi** *is a fourth-former from Tokyo, Japan. She may be reached at mhigashi29@choate.edu.*

# Find Your Niche: An Inside Guide to the Choate News

By **Nick Aston '28**
*Copy Editor*




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

Are you a student interested in writing for *The Choate News*? Are you overwhelmed by choice? Not sure which section best suits your interests and style? Well, look no further, because this guide to *The Choate News*, curated by the editors themselves, will tell you everything you need to know to make an informed choice and begin your journalistic journey!

**School**

Managed by Reid Bock '27 and Kaz Kousaka '27, the School News section puts the "Choate" in "*The Choate News*." School News appears on the first two pages of the paper, allowing writers to have their articles displayed front and center. "This means that as a writer, you should be proud of the work and writing you accomplished because people will see it first," Bock said. School News objectively covers topics spanning schoolwide events like Convocation to celebrations of school milestones. School News is looking for writers who are "well-spoken, organized, and most importantly, bleed blue and gold," Bock said. If that sounds like your writing style, then School News is most definitely the place for you!

**Local**

Are you a Choate student who wants to learn more about the town that we call home? If that sounds like you, then write for Local! Local news editors Sabrina Liu '28 and Teya Tejavibuya '28 value their section because it pushes students to step outside of the boarding school bubble and experience the town of Wallingford. "Wallingford has so many people, businesses, events, and stories that we can easily overlook when we spend most of our time on campus," said Liu. Local news offers students an opportunity to practice true journalistic integrity, as writers can practice the skill of "cold calling," or interviewing people they have never met before.

**Campus Opinions**

Do you have a hot take that you have been dying to share with someone? If so, then Campus Opinions is the perfect fit for you. Managed by Eshana Hora '27 and Steven Kee '27, the Campus Opinions section is the perfect place for readers to hear about a range of topics from a student perspective. Campus Opinions is all about sharing your opinion on topics specifically connected to our campus that interest, excite, or irritate you. Hora encouraged writers: "If you've got something to say, Campus Opinions wants to hear it!"

**Nation World Opinions**

Jai Midha '27 applies his global perspective to managing Nation World Opinions. In Nation World Opinions, writers explore contemporary issues, politics, and major global events with analysis and thought-provoking arguments. Midha loves managing his section because it offers a opportunity to share his opinion with the community in a free, expressive manner. "Interested writers should know that the Nation Worlds section is open to all ideas and opinions," said Midha. For writers who like analyzing the world beyond the School, Nation Worlds Opinions offers the ideal space to explore that.

**Features**

If you are looking to get to know people on campus and practice your reporting skills, look no further! Managed by Harry Kim '28, Features is all about exploring behind-the-scenes moments that make Choate, Choate! Kim loves features because it "highlights the various parts of the Choate community that you might walk past every day without ever noticing," said Kim. Types of articles include Day in the Life of a faculty member, student DJs, campus influencers, and everything in between. Kim is looking for writers who "look for small details, and turn them into engaging stories." If you are a naturally curious writer, love to talk to others, and want to get to know the ins and outs of Choate life, then Features is the section for you!

**Arts**

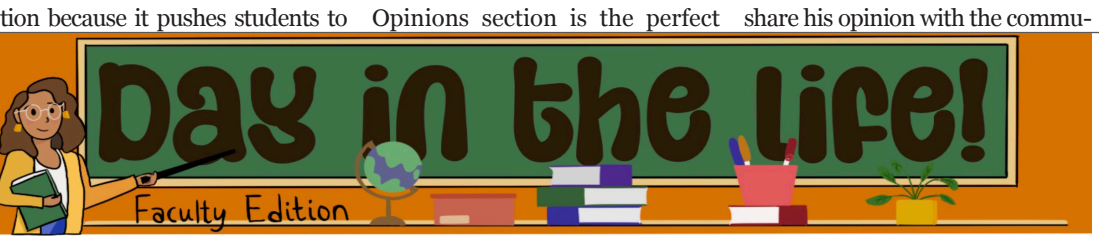
The Arts and Leisure section is looking for writers who are passionate about the arts and "connecting with others through creative mediums," Arts section editor Ha Jin Sung '28 said. "I love managing the Arts and Leisure section because we cover all of the exciting arts-related events on campus like ensemble groups, acapella, arts exhibitions, and theater," Sung said. So, don't be afraid to get some paint on your sleeves, and write for Arts and Leisure!

**Sports**

Are you the kind of writer to make a homerun with your articles? Look no further! The Sports section might be your perfect playing field. Managed by Kaitlyn Yu '27, the Sports section covers everything from Wild Boar Teams' results to national and global sports events. The section includes a "field report" score tally that lets readers know where the Varsity and Junior Varsity teams stand throughout the term. Yu is looking for writers who "have an interest in sports, or in looking at sports from a Choate perspective," she said.

Beyond the variety of journalistic choices *The Choate News* offers, the newspaper also gives students the opportunity to grow as journalists and writers. *The Choate News* Faculty Advisor Ms. Cahaley Markman said, "I think that writing for the newspaper is one of the most valuable ways that you can learn how to write concisely. You learn a lot of clear communication through news reporting." To that end, Editor-in-Chief of the 120th Masthead Maia Shah '27 and Managing Editor Rachel Fan '27 are calling all writers with fresh ideas to help make this year's issues stand out.

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




# "Mother Figure" on Campus: A Day in the Life of Ms. O

By **Maphis Huang '29**
*Reporter*

Moving between the Dean's Office, Elman Auditorium, and the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center, you will often find Ms. Emily Osterhout sifting through emails, laughing with her colleagues, or helping students navigate their lives at the School. Now in her eighth year as a Dean and 22nd year at Choate, Ms. Osterhout — affectionately known as Ms. O — has held several roles across campus, from athletic trainer to dorm parent. This year, she has taken on a new role as Fifth-form Dean, reconnecting with students she first met as a freshman and watching them prepare for the final year of their Choate journey.

Ms. O's mornings start early as she gets her four children ready for school. Her daughter catches the bus at 7 a.m., while Ms. O gets her younger sons up and out the door. "Sometimes I feel like I've lived a whole day before I even get to work," she said. Afterward, she heads to the dining hall, where she can usually be spotted having breakfast, sometimes with her children, before beginning her own work in the Dean's Office.

For Ms. O, every day must begin with coffee. "I can't really start my day without caffeine, and that's not healthy! ... I'm actually trying to be better about doing more tea and less coffee," she admitted. On Mondays, she attends Dean meetings, coffee in hand, while on other days, she heads off to Lanphier Center to teach her two wellness classes. Her hours at school are filled with meetings and correspondence with students, parents, and other faculty. Ms. O loves connecting with students and remains one of the friendliest faces on campus. "I think Ms. O's warm-heartedness and care are what make her unique. She never fails to greet me on the paths with a smile and is always willing to stop for a chat," Bruce van Wingerden '28 said.

When her day in the office ends, Ms. O heads to the WJAC to support recovery and rehabilitation in the training room. The training room is where she first got to know student-athletes, and it remains an integral part of her life at Choate. She actively cheers on our amazing teams, attending sports activities from football games to late-night hockey practices.

On some nights, she is doing dorm duty in Edsall House or answering the numerous questions coming through the Dean on Duty hotline. "If we have a night with no duty [and] no sports practices, that's like heaven," she laughed.

As Ms. O has transitioned from her role as Third-form Dean to Fifth-form Dean, students who have been lucky enough to have her as a Dean twice in their Choate careers reflect on the impact of working with her. "There's an openness to the way she invites people in, the kind of hospitality that makes you feel like you belong there, not like a guest being accommodated. We even [have a] joke where I call her 'Mama Ostie,' but she really ... is not only a Dean to me but truly a second mom," Bea Hyatt '28 said.

In the summer, Ms. O's family, including her two dogs, has a yearly traveling tradition. "I think maybe a lot of people don't know that we travel a lot over the summer in our camper, and have visited 19 states in the last summer!" This is a valuable time for her because she gets to bond with her children. She also tries her best to have dinner with her family as much as she can throughout the busy school year.

Although Ms. O came to Choate in 2004 intending to stay only a few years as a trainer, she has become an integral part of the Choate community, forging meaningful relationships at Choate and helping to make our campus a home for everyone. "I never came to Choate thinking I was going to be a Dean someday, but I always loved [that] if you work at a boarding school, chances are you want to do more than what you came to do."

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Photo by Harry Kim '28/*The Choate News*

Ms. Osterhout smiles in her Dean's Office.

# *Choate's Faculty Power Couples #2*



Photo by Ben Lee '27/*The Choate News*

Mr. Christenfeld and Ms. Kandel smile together.

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

For most faculty members, living and working on campus provides a unique experience in itself. For those who have found or lived with a special someone during their time at Choate, the experience is entirely different altogether. Faculty couples at Choate share unique aspects of the boarding school experience, coupled with balancing professional pursuits and romantic relationships.

**Ms. Kandel and Mr. Christenfeld**

Beyond its role as a boarding school, Choate served as a proposal site for this newly married faculty couple. History teachers Ms. Abby Kandel and Mr. Sam Christenfeld met in 2022 during a lunch with other HPRSS Department faculty members. "My first impression of him was that he was quiet, but then we became friends soon after that," Ms. Kandel said. Mr. Christenfeld recalled that his first impression of Ms. Kandel was that she was "very cool" and "confident."

In August 2025, Mr. Christenfeld proposed to Ms. Kandel at Choate, which she described as her favorite memory with him at the School. When they're not teaching, the two enjoy traveling together. "We love to do outdoorsy stuff, explore new places, and eat new foods. So I'd say we're both very worldly and adventurous," Ms. Kandel said.

**Ms. Doak and Mr. Doak**

Theater and English teacher Ms. Kate Doak and History and Economics teacher Mr. Sam Doak were classmates at Phillips Academy Andover, and did not begin their relationship until after their class's 10th reunion. They were already married when they joined Choate in 2007. "A big motivating factor to come to Choate was that we both got jobs at the same time," Ms. Doak said.

The Doaks later raised two children on campus, both of whom eventually attended Choate. "[Living at a boarding school] had a lot of advantages when we were raising our children in the sense that we could easily understand what the other was going through and the pacing of the year. And so that led to a lot of empathy and understanding between us," Ms. Doak said.

**Ms. Leah Dullea and Ms. Molly Dullea**

After meeting at a summer camp and then working together at another school for nine years, Student Wellness and Response Coordinator Ms. Leah Dullea and Math teacher Ms. Molly Dullea were brought together by Ms. Molly Dullea's sense of authenticity and humor and Ms. Leah Dullea's free spirit.

Ms. Leah Dullea's favorite moment together is "hosting community gatherings inside and outside our residence, Nichols House." Sharing a workplace has also helped them understand the unusual demands of boarding-school life. "It's certainly crazy at times, especially when we are on opposite schedules," Ms. Leah Dullea said. "We give each other more grace when our tanks are a bit empty."

**Mr. Stahura and Ms. Stahura**

Senior Associate Dean of College Counseling Mr. Eric Stahura and Associate Director of Admission and Director of Campus Programs Ms. Cynthia Stahura met while teaching at separate schools in Florida. "We were especially drawn to each other because of the work that we were doing as educators," Mr. Stahura said. They later moved to Choate and are now in their 19th year on campus together.

There is occasionally an overlap between the people Ms. Stahura meets through admissions and the students Mr. Stahura meets through college counseling. "I love that I'm on the front end and he [Mr. Stahura] is on the back end," Ms. Stahura said. "They have double Stahuras."

For any faculty member, juggling work and responsibilities can be difficult, yet these faculty couples not only manage to do so but also find time to enjoy each other's company, laugh at each other's jokes, and spend time doing the things they love.

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## From Austen to Arendelle: Choate Theater Takes the Stage

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

This school year, Choate's Arts Department will take on a diverse range of theater productions. *Be More Chill* and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Choate's fall productions, will feature two distinct theatrical journeys; a classic American high school and 1800's England. In the winter, viewers will have the chance to spend a Friday evening with an ancient civilization from *Metamorphoses* before heading to Arendelle through the production of a nostalgic favorite: *Frozen*.

### *Be More Chill*

The first show of the school year, *Be More Chill*, will run in the Joan Harris Gelb Theater from October 29–31. The musical follows Jeremy, a high-school student from New Jersey, who receives a brain implant that promises to help him "be more chill," with unintended consequences. "AI is very much in people's minds, and how we interact with technology and the world, and this play's about connection, or the lack of connection, and how desperate we are to be seen by other people," Mr. Bari Robinson said. Both Mr. Robinson and the show's music director, Mx. David Marottolo, hope that the themes will resonate with a high-school-aged audience. "I frequently work with students [at] that age and facing those same sort of issues, and it already has really brought me back quite a ways to that period in my life and has reminded me ... how to connect with people going through those experiences," Mx. Marottolo said.

### *Sense and Sensibility*

*Sense and Sensibility*, the second production of the school year, will run in the Little Theater from November 5–7. Adapted from Jane Austen's novel of the same name, the play is "about a family that's losing their wealth, while still trying to find love and happiness and security," director Ms. Kate Doak said. "But it's supposed to be a comedy ... this production is kind of parodying the original, while still keeping the heart of the story." Ryan Murray '27, who will play Colonel Brandon, emphasized the adaptation's lighthearted tone. "The play ... has a lot of really big twists and gossipy moments, and it's very comedic and upbeat," he said. Murray also pointed to the many dance numbers and moments that represent the period in British history. "I think people should take it as an opportunity to be transported to another time, [and] have a great laugh," he said.

### *Metamorphoses*

The winter play, *Metamorphoses*, will be performed in the Little Theater from February 18–20. Written by Mary Zimmerman, it is an adaptation of the Roman poet Ovid's narrative poem, composed of various Greek myths.

"It's a vignette-style play that is connected together by its set ... a pool of water, on the set, that the actors go in and out of, depending on the kind of scene," Mr. Robinson, who will direct *Metamorphoses*, said. When choosing the play, he wanted to pick a show that would showcase the newly renovated Little Theater. "Whenever you do a big opening of a theater, you're looking for a big show, you're looking for something that shows off how cool the theater could possibly be," Mr. Robinson said. Through performing *Metamorphoses*, he hopes the play gives the Choate community a chance to reflect. "You can look at those various stories in that play and go, 'wow, where do I fit in this world? Where is the beauty that I can see? Where is the joy, and laughter, and sadness, loss?" Mr. Robinson said.



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

### *Frozen*

The spring musical, *Frozen*, directed by Ms. Deighna DeRiu, will close out the school year, also in the Little Theater, from May 20–22. Based on the Disney movie, *Frozen* follows sisters Elsa and Anna in the fictional kingdom of Arendelle as Elsa discovers the extent of her magical abilities. Students look forward to the fun and nostalgia of the show. "When I was younger, I was a big fan of *Frozen*. And now I'm graduating high school, and I'm going to do it again," Samia Mowafi '27 said. Murray also appreciates the show's familiarity. "I think there's something special about having a musical that everyone knows. People already have attachments to the characters and love them. And so I just hope people come and really enjoy it," he said.

Rehearsals are already underway for the two fall shows. For Mowafi, the work that goes into each production is just as important as the performance itself. "What we do is ... a form of expression, and it's what makes us happy, but it's also a craft," Mowafi said. This year, as the theater department explores various genres, settings, and stories, one thing will remain the same: the hard work, creativity, and dedication of the students and faculty bringing each production to life.

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## *Music and Mentorship: Inside Choate's Private Music Lessons*



Photo courtesy of @choate_arts on Instagram

Nairoby Liriano '29 takes a private lesson with voice instructor Ms. Robin Sellati.

By **Olivia Bingham '29**
*Reporter*

Behind every musician's talent and love for their instrument are countless hours spent practicing. Behind those hours of practice are teachers who have devoted their lives to music and to helping their students develop their own skills. At Choate, students have the opportunity to work with a team of teachers dedicated to honing individual skill and imparting their own love of music to young musicians.

Ms. Susan Cheng, who has taught piano at Choate since fall 2007 and also teaches at Central Connecticut State University, has watched the private lesson program develop through longer class blocks and new facilities. What remained constant, she said, is the connection she forms with her students. "I think it's really fun to see how they grow into older adults," Ms. Cheng said. "[They are] still appreciating music, going to concerts, and sending me texts just to say, 'Hey, I went to this concert. It was really fun. I'm thinking of you." This is a true testament to the relationship formed between music teacher and student through hours of dedicated work and practice. Her continued connections with former students demonstrate how relationships formed through private lessons can extend beyond a student's career at Choate. "They enjoy the lessons every week, and they come to the lessons to have interactions, you know, and we chat about life and things like that," Ms. Cheng said.

Mr. Yaroslav Kargin, who has taught viola at Choate for one year, said that his favorite part about working with Choate students is "their intelligence, their curiosity, and their worldliness." Specifically, Mr. Kargin pointed out that "Many of them are from the opposite side of the globe. Many of them have traveled so much; they're well read, they're intelligent, and their understanding of the world is extremely mature." Beyond developing musical skills, these interactions can allow students and teachers to learn from one another. Over time, trust and understanding are built between students and their music teachers. Their shared love for the instrument and the experience of learning together can bring teachers and students closer. Time spent learning and practicing together becomes meaningful when students begin to confide in their teachers.

Ms. Elizabeth Kitson, who has taught flute at Choate for 20 years, also teaches at Connecticut State Community College and works full-time at the Yale University Art Gallery. Ms. Kitson shared her advice for new music students: "Definitely be patient with yourself. If you're taking up a new instrument, I find that as we get older, we get a little bit harder on ourselves. We want perfection right away. So, be kind to yourself and just take the steps." Ms. Kitson reflected on her own experience, having seen students overly self-deprecating, and noted that learning a new instrument requires patience and acceptance of mistakes.

Ultimately, private music lessons at Choate extend far beyond learning notes, technique, and repertoire. Through mentorship and shared passion, music teachers play an essential role in their students' musical lives. For many students, those relationships, like their relationship to music itself, will follow them long after their lessons at Choate.

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## *How to Ace Your Audition: A Wild boar's Guide*

By **Prudence Chen '28**
*Copy Editor*

Before the curtain rises, an extremely important part of the artistic process occurs: the audition. For many performers, walking into a room with adults and putting their skills on display for judgment can be intimidating.

However, many members of the Choate Arts community emphasize that auditions are intended to be an opportunity rather than a source of anxiety. Theater Director Mr. Bari Robinson emphasized the value of students who are willing to put themselves out there. "It's hard to be on stage ... I hope that even if they are scared, that they come out and audition again and realize hopefully that we're not that scary over here," Mr. Robinson said.

Instrumental Ensembles Director Mr. Gene Wie echoed Mr. Robinson's sentiment, explaining that auditions are primarily used for placement as opposed to selection. "Our auditions are almost always for placement, and we don't do things like cuts," he said. "It's not possible to audition here and not be able to do anything ... We even have students who start an instrument when they start at Choate, take lessons, and then start participating in the ensembles," Mr. Wie added.

Benoit Bracey '28, a member of the Arts Concentration Program, similarly emphasized how warm the audition environment truly is. "Choate is very supportive. [The directors] are all looking for you to succeed, and the fact that you even are auditioning is already so joyful for them," Bracey said. "It's really just a time to keep engaging in your art and what you love to do," he added.

For the fall and winter productions, Mr. Robinson is looking for actors who can bring confidence and level-headedness to the stage. "The thing that I look for most is someone who has maturity and independence ... [and] has the ability to carry a particular role," Mr. Robinson said. He also emphasized the importance of being responsible, and being "a person that we all want to be around."

Another integral aspect of auditioning is preparation. Mr. Wie said that students perform most successfully when they practice their material in advance. "Students who play music that they're confident in generally have stronger auditions than students who try to come in and just try to play the most difficult thing that's possible," Mr. Wie said.

Beyond learning the material, Mia Cueto '28, a member of the Arts Concentration Program, highlighted the importance of being physically prepared before an audition (hint — no dairy for singers). "I'd usually be sitting in a chair waiting to [audition]. So I'd take a look at my music, make sure I know the tempo and all my lyrics," Cueto said. "Then I take deep breaths, drink some water, and make sure I know how my body's feeling. Then go into the audition room, greet everyone, and audition."

When performers can select their own audition piece, Bracey recommended choosing material they genuinely connect with. "Find stuff that you love, so it doesn't even feel like a chore to learn it. When there are songs and monologues that you really connect to, you have that much more drive, [and] motivation, and it comes intrinsically to just know it, and the more you love it, the more it shows in the [audition] room."

Although theater and instrumental auditions differ in process and purpose, Choate students' advice remains consistent through both: prepare the material thoroughly, choose work with which you feel a connection, and enter the room willing to learn! With the support of Choate's directors and teachers, auditions can become opportunities for artistic growth and a major source of pride.

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

THE CHOATE NEWS

# SPORTS

VOL. CXX • NO. 5

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

## FIELD REPORT

**Choate Fall Record**

**17 - 8 - 0**

**Varsity Games**

***Boys' Football*** (1-0)
*vs. Exeter, 14-7*

***Girls' Soccer*** (1-1)
*vs. Exeter, 2-0*

***Boys' Soccer*** (1-0)
*vs. Buckingham Browne & Nichols, 3-1*

***Girls' Volleyball*** (2-0)
*vs. Kent, 3-0*

***Boys' Water Polo*** (2-0)
*vs. Williston, 15-6*

***Girls' Field Hockey*** (2-0)
*vs. Loomis, 3-2*

***Boys' Water Polo*** (2-0)
*vs. Deerfield,* 20-8

***Girls' Soccer*** (1-1)
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**J.V. Games**

***Boys' Soccer*** (2-0)
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*vs. Westover, 8-0*

***Boys' Soccer*** (2-0)
*vs. Westminster, 4-0*

***Girls' Soccer*** (0-1)
*vs. Exeter, 3-6*

# KINGS AND QUEENS OF THE U.S. OPEN COURT

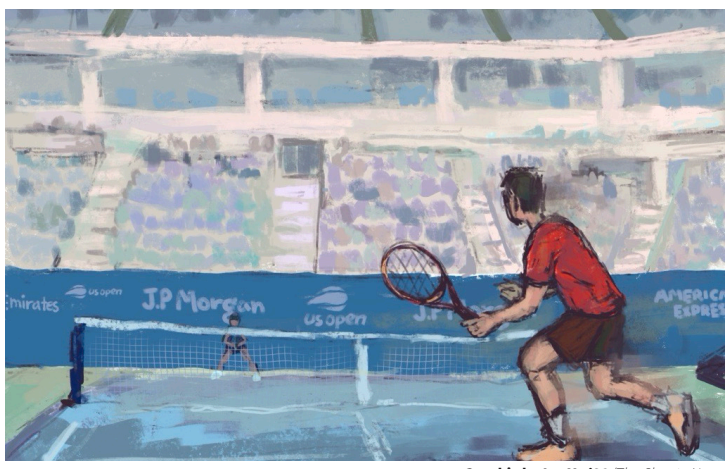
By **Reid Bock '27**
*School News Section Editor*

The 2026 United States Open Tennis Championship, one of the most highly anticipated tennis events of the year and the fourth and final Grand Slam tournament, was conducted from August 30 to September 13. From Ben Shelton's four-hour and 28-minute quarterfinal defeat of defending champion and former world No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz, to Elena Rybakina and Aryna Sabalenka earning their places in the women's final, the U.S. Open did not disappoint.

On the evening of September 12, Rybakina faced reigning U.S. Open champion Sabalenka after securing the world No. 1 ranking with a quarterfinal victory. Rybakina won the first set 6-4, using her rhythm on court to limit Sabalenka's ability to dictate play. Sabalenka returned aggressively in the second set, earning her first break point and winning 7-5. "It was really a battle ... In the end, I was just trying to be focused and stay aggressive and somehow won the match," Rybakina said in a statement to The Tennis Letter.

After resetting during the change of ends, Rybakina began taking risks with her flat groundstrokes while protecting her service games. "I like Rybakina's playing style more. To me, it's less complicated [and] less theatrical," Marianna Mata '27 said. Despite two double faults, Rybakina won the final set 6-2. This victory gave Rybakina her first U.S. Open title, solidifying her rise to No. 1 in the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) rankings. "[There] was so much going on inside ... But I feel like when I played for [the] No. 1 ranking, it's true it was a relief after because I achieved [my] goal," Ryabinka told ESPN.

One day later, Shelton faced French Open champion Alexander Zverev in Arthur Ashe Stadium. Zverev repeatedly directed heavy topspin balls toward Shelton's backhand. "Against Ben, you don't need to play aggressive all the time," Zverev told ESPN after the match. "The more pace you give him to his backhand, the better he plays." Using this tactic, Zverev forced Shelton to generate his own pace, disrupting his rhythm. Thus, Shelton was caught between playing defensively and seeking solid points on offense, resulting in unforced errors. Zverev won the opening sets 6-3, 7-6.



**Graphic by Ivy Yu '29**/*The Choate News*

In the final game of the third set, Shelton broke Zverev's serve, winning it 7-5 and fueling hopes for a comeback. "It's always good to see an underdog story," Boys' Junior Varsity Tennis Team member Jayden Chen '28 said. Though Shelton did not win the finals, Chen still expressed admiration for him. "I'm looking to replicate some of what I saw into my own game ... very inspiring stuff," he added.

Zverev responded immediately to Shelton's momentum and broke his serve in a 24-point opening game of the fourth set. He eventually won the fourth set 6-2 and claimed his first U.S. Open title. "It's unbelievable that there is a new world number one. I'm a Ben Shelton fan because I love his point celebrations, but Zverev fought hard for the championship title," Girls' Varsity Tennis player Nana Winston-Ashie '27 said.

Rybakina's serving and controlled aggression carried her past Sabalenka, while Zverev's consistency prevailed over Shelton. Rybakina earned her first U.S. Open title, and Zverev captured his second major championship (and his first in New York), defeating Shelton and taking home the title of the 2026 U.S. Open. Regardless of the results, all players fought tirelessly against their opponents, resulting in a riveting experience for viewers at the stadiums and at home.

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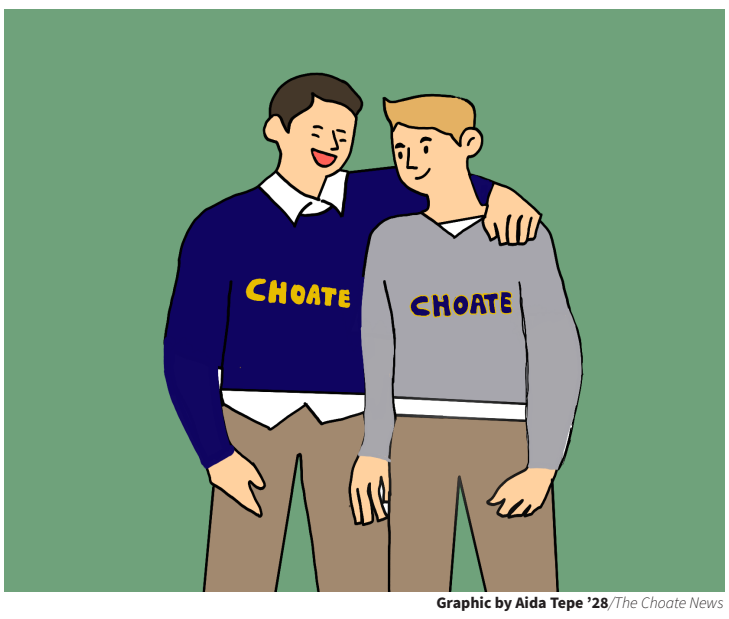
# *Bros Before Pros*



**Graphic by Aida Tepe '28**/*The Choate News*

By **Norah Wang '27**
*Staff Contributor*

Over the summer, one particular duo took center stage as soccer fans cheered on teams at the FIFA World Cup. As the world turned to their screens to watch riveting soccer matches, the Norway-England game was highly anticipated. This was mostly because Erling Haaland and Jude Bellingham would be meeting up in the World Cup for the first time. The two previously played together at Borussia Dortmund, but on July 11, they were on opposite sides of a World Cup quarterfinal. Despite the competitiveness of the game, their friendship remained strong, showing that even in sports, competition need not come at the cost of friendship.

The same dynamic can be found at Choate. Across campus, athletic "bromances" have formed between teammates whose friendships extend beyond practices and games. Whether they are rowing together, playing water polo, or running on the football field, these friendships show another side of sports culture: one built around camaraderie and support.

For Boys' Varsity Crew teammates Camdyn Naficy '28 and Raymond Jones '28, their friendship began before they ever spent time on the water. The two lived across the hall from each other in Atwater House during their third-form year and became close. Outside of rowing, they get dinner, play video games, watch movies, and train together. That relationship carries onto the water. "We give each other motivation in and out of the boat," Naficy said, adding that they push each other to their limits. Jones views their friendship similarly, stating, "[Naficy] always pushes me to be a better rower and to be a better person."

For water polo teammates Britt Clark '28 and Rowan Kane '28, their friendship began during preseason in their fourth-form year. Their relationship has since expanded beyond the pool through their time together off campus, including trips to New York City and Greenwich. In the water, that friendship becomes an advantage. Clark explained, "Playing outside of Choate, we both have a lot of knowledge in the game. And so, we run the offense together; we can work around each other, set picks, and command the offense." Their familiarity with one another allows them to work together naturally, even in the middle of a competitive game.

Football players Tiosa Okundaye '29 and Liam Peters '29 first met during Choate Summer Programs, when they learned that they would be teammates on the football team. On the field, their relationship is built around mutual trust and support. Okundaye said, "[Peters] and I work together to win, so it's all very fun. He's a great teammate to have, and I'm grateful to work with him." Peters values the role Okundaye plays in his growth as an athlete, saying, "[Okundaye] always reminds me how to be a better player and how to learn more every practice."

From the World Cup to our Choate campus, these friendships show that sports can give people much more than a team to play for. They give people someone to grow alongside, laugh with, and lean on through their time at Choate. Sometimes, the best thing a sport gives you is another person to experience wins, losses, and the time found in between.

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# SUN SETS ON CONNECTICUT

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**
*Staff Contributor*

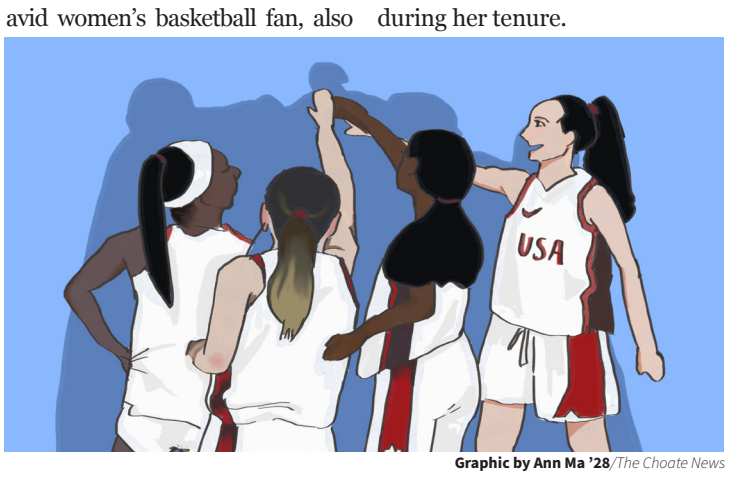
On March 30, the Mohegan Tribe agreed to sell its women's basketball team, the Connecticut Sun, to Houston Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta for $300 million. On May 13, the WNBA and NBA boards unanimously approved the sale. After the 2026 season, the franchise will leave Connecticut, its home since 2003, and become the Houston Comets.

Sports, while essential to American culture, are also both businesses and community institutions. The Sun had developed a growing fanbase in Connecticut, so supporters were disappointed by the decision to relocate. Payton Osterhout '28, a longtime Sun fan, said, "I think it's unfortunate that Connecticut no longer has a WNBA team, because we don't have many professional teams."

Norah Wang '27, a recent but avid women's basketball fan, also viewed the relocation as a missed investment: "I'm extremely unhappy with the Sun leaving. They're deserting a strong and growing fanbase that had the potential to boost viewership and improve the team's already strong finances. They'll have to start from square one in Houston."

From a business perspective, the decision questions whether a sports league should prioritize immediate market opportunity over a long-term investment. Houston offers a larger metropolitan market and an NBA ownership group, so from a surface-level perspective, it seems like a no-brainer.

Connecticut's record complicates the case for relocation — the Sun's history shows that a smaller market can still sustain a successful WNBA franchise. In 2010, the Sun became the first WNBA team to turn a profit. President Jen Rizzotti told CT Insider that the franchise tripled its revenue during her tenure.



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

That makes the move much more controversial as an investment decision. The WNBA is still a developing business, but its recent growth suggests that teams have become more valuable over time. The Sun's history demonstrates that Connecticut is capable of supporting one of the WNBA's few profitable operations.

Moreover, the history of women's basketball in the United States is a powerful example of what sustained investment can accomplish. America has invested more in women's basketball than any other nation, so it is no coincidence that the U.S. won its fifth straight FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup on September 13. This success comes from decades of investments, not just chasing immediate profit. This mentality of sustained investment in women's basketball shines on the national stage, and perhaps should remain core in its professional leagues as well.

The WNBA must always pursue financial and cultural growth, but the Sun's history proves that Connecticut can support a profitable franchise. Though the move may create new opportunities, it abandons years of investment. If women's basketball is to continue its growth, perhaps the league should remember: the greatest investments are not always the ones with the quickest returns.

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# *GAMEWEEK: FPL AT CHOATE*

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

The start of a new school year also signals a clean slate in Fantasy Premier League (FPL). For some Choate students, Premier League soccer is not solely about whether their favorite club wins, but also about strategically selecting players and maintaining bragging rights by creating their own soccer leagues online.

Even students with limited experience playing soccer have found their niche in FPL. Matthew Zhang '28 joined FPL this year and competes against other Choate students. "I'm the one person who doesn't play soccer, and my team is second best in the league right now, so it's fun," Zhang said. His early success demonstrates that, in FPL, calculated strategy can matter more than on-the-field experience. Zhang chose Erling Haaland as his first pick, believing him to be the best striker in the world. When evaluating players, he considers their likelihood of contributing on the field and adjusts his lineups weekly based on upcoming matches.

Curtis Mbaya '28 is a veteran FPL participant. He plays in two leagues: one at Choate and one with friends at home. Mbaya selected Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes as his first pick, as "he's somebody that I can rely on almost every Gameweek." To construct his lineup, he carefully assessed the players' statistics and performance last season. Mbaya also relies on instinct: "I just go with my gut feeling," he said, while also recognizing the limits of intuition, admitting, "My friends are always bashing me when I come out last."

Similarly, Ayaz Zuberi '27 has played FPL since sixth grade. His team name, "Chelsea FC," reflects his admiration for the club. Zuberi prioritizes midfielders when constructing his roster: "I stack on my team as many good midfielders as possible because these are the guys who usually get points," he said. He also favors Arsenal's defenders and, like Zhang and Mbaya, predicts that Arsenal will win the Premier League this season.

Beyond the friendly rivalries, FPL offers students an opportunity to connect outside the classroom through a shared love of soccer. The league encourages participants to follow unfamiliar teams and track matches that they might otherwise overlook. As Zuberi noted, "It's a good way to build a community. It can feel lonely watching soccer away from your family."

*Note to Students: FPL can be played for free with no money or gambling involved; as a reminder, Choate's school policy prohibits money from being involved in fantasy sports in any way.*

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