The Choate News Deerfield Scroll

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Celebrating 100 Years of *The Scroll*

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The Presidential Debate

By **Zaki Shamsi '26**
Choate Rosemary Hall Student Council President and Opinions N/W Editor

First, credit where it's due: Deerfield is beautiful. Their campus looks like a historical drama where the extras never sweat and every tree has been spawned. The blazers are pressed, the table manners immaculate, and the devotion to bonfires... a little suspicious. Lovely for Pinterest; less lovely when civilization awaits beyond miles of corn and cow manure.

At Choate, when the rain pours, our campus doesn't flood; it glows like the Platinum LEED-certified beacon of progress it is. Our architecture may not have a single theme, but why should it? That's called innovation!

And yes, John F. Kennedy '35 once roamed our halls. George Washington really did have tea in Squire Stanley, which basically makes Wallingford a historical landmark and our campus a Revolutionary Airbnb. We even have Antonio in the servery, who turns every meal into a performance worth a standing ovation.

We make friends without assigned dining hall tables. At Choate, we don't outsource friendship to a chart. We sit where the conversation is, and if there isn't one yet, we start it.

Deerfield's mascot is, and I wish I were kidding, a door. A literal door. It's poetic, really — a symbol of entry, or more accurately of students desperately hoping to leave. Ours, on the other hand, is a wild boar: bold, unbothered, and, most importantly, alive — much like our community.

Deerfield can cite a Taylor Swift ex in the footnotes — adorable, truly — but Choate lives rent free in writers' rooms. Gilmore Girls inspiration?

Check. Family Guy reference? Check. The Summer I Turned Pretty mention? That too. Deerfield may be older but clearly influence isn't measured in birthdays.

And while Deerfield Day brings its fair share of chants and bragging rights, at the end of the day, some of our best events exist because of you, and we mean it: thank you. Outside the scoreboard, every Deerfield student I've met has been welcoming and quick with a smile. It has been a pleasure rivaling you on the stage in debate tournaments and athletic competitions. See you in the stands this Deerfield Day — hopefully the seats aren't assigned.



Graphic by Leah Han '27

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By **Patrick Zhang '26**
Deerfield Academy Student Council President

Why go to boarding school? It is not because of "innovation", not Platinum LEED certifications, not a presidential alumnus, not pop-culture references, not an overspending football program. Leave these superficial medallions of 'HR talk' to universities that can do it way better than anything a high school in Connecticut can muster up. The reason we go to boarding school is because of one thing, community, an idea seemingly alien to Choate Rosemary Hall.

Sit-down dinner might seem antiquated. Assigned seats? A teacher at every table? Student waiters? What are we? Back home? Precisely! It is family-style dinners that we share with our classmates, not cliquey, awkward eating clubs. You get to meet students you would never in a lifetime cross paths with. Where else can a new student without any connections feel like they are part of a community than at a roundtable where the ice is broken by good food and conversation? Deerfield's sit-down meals are where bonds are formed.

The class dress of coat and tie means so much more to us than what outsiders might see as "Pinterest-worthy." A uniform by definition equalizes the student-body. It cultivates community by upholding respect for a standard. When you see another student in coat and tie no matter who they are, what classes they take, , where they are from, you can rest assured that they too have bought into Deerfield.

But tradition does not dictate austerity, rather it kindles those flames of childhood. We rally around institutions passed down to us by generations past, not because the school forces us to, but because we want to. Getting students up early in the morning is no easy feat. Yet every Friday we wake ourselves to march into the Deerfield River. We are our brothers and sisters keepers in this weekly trial, we are our own tradition's keepers.

Sure "innovation" is all the buzz in our age of artificial intelligence, and we might seem old-fashioned with our phone rules.. But how does it feel to say hello to everybody you see on the street and have them respond to you with their face not buried in their phones? How does it feel to go to a school where everybody knows your name? At Deerfield, students feel human. To be in a community is to feel human, and to attend a boarding school is to be in a community. Choate, I hope that you too will be worthy of your heritage, that you will one day, uphold your heritage as a boarding school.

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Letters from the Editors, in Journalism and Rivalry

By **Reinah Lee '26**
Editor-in-Chief of The Choate News

Dear Reader,

I have a confession. Something weird happened this summer when I was working in Deerfield at a residential youth summer program. First, what's the Choate Editor-in-Chief doing at Deerfield in the first place? Long story short, I think you'll be more intrigued with the dirty secret I can expose about our rival.

At times, I felt like a sleeper agent, an investigative journalist visiting quintessential Deerfield spots and mingling with the enemy to uncover something dark. I spent hours at the Deerfield River, making sure that Choate's waterfall was cooler. I examined every ordinary door I passed by, sarcastically wondering if it was *The* Door. I even climbed to The Rock while anxiously planning what I'd do in a very probable bear encounter, thinking to myself, "I never have to worry about bears in Wallingford."

Although I was sure that our schools were nothing alike, my limiting beliefs regarding the rivalry were challenged when one of the summer interns, who happened to be the graduated Managing Editor of the *Deerfield Scroll*, became my friend. We were paired for evening duty when we started conversing about our newspapers and sharing links to our favorite pieces. As I began reading a *Scroll* article depicting a tragic DoorDash incident written as a crime scene, I felt something funny. I loved it. After exploring numerous articles (though their website could use some work) and reading the graduating EIC's final editorial, I had a peculiar feeling. I was amused, and I felt seen.

So if you're a Deerfield student reading this, what's a copy of *The Choate News* doing in your hands? To my Choate peers, how did this *Deerfield Scroll*-branded issue get to you?

If there's anything I learned from student journalism over the past three years, it's that the best way to know a place is to know the people, and getting to know my fellow interns who happened to be Deerfield students was transfluential. While I had ignorantly spent the first week comparing everything, from the landscape to the architecture, I realized that I had been diminishing the beauty and history in front of me. In just a few short weeks, I didn't expect to trust and depend on these people I called rivals, but late nights in the 'Nest' watching Business Proposal made less sleep more fruitful. Trips to Boston with Deerfield's ME and Photography Editor, cracking inside jokes and sipping extra-performative matchas from Tatte, made the rivalry more rewarding.

As Editor-in-Chief of *The Choate News*, my experience devoting my high school career to the paper has been beyond fulfilling, and I've learned so much about myself. But, missing out on Wednesday mug nights because it coincides with Layout and send to print, and getting dragged for sleeping through my 8:15 a.m.'s because no one understands the life of a showgirl (being an EIC), left a personal void that couldn't be filled by simply increasing text box tracking.

I had to realize that I'm not the only high school senior, newspaper editor, or even *Choate News* Editor-in-Chief who experienced these battles. Deepening my relationships with former Editors-in-Chief, Fiona and Lauren, and now with rival editors, reminds me why we share our stories in the first place. The burning necessity of nourishing student journalism is to feel seen and help others feel seen. With over a hundred years of *The News* and (finally) *The Scroll*, my hope for this collaboration is that by highlighting student life and discourse across campuses, we can remind ourselves to continue creating and do so together.

Happy birthday, *Deerfield Scroll*, you're in good hands. Signing off in sweatpants, Reinah Elle Lee

By **John Liu '26**
Editor-in-Chief of the Deerfield Scroll

Dear Reader,

My shoes were absolutely killing me. Having just walked what Google Maps predicted as a 24 minute walk from 45th down to 32nd in a time of just seven minutes, I caught the 6:04 PM train from Penn Station back to Princeton Junction on the infamous NJT. I was positive that I had just burned the soles of my feet. Additionally, the fact that I wasn't able to snatch a seat on the hour or so ride back only made my feet hurt more. Exhausted and in pain, having already been up for twelve hours by now, I hope you can understand a little bit of my pissy mood. Scrolling Instagram reels to get a dopamine rush, I only got more annoyed when a notification suddenly popped up at the top of my screen.

Exiting Instagram to check what the notification was about, I was pleasantly surprised to be greeted by a text from Yoonsa, a former Managing Editor of the *Deerfield Scroll*. After catching up on how our summers have been, mine dominated by work and college essays and hers filled with vacations with friends, she revealed the real reason she wanted to talk. Texting furiously, she explained that a close friend of hers was the Editor-in-Chief of *The Choate News* and wanted to collaborate with the *Deerfield Scroll* on an issue in the upcoming year.

After I saw this text, my mood died down as quickly as it rose. My knee-jerk reaction was instantly no. Collaborate with Choate? Did the sky turn red? At the time, the idea seemed as utterly preposterous to me as Chloe's comment that there would be a day in Senior Fall when I would need to drink 400 mg in a day to finish my college essays arose. After all, I had always thought of Choate as a rival—working together just never seemed a possibility. Not wanting to burst Yoonsa's bubble however, I gave her an inconclusive answer of "we'll see what we can do," and just put this idea in the back of my mind, which was soon replaced by the cash flow model I had to finish before work the next day.

So why are you reading this issue?

First, as *Scroll* Advisor Mr. Romick pointed out, "it's for the love of the game." But in all seriousness, it's because I think, as a community, it is precisely what we need right now: a renaissance of student journalism. After connecting with former Editor-in-Chiefs of the *Scroll* for their reflections on how their *Scroll* experience has later benefited them in their lives, including Anna, Kaitlyn, Sunshine, and Joshua, the common thread they all mentioned wasn't actually about journalism. Rather, the words community, curiosity, commitment, and collaboration were echoed by them all. In an increasingly polarized society—especially one where journalists around the world are under attack, student journalism can be an answer to a lot of the problems we face.

Freeing myself from my narrowmindedness in August has also allowed me to see clearly what I couldn't see back then. The *Scroll's* collaboration with *The Choate News* transcends whatever emphasis we place on our elite, small school rivalry. Rather, it is a celebration of two long-standing institutions, one in it's centennial and the other way past, devoted to fostering the next generation of journalists, writers, thinkers, and leaders. And now, more than ever, the *Deerfield Scroll* and *The Choate News* depend on you, students, to preserve and carry on the legacy of our publications through your writing and editing.

So I encourage you to read, to write, to listen, and to learn. Deerfield students, take a moment to flip through these pages and appreciate what *The Choate News* has to offer. Choate students, I invite you to do the same.

Through reading these pages, I hope you realize that in spite of our rivalry and our differences, we are a lot more of the same.
Yours in Service,
John Oi Liu

SCHOOL NEWS

Fall Festivities at Harvest

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

As campus fills with the scent of apple cider and the sound of music, Harvest Fest gives Choate students a chance to relax and de-stress from midterms. The tradition is a highlight of the fall term, allowing the community to come together in a moment of celebration and calm. The lively atmosphere, along with numerous fun activities, makes Harvest Fest a great way to spend your time before the long weekend.

Every year, Harvest Fest takes place on the Tuesday night before Family Weekend, with no classes on Wednesday. In regards to the goal of Harvest Fest, Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar said, "[Harvest Fest] is focused on giving students an opportunity to relax leading up to Fall Family Weekend."

Harvest Fest began as a fundraising opportunity for clubs to raise money for their events, but it has since evolved into a larger community celebration. "Clubs would host fall-related booths … now it's open to the entire community," Ms. Kazar said. "The School aims to create a sense of belonging, and Harvest Fest is just one of the traditions that help create community."

Many students have appreciated this sense of community. Parker Jackson '28 said, "Not every school has something like this — it's unique. You are surrounded by your friends, eat good food, play games, and be together."

Competitive events also play a role in the evening. For the past three years, Boar Pen has organized a Spikeball tournament — a highlight for many attendees. Ms. Kazar noted that this year ran the event smoothly, crediting Boar Pen's strong leadership: "There were probably around 200 participants, and everything ran on time."

Costumes, strongly encouraged for participants, added to the evening's cheer, and many duos dressed in coordinated outfits.

Beyond the turf, the parking lot was crowded with students lined up for food trucks offering fried dough, hot chocolate, apple cider, and other delicacies. A DJ played top hits, and the mechanical bull ride and icebreaker games were also offered to students. "I think the food trucks were set up perfectly," Jackson said. "You could wait in line, talk with your friends, and have something to look forward to."

The large turnout this year underscored the vibrancy of Choate's student body and its eagerness to connect. "Events like Harvest Fest keep the community alive," Hult-Falk said. You know the homework and tests are still there, but for a few hours, everyone puts that aside."

Following midterm week, Harvest Fest gives students a chance to forget about the academic rigor of Choate, play some Spikeball, and spend some quality time with friends.

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Community Service Day With Purpose for People and Planet

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Copy Editor

Volunteering in over 30 projects across Connecticut, the Choate community celebrated its annual Community Service Day on October 10. From packing meals and harvesting vegetables to clearing invasive plants, this year's theme, "With Purpose for People and Planet," highlighted the importance of volunteering with intent.

According to Director of Community Service Ms. Melissa Koomson, the purpose of the event is for students to seek opportunities and "do it with purpose and integrity." The program aimed to give students the chance to connect their daily experiences on campus to real-world engagement beyond Choate.

Science teacher Mr. Will Morris brought his advising group to volunteer with LEAP (Leadership, Education, and Athletics in A Partnership) at the New Haven Garden Club. During the project, the students harvested jalapeño peppers, which sparked an unexpected science lesson that followed in the classroom. The gardeners offered Mr. Morris peppers, which he used in his Chemistry of Food class to make salsa and study how acids moderate spice.

HPRSS teacher Mr. Brendan Cahill's advisory group worked with the North Branford Land Conservation Trust to remove invasive species and protect native trees. "Although not everyone in the group was naturally drawn to the outdoors, most students quickly adapted to the experience and found it rewarding," Mr. Cahill said.

For many students, participating in Community Service Day offered lasting lessons about empathy and responsibility. Ethan Yu '29 helped harvest radishes and tomatoes for local families. "It was really fun," he said. "It makes me feel really grateful and thankful that our school provides us food." Witnessing the farm's impact gave Yu a deeper understanding of how service supports community well-being. "People in a community should work together to provide each other with what they need," he reflected.

Maxwell Wijaya '27, who participated in the food-packing event in the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC), shared similar enthusiasm. "It was a great opportunity to work with peers you might not otherwise have been able to," he said. At the end of the event, students packaged a total of 101,424 red lentil jambalaya meals for families facing food insecurity in the Wallingford and New Haven areas.

While the volunteering has ended, Ms. Koomson hopes that students will continue their service beyond Choate's campus. "I encourage students to be curious and ask questions about how they can continue those partnerships," she said.

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New Educators and Friendly Faces: Part 2

By **Drew Wolfson '27**
Staff Contributor

As the school year settles in, Choate welcomes new educators to its classrooms, fields, and offices. In the second part of our new faculty introductions, meet the teachers who have recently joined the community, each bringing something unique to campus.

Brendan Cahill

A 2012 graduate of Hartwick College, Mr. Brendan Cahill joins the HPRSS Department and Athletics as a World History teacher and Special Teams Coordinator for the Choate Football Team, respectively. Before Choate, Mr. Cahill taught high school government and economics classes and ran his own business where he trained high school, college, and NFL-level athletes. Additionally, he served in the Peace Corps, sharing his passion for teaching with children abroad. Mr. Cahill is excited to be at Choate and looks forward to living on campus, supporting the students in academics and athletics.

Gillian Ritter

Ms. Gillian Ritter is an Assistant Director of Admissions at Choate. Before arriving at Choate, Ms. Ritter worked at Trinity College, where she served as Associate Director of Admissions. With over a decade of experience in admissions, Ms. Ritter brings a wealth of expertise to her new role. She is excited to join a large community, work closely with students, and attend athletic games and musical performances across campus.

James McCarthy

Mr. James McCarthy '19 returns to campus as a Math and History teacher and Offensive Line Coach for the Choate Football Team. Coming from The Taft School, Mr. McCarthy enjoys the special environment of boarding schools and is excited to be engaged in all facets of student life. "Whether it's small interactions on the path or bigger things like a coach or being in the dorm, when you are able to see students in all the ways that we do, you have opportunities to really connect with them and help them," he said.

Aidan Spencer

Mr. Aidan Spencer is a new member of the English Department and serves as the Assistant Coach for the Boys' Varsity Crew Team. Mr. Spencer comes from a history of boarding school life: growing up at the Taft School, attending St. Paul's School as a boarding student, and later teaching at Phillips Academy Andover. "Working in a residential environment is really special," he shared. "I get to be a teacher, a coach, and I get to see students in the dorm." He looks forward to becoming part of the Choate community and spending his Saturdays cheering on his students at their games.

Ekram Karim

Ms. Ekram Karim is a new adjunct faculty member teaching Arabic. With experience teaching at both high school and university levels, she is excited to be part of Choate's multifaceted approach to learning. Ms. Karim also looks forward to "teaching diverse students who are all very motivated to grow and learn, and to expand their worldview by introducing them to a new culture through learning a foreign language." Ms. Karim hopes to get the full Choate experience and engage with its community.

Max Groen

Joining Choate as a new Mental Health and Performance Counselor, Mr. Max Groen '15 returns to campus from Christchurch School. "I love the amount of daily 'touch points' that boarding school, as well as my specific role, allows for me to interact, support, and connect with our students," he said. Mr. Groen will work with students and athletic teams throughout the school year, supporting their well-being both in the classroom and on the athletic fields.

Brittany Post

Ms. Brittany Post joins Choate as an assistant athletic trainer. Before beginning her career in athletic training, she ran Track and Field throughout her four years at Southern Connecticut State University, giving her the opportunity to developing a deep understanding of the demands placed on student-athletes. She works closely with student-athletes, assisting them with rehabilitation, recovery, and overall athletic performance, becoming an integral part of student-athlete care at Choate.

Together, these new faculty members bring a fresh perspective, deep expertise, and a shared commitment to student growth in and out of the classroom. The community looks forward to their presence around campus. Welcome to Choate!

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Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram.

New Choate faculty gather together for a photo.

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Shamsi Knocks on Deerfield's Door
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Century of Rivalry
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Read it, then recycle it.



Visuals by Leah Han, Sienna Kim, and Deerfield Communications.

LOCAL AND FEATURES

WHAT MALALA SAID: VIRTUAL Q&A WITH YOUSAFZAI

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26**
Arts & Leisure Section Editor

Many Choate students have likely heard of Malala Yousafzai's famous quote: "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world." However, few understand the gravity of and the context behind her words.

On October 22, the Wallingford Public Library (WPL) hosted a virtual Q&A with Yousafzai and the Library Speaker's Consortium (LSC) after the release of her second memoir, *Finding My Way*.

Yousafzai was born in Mingora, Pakistan, in 1997 and has become a women's education activist, best-selling author, and the youngest ever Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. Growing up, Yousafzai learned intellectual curiosity from her father, Mr. Ziauddin Yousafzai, an educator and co-founder of the Khushal Public School in her hometown. However, during her early childhood, the Taliban, an Islamist nationalist political party, banned girls from attending school. After they forcefully closed her father's school in 2009, Yousafzai advocated for women's rights to education by partnering with various activist groups. But amidst her fame, she also received death threats from several members of the Taliban, leading to her attempted assassination on October 9, 2012.

Yousafzai's first memoir, *I Am Malala*, goes into detail about her journey and the struggles she faced as a teenager in the spotlight.

Although Yousafzai has an extensive resume in political activism, instead of focusing on her trauma, her second book describes the challenges she faced with mental health and making friends throughout college. "[*Finding My Way*] is me reintroducing myself to who I am, and the most important thing throughout these years has been to be true to myself ... and show myself for who I am," Yousafzai said.

LSC Director and Author Talk Host Brandon Atler, who moderated the Q&A, found Yousafzai's authenticity in *Finding My Way* reflected throughout her responses. "Despite her being this huge global figure, [Yousafzai] is so down to earth, and just so easy to talk to like someone you've known forever," Atler said.

While mediating the Q&A, Atler was impressed by the questions the audience asked. "We had questions from nine and eleven-year-olds ... and one of the biggest things she said to them is to have courage and always ask for help, like mental health."

When Yousafzai moved away from her hometown to attend Oxford University, she faced relentless homesickness and struggles with elements of her own mental

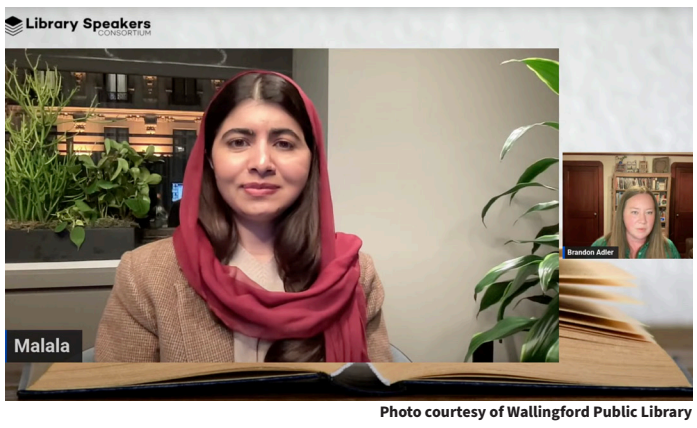

Photo courtesy of Wallingford Public Library

Malala delivers empowering message during virtual Q&A.

health. "I hadn't had panic attacks before [going to college], [but] my friends were so kind that they made sure they were there for me ... And then finally, a friend of mine suggested that I see a therapist. She told me that a lot of students do, and that gave me a little comfort."

The Q&A with Yousafzai was made possible by the LSC, founded in 2022, which aims to support local libraries in more suburban and rural areas by connecting them with best-selling authors virtually and in person. WPL Readers' Advisory Librarian Mrs. Cindy Haiken primarily connects the WPL with the LSC, working to schedule annual in-person author visits in Wallingford and to advertise LSC events to the WPL community. "[The LSC] works to make it financially possible for libraries to access these events," Mrs. Haiken said. "You can also post questions when you register, and they give a shout-out to the library where they came from."

While juggling her activism work and new book tour, Yousafzai continues to remind students around the world to slow down and take their education as a gift. Yousafzai said, "[At college,] I was managing my own schedule, and I realized that I could be using my time to do anything. All of those experiences socializing with my friends really helped me learn and grow as a person." Even more, she emphasizes the importance of using that education to collaborate with others and make a change. "Change begins with one person," Yousafzai said. "But for us to see the transformation, we need to work collectively. Being there for each other and joining hands can help us make a huge difference."

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LOCAL FARMS CELEBRATE FALL

By **Oola Breen-Ryan '29**
Reporter

Whether you're hunting for the perfect pumpkin to carve for Halloween, craving fresh apple cider donuts, or simply seeking escape from campus life, Connecticut fall means farm season. Several orchards and farms throughout the area are open with activities that showcase the best of a New England autumn.

Beaumont Farm and Geremia Farms are both based in Wallingford. At Beaumont, a wide selection of flowers and produce is available, along with decorations to complement the fall season. Geremia Farms also offers a variety of seasonal gourds, corn husk bales, squash, and pumpkins.

For students seeking an adventure beyond the town Choate calls home, Hindinger Farm, in Hamden, Connecticut, is a historical farm that has been in operation since 1893. Ms. Elizabeth Hindinger, a descendant of the original family, explained that the farm has evolved significantly over the years. "It started as a diary farm," she said. "They were self sustaining, raising pigs and turkeys. Then, it evolved into more orchards and wholesale, and now it's all retail." The farm hosts annual autumn events, including a Fall Festival on October 5, featuring food trucks, live music from Replay Band, and a petting zoo. According to Ms. Hindinger, the farm offers "tractor rides on the farm every weekend" and has "plenty of pumpkins, really good apples, and vegetables."

Similarly, Drazen Orchards, Bishop's Orchards, and Clover Nook Farm offer fun activities, including pick-your-own fruit events and seasonal baked goods. Located in Cheshire, Drazen Orchards has been growing many apple varieties, including Cortland, Macoun, and Honeycrisp, since 1950, along with peaches, plums, pears, and blueberries.

Established in 1871 in Guilford, Bishop's Orchards has an annual Fall Festival that runs from August to November. They offer unique activities, including apple harvesting, wagon rides, a corn maze, food trucks, and a pick-your-own pumpkin event.

The Clover Nook Farm has a wide range of pumpkins and free hayrides, from "warty goblins" to "snowballs." According to their website, Clover Nook is "an eighth-generation family farm with roots dating back to 1765."

These local farms offer seasonal experiences just minutes from campus, providing a chance to explore Connecticut's rich agricultural heritage. With most farms open through November, there's still time to experience the best of a Connecticut fall.

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Sabbatical Side Quests

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Copy Editor

Around every seven years, Choate faculty have the opportunity to take a term off for sabbatical. For many, the break is a chance to explore hidden talents, rediscover old passions, and return to campus with fresh perspectives.



Photo courtesy of Ms. Stephanie Neul

Ms. Stephanie Neul observes a Galapagos tortoise on her sabbatical.

Mr. Thomas Larsen

Physics teacher Mr. Thomas Larsen spent his 2025 spring term sabbatical constructing a wooden stand-up paddleboard. "I got the idea from something that I did on my first sabbatical ... I developed an interest in wooden boat building," he said. During his first sabbatical, Mr. Larsen built a wooden sailboat in the jewelry and ceramics studios at Choate.

This time, working from the basement of his family's Maine home, he completed the paddleboard in early summer. "I couldn't do something like this in the regular routine of the school year," he said. "I wanted to dedicate whole days to the process, and it was a lot of fun." Mr. Larsen has enjoyed paddling through the bays and channels near his home and hopes to use the board for years to come.

Dr. Selena Gell

For Science teacher and co-director of the Science Research Program Dr. Selena Gell, her spring 2024 sabbatical was a blend of creativity, fitness, and exploration. While her children were in school, she took pottery and watercolor classes. "[It was] really fun, because I don't have time to do those things usually," she said. Dr. Gell also trained for her first Olympic-length triathlon, setting what she called "a new challenge" in running, cycling, and swimming.

When summer arrived, Dr. Gell and her family spent eight weeks on a cross-country road trip, visiting national parks including Zion, Yellowstone, and Glacier. "It was nice to spend time thinking about [what] I find meaningful in my life and work," Dr. Gell said. "It was really fun to get in touch with ... parts of myself that I feel like I don't get in touch with."

Ms. Stephanie Neul

During her 2024–2025 winter term sabbatical, Math teacher Ms. Stephanie Neul spent her time exploring both new places and new routines. In February, she traveled through Chile, hiked in Patagonia, Argentina, and visited the Galápagos with her sister."I thought I'd be really scared traveling in a foreign country by myself, but it was way easier than I thought and way more fun," Ms. Neul said. She also found that meeting people from around the world gave her "a more global perspective."

When she returned home, she visited friends, went to Taylor Swift concerts, hiked with her dogs, and even picked up cross-stitching, her new favorite hobby. Additionally, Ms. Neul aimed to practice her Spanish, read more, and learn how to rest.

Whether through constructing a paddleboard, swimming in a triathlon, or hiking across Patagonia, Choate's faculty used their sabbaticals to rediscover creativity and life balance.

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Inside the Printing Process

By **Jai Midha '27**
Copy Editor

It's Monday morning, and *The Choate News* has hit the dining hall tables. Over the course of the school day, the 1,300 copies of the paper will cover everywhere from Lanphier Cafe to Carr Hall. Mr. Blaze Garbatini, on behalf of the Valley Publishing Company, marks the start of the paper's journey.

Raised in the family business with 40 years of experience, Mr. Garbatini grew up around printing. "I was born into it, and even when I was going to school, I would go to the print shop and I'd help my father," he said. Helping out where he could, Mr. Garbatini composed papers and wrote headlines after school. "After many years, it just became a regular job, and I just kept doing it and never really did much of anything else," he said.

The company began in 1959 by publishing roughly half a dozen different publications, ranging from shopping guides and ads to local newspapers. However, like many other industries, Covid-19 had put enormous strain on the publishing industry. For Mr. Garbatini, he and his company had to strictly focus on printing. "If we were publishing our own stuff, advertising had dropped, and the reason why we survived was because we went into just printing," he said. After four decades in the field, Mr. Garbatini has garnered a reputation that attracts many schools, such as Yale University and the University of Connecticut, as well as our very own *The Choate News*.

The process of printing newspapers can be more complex than it seems. It can take two to three attempts to start the printing press before the ink looks clean on the paper. In most cases, the printer runs smoothly, capable of pumping more than 25,000 copies an hour. However, sometimes, the smooth running grind of the printer must come to a halt. "It could be that a bad plate was made so the image isn't clear on the plate. It could be a bad ruler in the press. It could maybe be the water and the ink balance. It could be none of those," Mr. Garbatini said. "Getting all the inks to lay down on the sheet with pretty much the same density [is the most challenging part]."

From 900 pounds of paper roll stretching out to about six miles, the paper feeds straight from the printing press into a folder that automatically folds up bundles of newspaper, ready for delivery to schools and publishers. By Monday morning, the 1,300 copies of The Choate News are distributed around campus by *The Choate News*' Outreach Team.

While many individuals engage with journalism on their devices nowadays, Mr. Garbatini believes that paper newspapers are still valuable. "Having an actual printed paper is better because if you see it somewhere, you can pick it up in a school, hallway, store, or mailbox; it's pushed on you. When it's on the computer or online, you have to pull it — you have to go seek it out," he said.

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Photo courtesy of Blaze Garbatini

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The Choate News

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A Digital Demise

By **Laveenya Seenivasagam '27**
Opinions Writer

In an interview, Harm Reduction International and Global Fund Trustee Ms. Palani Narayanan discussed the pressing question: What is hate speech? This question connects to the concern of harmful content circulating on social media platforms and its impact on vulnerable populations. While social media platforms must uphold the principle of free speech, tech companies have a responsibility to moderate hate speech and violent content by protecting all users, especially vulnerable communities such as people of color, youth, and LGBTQ+ individuals. They should foster a safe environment for free expression, while ensuring accountability for the content on their platforms.

People have the right to express themselves, but this freedom should not harm others. According to UCLA's Initiative to Study Hate, hate speech is defined as "any form of expression through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred against a group or class of persons on the basis of race, religion, skin color, sexual and gender identity, ethnicity, disability, or national origin." Recently, Meta announced changes to its content policy, allowing tolerance for more speech. This raises concerns about tech platforms' promotion of free speech in lieu of safeguarding certain groups' impartiality, particularly in light of external pressures like President Donald Trump's P'00 administration.

The tragic case of 14-year-old Molly Russell, a British teenager who died by suicide nine years ago after being exposed to self harm and suicide related content on Instagram, underscores the devastating consequences of unmoderated online spaces. An inquest found that Molly viewed thousands of disturbing posts in the months leading up to her death, prompting a government inquiry into how algorithms promote harmful material to young users. This tragedy illustrates how the spread of violent or hateful content online, especially when amplified by platform algorithms, can cause real-world harm. Social media platforms must act quickly to block or remove such content and ensure that their recommendation systems do not push users toward dangerous material.

Tech companies should be held accountable for the content shared on their platforms. With powerful algorithms shaping what people see, companies have a responsibility to manage and remove harmful or otherwise hateful content. As Former CEO of Consumer Reports Ms. Marta Tellado said, "We need much more transparency and accountability for the most heavily trafficked tech platforms, especially where algorithms are concerned." Platforms should define harmful speech clearly, educate users on these standards, and enforce consistent rules. Users who repeatedly share hate or violence should face consequences to ensure that harmful content is promptly addressed. With transparency and accountability, isn't it time we create a digital space that's truly safe for all?

Laveenya Seenivasagam *is a fifth-former from Puchang, Malaysia. She may be reached at lseenivasagam27@choate.edu.*

The Judicial Committee Needs to Publish Anonymized Summaries

By **Maia Shah '27**
Local News Section Editor

Every Choate student is familiar with the honor code: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid." It is scrawled at the top of exams, typed before submitting final essays, and printed on posters across Steele Hall, a quiet but visible acknowledgment of a shared standard of accountability. The honor code, for me, is more than a ritualized signature; it is a statement of trust. It symbolizes a student's obligation to act with integrity, and I hope the system that enforces this honesty will act in the same way. To that end, Choate should publish anonymized summaries of Judicial Committee (JC) cases to ensure transparency, fairness, and trust in a system that should reflect the legitimacy of real-life courts.

The JC was founded to uphold Choate's core values, but it operates almost entirely out of student oversight. It is composed of a group of elected student representatives and faculty advisors who interpret the student handbook and recommend appropriate consequences for breaches of the School's personal and academic honor code. Cases are brought before the committee, recommendations are finalized, and appropriate discipline will be enforced. Members of the JC aren't allowed to disclose any details regarding a case; all information that is shared is at the discretion of the student involved.

The JC system is designed to be impartial, but it would be naive to assume that all students stand before it on equal footing. Though most JC members may recuse themselves to uphold impartiality in cases involving their friends, there is still cause for concern that students with connections to JC members are more likely to receive lighter disciplinary action than one without connections.

For example, if two students both used AI without authorization to complete a paper but receive vastly different consequences, the lack of established precedent makes it impossible for the student body to hold the system accountable for the discrepancy — we don't know the rationale or processes behind giving students different punishments for what seemingly looks like the same violation of our honor code. In an incident like this, some may assume that one student received preferential treatment due to a privileged connection.

There are undoubtedly reasons beyond corruption or backdoor deals that may cause discrepancies in seemingly similar cases. Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 made it clear that each student's circumstances vary, playing the largest role in determining punishments. "For example, if it's a major assessment, we're going to be talking about probation generally. But that doesn't mean we're always going to land there necessarily, because maybe there's a mitigating circumstance that we don't know about," he said. However, to reassure students of the JC's impartiality and legitimacy publishing summaries is necessary.

JC decisions cannot occur solely behind closed doors. Legitimate courts do not operate in secrecy, nor are their decisions made silently. They document the process, explain the rationale, and review precedents set by previous cases, allowing public scrutiny to prevent injustice or prejudice. Fifth-form JC Representative Pete Areewong '27 agrees: "I think [published summaries] would give the students a clearer image or idea of what types of violations there are. I think it would demystify the whole secrecy of what the JC does." Mr. Gilyard, while not in favor of published summaries, recognizes the importance of destigmatizing the process for the student body. "There is more work we can do for the entire community around what [the JC] looks like," he said.

Some may be alarmed at the mention of published JC summaries, as they may hold concerns regarding student privacy. The current JC confidentiality policy is designed to protect students' identities and prevent unhealthy gossip among students. JC Chair Andy Stahlman '26 said, "The big thing is, we're trying to remain confidential. The student is explicitly allowed to tell any story, or whatever they want, about the JC, but there are oftentimes special circumstances revolving around a student's life that we shouldn't really be sharing with the entire student body that can actually impact the way our decision is made." While I would be remiss not to recognize that students crave drama, the goal of publishing JC decisions is not to encourage gossip, but to ensure equal treatment. Anonymized reports would protect students' identities while still providing clear explanations of the cases.

If Choate truly trusts students to hold one another accountable and provide recommendations for disciplinary action, the system must also be accountable to students. Anonymized case summaries provide a fair avenue to protect student privacy and identity. Summaries would uphold fairness, especially against the influence of personal circumstance, mitigate gossip through anonymity, deter future honor code violations by making consequences clearer, emulate the processes of real courts, and hold committee members accountable. The student body is constantly reminded that true honor lies in acting with integrity, even when no one is watching. By opening the judicial process to public understanding through published, anonymized summaries, the JC will have the opportunity to practice the very values we are expected to uphold.

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A Fragile Step Toward Peace

By **Leela Curry '29**
Opinions Writer

After more than two years of devastating conflict, Israel and Hamas have agreed to a ceasefire and hostage-exchange deal that offers a rare moment of calm in one of the world's most deeply divided regions. The truce was arranged in early October by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar; it is far from an end-all resolution, nor does it erase any of the grief and torment that came before it. However, the agreement does represent a crucial step toward the prioritization of human rights over politics — a reminder that even fragile peace is better than endless war.

The war that began in October 2023 devastated both peoples. Hamas's attack on Israeli communities left deep scars of loss, while Israel's military response reduced entire neighborhoods in Gaza to rubble. Thousands of civilians became victims of a conflict that they never chose. Every side has mourned. Every family has suffered. And it is precisely this shared suffering that makes the current truce so powerful; it proves that, despite everything that has happened, both sides can still recognize the value of human life.

Under the ceasefire, Israel has halted major operations and Hamas has agreed to stop firing rockets into Israeli-controlled territory. Hostages and prisoners were exchanged, and hundreds of aid trucks were finally crossing into Gaza, carrying food, medicine, and clean water. It is easy to see these actions as mere logistics, but they are something far greater — they are gestures of humanity that society often overlooks. Each truck that passes through the border, each civilian who sleeps without the sound of explosions, is living proof that compassion can still break through the noise of politics.

This truce is far from perfect. It does not yet answer the questions: who will govern Gaza, how security can be guaranteed, or whether true reconciliation is even possible. But perhaps this moment doesn't need to solve everything. Perhaps its purpose is simply to remind people that dialogue is still possible, that mercy still matters, and that peace, however temporary, is always worth pursuing.



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

In Gaza and Israel, small signs of normalcy are beginning to reappear. Children are venturing back outside. Families are searching for loved ones. Aid workers are returning to hospitals that have been starved of resources for months. Every quiet sunrise that follows this ceasefire is a symbol of resilience — a declaration that hope, however fragile, refuses to die.

The world, too, is watching with cautious optimism. Governments and citizens across continents are urging that this not be just another pause before more bloodshed, but a genuine turning point. Every ceasefire that holds a little longer than the one before brings us closer to the possibility that it might one day hold forever.

This moment matters because although it is not the end of conflict, it is the beginning of what could be a moral awakening. The decision to stop fighting, even temporarily, is not a sign of weakness but of wisdom. It honors the lives already lost by protecting those who remain.

Peace will not arrive overnight, but this ceasefire, in all its fragility, offers something precious: a glimpse of what a future without constant suffering could look like. It tells the world that progress is possible — not because the pain has ended, but because humanity, even after everything, still dares to hope.

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ARTS & SPORTS

Monday, November 3, 2025

What to Expect From Term-End Recitals

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor

Whether you're a mathematician, scientist, or historian at heart, if you have a passion for music, you can perform at one of the School's term-end recitals. These recitals offer students the opportunity to share their musical involvement in front of a supportive audience. However, the term-end recitals are more than just showcases. Art Center Operations Manager Mrs. Carol Jones said, "[The recitals] give students a stopping point, something that they've worked towards."

For the Administrator of Music Ensemble and Private Lessons Mrs. Ashlee Hyatt, making the stage feel accessible is essential to encourage new performers. "There is this misunderstanding that the students performing are those who have a lot of experience," she said. "This could be your first term taking guitar or violin lessons. [They're] about getting yourself out there."

Bowen Jin '26, an experienced trumpet player and member of the Arts Concentration Program (Arts Con), appreciates having a low-stakes environment to perform new repertoire. "You're not playing in front of the whole school. You're playing in front of friends and family who understand that this is a creative space for exploration," Jin said.

Grace Yoon '26, an Arts Con bassoonist, echoed Jin's appreciation for artistic freedom without judgment or pressure from the crowd. "There's really nothing like [these recitals]," Yoon said. "I'm free to play whatever I want ... without accompaniment, with accompaniment."

Still, getting peers to attend during the busiest week of the term can be a challenge. To improve student turnout, Jin suggested making these performances more visible. "Sometimes people are not paying that close of an attention to the posters or emails," Jin admitted.

Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Hyatt share the hope that more students discover that thrill. "A lot of times they're juggling classes and other obligations. But we're [also] helping build community around the arts," Mrs. Jones said.

Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned musician, performing in the term-end recitals is a chance to explore a new skill or relearn an old passion. Regardless, even if you just want to support your peers, the recitals might be the chance to unwind during stressful exams and enjoy student-led musical performances.



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

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Criticism and Love, That's The Life of a Showgirl

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Reporter

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift has been on a victory lap since her billion-dollar-grossing Eras Tour and is recently engaged to football star Travis Kelce, all while shattering records with her newest album, *The Life of a Showgirl* (*TLOAS*). The album explores Swift's relationship with fame and the criticism she has faced as a prominent celebrity while also celebrating her love story and enduring friendships.

As with any Swift release, the album has received its fair share of criticism on social media. However, *Rolling Stone* scored TLOAS with a perfect 100 — a poetic echo of Swift's lyric "keep it one hundred" on the single track "The Fate of Ophelia."

Similarly, the Choate community holds varied opinions on *TLOAS*. Connor McLaughlin '28, a dedicated Swiftie, is proud to call this album his favorite Swift release. "The best thing would be how the album doesn't lie and how it is truly the life of a showgirl," McLaughlin said. He defines Swift's vibe on the album as edgy and upbeat, identifying the third track, "Opalite," as a stand-out.

Ryan Rousseau '28 enjoyed *TLOAS*, but critiqued a lyric in her sixth track, "Actually Romantic:" "One of the lyrics was 'a chihuahua barking in a tiny purse' ... [I] thought that was an interesting word choice. I don't know what she was trying to get across to people," Rousseau explained.

Whereas Rousseau only notes one substandard lyric, Camdyn Naficy '28 criticized the entirety of the album's lyricism. "Her writing got a lot worse over the years. [The lyrics] felt unnatural to me, and it didn't have enough heart," he said.

Admissions Director Mr. Jeff Beaton begs to differ. "I find [*TLOAS*] to be one of those albums ... that you can put your windows down and sing out loud [to]," he said.

Although Mr. Beaton is an avid Swiftie, he admits that her lyrics mark a shift from the public image she's crafted. He recognizes that Kelce is a new muse, yet insists he has no right to be critical of someone as transformative as Swift. "[Swift] is an absolute genius, and I don't think it's fair for us to be critical of someone who has transformed the music industry," he said.

Director of Student Activities Ms. Alexandra Long is another loud-and-proud Swiftie. She hosted the listening party on October 4 in the Student Activities Center (SAC) — complete with orange lighting and a bracelet-making station. Ms. Long links the online criticism to the longstanding scrutiny faced by women across the music industry. "She's a successful woman, and they've been hating her since the beginning. She has so many songs, like 'The Man,' 'Father Figure,' songs talking about [this hatred from the public]," Ms. Long said.

Even with mounting criticism, *TLOAS* has managed to soar to the top of listening charts, sparking some of the most divisive discourse of any Taylor Swift album yet. But, as Swift might say, "Baby, that's show business!"

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Serving Up Competition at Harvest Spikeball Tournament

By **Elliot Sun '28**
Reporter

On October 14, Choate celebrated Harvest Fest, featuring its annual campus-wide Spikeball Tournament that drew students to the Class of '76 Turf field for a night of fast-paced rallies, close matches, and strong school spirit. The tournament, organized by Boar Pen, featured over 20 teams competing in a single-elimination bracket. It culminated in a thrilling championship match where Mickey Delvecchio '28 and Britt Clark '28 emerged victorious against Owen Morris '26 and Lucas Carlson '26.

Boar Pen, the student organization behind Choate's school spirit events, spent days preparing for the tournament. "I think [the tournament brought] people together and [created] competition within the school," Max Weber '26 said. "I hope it brought some good memories ... And I hope that people had a good time, and that they're excited to [attend] more [events] like this."

From the start of the Harvest Fest to the end, students crowded around the nets, music blasted in the background, and people celebrated every dramatic save. Delvecchio said, "The atmosphere was great ... Even when [things] went wrong, we were able to keep our heads high and just kept pushing forward."

For Delvecchio and Clark, the chemistry was instant. "Early on in the fall, [Clark and I] were playing Spikeball. And then came the Spikeball tournament, [where] we grew closer, and that's where the magic started," Delvecchio said. Still, their path to victory wasn't easy. With games going to overtime and crowds gathering around the court, maintaining composure was key. "The most rewarding part of the event was right after we won; all of our boys came up to us [and celebrated]," he recalled.

The runner-ups were Morris and Carlson, who maintained a strong competitive spirit through the matches. "There were ... a lot of teams giving it their all, and I think it made [the tournament] ... really enjoyable," Morris said. Despite their team falling short in the finals, Carlson reflected positively on the experience as a whole while staying critical about his performance. "We're disappointed with our end result. I think in another world, we definitely could have won that tournament, but it was still very fun," he said.

With Boar Pen planning more spirit competition events for the future, there are going to be plenty more opportunities for students to display their competitive sides.



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

Teammates Dion Vinca '28 and Camdyn Naficy '28 pose for a photo.

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

HOME OR AWAY, BOARS ALWAYS ROAR!

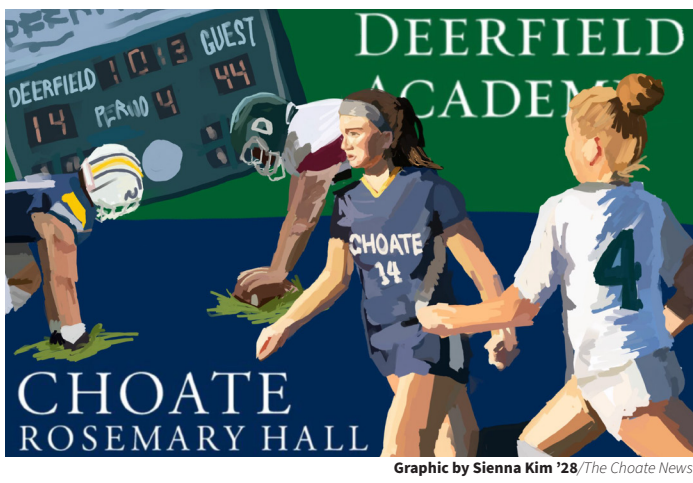
By **Elishka Roux '29**
Reporter

Since 1922, Choate Rosemary Hall and Deerfield Academy have hosted a day of athletic competitions in the fall. To the Choate community, this event is known as Deerfield Day, where athletes travel to alternating campuses and engage in football, soccer, girls' field hockey, and girls' volleyball games. With fierce competition between the two schools and in anticipation of the annual occasion, Choate athletes and coaches commented on their preferences for which school is hosting the event.

Varsity Football Head Coach LJ Spinnato did not see a difference in hosting Deerfield Day on either campus. "No matter where it is, you're seeing the best of [our performance] from a [supportive and competitive] standpoint," he said.

Girls' Varsity Soccer Coach Susan Peel Farrell also expressed a similar opinion. "My experience in 35 years is [that] it's really fun at both locations. There's always going to be a huge crowd, whether it's home or away, and there's a lot of school support ... All of that is really fun and makes [Deerfield Day] very memorable," she said.

However, Boys' Varsity Soccer player Edward Jeong '27 prefers playing at home on Deerfield Day. "[Deerfield Day games at Choate] are easier for parents [to attend] ... It's also a lot more interesting at home. We always have Boar Pen cheering for us, and everyone's close to the field."



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

Jeong also elaborated on the benefits of home-field advantage. "[If Choate hosts Deerfield Day,] we'll practice on the same field we're going to play on. That's a big help," he added.

Matt Pain '26 echoed this sentiment. "When [Deerfield Day is] at Choate, I really like it because you have all the Choate students there, and it's really supportive. It's a really fun environment, especially [when] cheering for your teams."

In contrast, Girls' Varsity Volleyball player Jessica Lin '27 enjoys going to Deerfield for the event. "The atmosphere is different [at Deerfield]," she said. "It's really exciting, really aggressive, and it's really loud. It's fun."

Beyond the competition, Deerfield Day brings together students, faculty, and alumni. Even during the spring of 2020, when Covid-19 prevented in-person events, students from both schools found creative ways to keep the tradition alive. According to Coach Farrell, the students of Choate and Deerfield "[played] ... online games where ... Choate matched up against teams from Deerfield ... It wasn't the conventional Deerfield Day, but ... two schools [came] together to have something fun."

Whether Deerfield Day happens at Choate or not, Coach Spinnato believed that the spirit of the tradition made the competitions all the more memorable. "It's an awesome experience seeing our school defend what we believe in, [and] go out [to] compete and support in every way," he said.

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The Deerfield Scroll

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The Deerfield Scroll, established in 1925, is the official student newspaper of Deerfield Academy. The Scroll seeks to uphold the spirit and integrity of journalism, to serve as an accessible platform elevating student voices, and to show that every story and opinion, when written and rooted in compassion, is worth sharing with the Deerfield community. We strive to be a newspaper of the students, by the students and for the students. Signed letters to the editor that express legitimate opinions are welcomed. We hold the right to edit for brevity. Opinion articles with names attached represent only the views of the respective writers. Opinion articles without names represent the consensus views of the editorial board.

Jeffrey Selingo: College Advising's Fall Family Weekend Keynote Speaker

KATIE KIM
Associate Editor

Every year, the College Advising Office prepares a presentation about the college admission landscape for parents during Fall Family Weekend. This year, on October 17th, Deerfield Academy's College Advising Office invited Jeffrey Selingo as the keynote speaker. An American author and journalist, Selingo wrote USA Today Bestseller and 2020 New York Times (NYT) 100 Notable Book of the Year "Who Gets In and Why: A Year Inside College Admissions" and NYT Bestseller "Dream School: Finding the College That's Right for You." Selingo delivered recommended strategies to parents for a successful college search and offered research-backed guidance on finding the right college.

Selingo had first come to campus in 2023 when Head of School John Austin, aware of Selingo's works, suggested inviting him to the Deerfield community to the Dean of College Advising Mark Spencer. In this visit, Selingo conducted a Zoom session for Deerfield parents, discussing the challenges students face in searching for their dream colleges and the need to rebuild how they prepare learners for the next step. "[Selingo] was very dynamic and extremely informative, so when I started thinking about what College Advising might do at this year's Fall Family Weekend, he was an easy thought," Mr. Spencer said.

In previous years, the Office held Q&As with the Admissions Dean at different colleges and a presentation on the advising process. However, the Academy decided to invite Selingo instead when, nine months prior to this year's Fall Family Weekend, he reached out to Mr. Spencer and informed him about his new book, "Dream School: Finding the College That's Right for You." "That book, Dream School, struck me as hitting the right tone of how to do the college search right," Mr. Spencer stated. "So, I asked him if he'd be willing to speak at this fall's Fall Family Weekend, and he graciously said yes."

In this year's keynote speech, Selingo specifically mentioned two aspects of the college admissions process that students often overlook. First, Selingo reminded students that they have more agency in the process than they often realize, encouraging them to ask thoughtful questions to find the schools that truly fit them. Chloe Hernandez '27 stated, "Before listening to Selingo's speech, I found myself looking into higher-ranked schools and naturally thought those schools would ultimately be the ones I would be applying to."

However, as Selingo noted that college rankings should not be the sole deciding factor for identifying prospective universities, Hernandez realized that "the right college depends on individual priorities like academic goals, campus culture, and personal fit, which are not captured by rankings alone."

Selingo continued to share what really matters in college and how that translates to the college search. Mr. Spencer was especially appreciative of Selingo's research that supported his argument about the right college search. "Whether it was surveying 3,000 parents or collaborating with the Burning Glass Institute to analyze job data and skills, [Selingo's] work gives students meaningful ways to think about their choices," Mr. Spencer said. College Advisor and Philosophy & Religion Department Chair Ms. Jamie Brightman added, "I like that Mr. Selingo offers a metric for understanding college quality, based on his extensive research, that helps highlight exciting, high-quality schools that might otherwise be under-the-radar for students."

Through "Dream School: Finding the College That's Right for You," Mr. Selingo urges families to deviate from the "Top 25 or bust" mindset and look beyond highly-ranked schools, revealing what actually matters in college: strong job opportunities after graduation, firsthand learning experiences, and a sense of identity.

Deerfield Debate Program Launches Year-Long Cocurricular Program

CLAIRE XIA
Associate Editor

This year marks a new chapter for Deerfield Debate, which aims not only to win, but to grow. Following the team's accomplishments during the recent years, it also celebrates the launch of its long-awaited debate co-curricular, which has transformed the program from a thrice weekly after-sitdown club into a full-fledged program.

The debate season began with Deerfield's participation at the International Independent Schools Public Speaking Competition (IISPSC) in Portland, Maine. From October 16-20, Deerfield students, John Woo '26, Casey Lee '28, and Alice Chen '28 competed at the IISPSC, hosted this year by the Waynflete School. The event gathered around 120 top speakers from North America, India, and Hong Kong for four days of intensive rounds in debate and public speaking events.

Each competitor selected three events. Woo competed in parliamentary debate, extemporaneous speaking, and cross-examination; Lee in cross-examination, parliamentary debate, and persuasive speaking; and Chen in parliamentary debate, impromptu speaking, and persuasive speaking.

"It was definitely a lot of stress and time spent in preparation—I probably rewrote my persuasive speech like 60 times," Lee reflected. "It was definitely worth it when I got there and saw all this work come to fruition and had the opportunity to meet so many new friends."

Woo captured Parliamentary Champion, marking the third consecutive year a Deerfield debater has claimed the title. Lee and Woo together placed second in cross-examination, and Lee placed third overall in the U16 division and qualified for Team USA for the World Individual Public Speaking and Debating Championships in the UK this spring. Chen finaled in persuasive speaking, ranking as the seventh overall American speaker. As a team, Deerfield placed eighth overall in the competition.

The debate members have been chosen through an audition process that drew seven competitors, who each prepared material across their chosen categories for a panel of four judges: Debate Coach Dan Houston, Deerfield teachers John Leistler and Matt Kutalowski, and an outside coach, Geoffrey Buerger. Lee mentioned her experience: "It was a very difficult audition process because everyone was obviously super talented." This "deep bench" of skill, as Dr. Houston refers to it, shows a bright future for the program.

For Dr. Houston, who has led Deerfield Debate for many years, the international experience represented more than just competition. Speakers received feedback from a panel of judges that are "just members of the community" rather than actual coaches. Dr. Houston believes that there is value in "learning how to connect with an average person," and through this competition, debaters were able to do so.

Additionally, students from Deerfield were able to form friendships with people who are usually their rivals. "The other piece of it, though, is camaraderie. When we American schools go to an international event, the Americans all become besties because we have a new opponent," Dr. Houston noted.

The connection between skill and community is at the heart of Deerfield's new debate co-curricular, which began this fall. The co-curricular, long requested by students and coaches, allows debaters to treat their passion as a full-time co-curricular rather than an extracurricular club layered on top of sports and the many other commitments Deerfield students dedicate themselves to.

"We've been working on it for a couple of years trying to make it happen," Dr. Houston explained. "People were concerned with adding an additional co-curric … and the thought that it would become a place for kids to just hang out to avoid doing other co-curric commitments." Ultimately, the need to give serious debaters a "home" overruled these initial concerns.

The new structure brings many opportunities for those passionate about this activity. Dr. Houston talked about the significance of simply having more time: "It allows us to explore other forms of debate. We've always done our little league, the Debating Association of New England Independent Schools, DANEIS … it never conflicts with sports. But there's a whole other world out there—geared toward public schools but they're a huge nationwide organization and they do all of their stuff on Fridays and Saturdays."



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Students of the co-curricular echoed the same sentiment. "It [debate] should be treated like a sport because of how much time you have to put into it and dedicate yourself to in order to succeed," Henry Fuller '28 said.

The co-curricular also includes a community engagement component. Every Tuesday, debaters visit The Bement School to run after-school debate pods for students. Fuller reflected, "We normally have them do some sort of activity, whether it's impromptu speaking or sort of round, that's like going against each other, and then we do a lesson." Chelsea Shen '27 also noted the positive effect on the students, saying, "It's been a little over a month, but we're trying to build it up to have them hit the ground running in high school."

Dr. Houston saw this partnership as a defining feature of the program. "As a club, we could never get out in the world. But as a co-curricular, we can get out there and talk to people about debate." He added that although members of the co-curricular range from novice to very experienced, all of them need to be able to teach. No matter the skill of the debater, "you don't really know something until you can teach it," he said.

Though the program is still developing, it marks a major shift in Deerfield's academic and co-curricular landscape. Alumni Justin Ahn '24, a former captain of Deerfield Debate shared, "We had so many years in a row of success, so they want to acknowledge and reward that and also make sure that level of success is sustained in the future."

From international podiums to Bement classrooms down Main Street, Deerfield's debaters represent the Academy's sense of community and values. As Houston reflected, "we went out with Choate to get gelato—they were all forming these amazing friendships and having so much fun with each other. That's the stuff I'll remember 10 years from now—not the debate rounds but these moments of awesome friendship."

How the Academy Responded to International Politics: 1970-1990

LUCIA KINDER
Features Editor

From the Vietnam drafts of the 1970s, nuclear threat of the late ’80s, and Middle Eastern crisis of the early ’90s, international war of the late 20th century marked eras of the nation—and eras of Deerfield.

The Cold War began between the United States and the Soviet Union in the aftermath of WWII and reached its peak during the Cuban Missile Crisis of the ’60s, the closest nuclear threat came to turning into warfare. The Cold War continued until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, but throughout the ’70s, national attention shifted to the Vietnam War—a proxy war between North and South Vietnam.

Former Deerfield History and Religion Teacher Michael Cary saw the early-to-mid 1970s as a “distinctly anti-institutional period,” while anti-Vietnam war movements spread across American college campuses. He found that the student body’s attitude mirrored national interest and perspective: at the time, he said, the Deerfield boys were “rowdy and rebellious.”

By 1976, military reputation had sunk. Former Deerfield English Teacher Mark Scandling, who served in the Army for four years on a chemical weapons base, described the fall in military pride after Vietnam, and the shame of wearing a military uniform.

The focus on the Cold War, then, was low, said Steve Carr Davis ’80, who came to Deerfield at the end of Vietnam. “The country was exhausted,” Mr. Cary said.

But after his election in 1981, Ronald Reagan’s presidency aimed to place the military back at the forefront of the United States and encouraged a strong pro-American ideology. “The mood changed on campus when the mood changed in the country, and that was with the election of President Reagan … he promised a new, more vital, more confident, and stronger America,” Mr. Cary said.

At Deerfield, Mr. Davis remembered discussion around current events, in particular the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979, when 66 Americans were taken hostage at the United States Embassy in Iran. Every Thursday, the school would have an international news update, informed by newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post. He added that the majority of the student body subscribed to paper newspapers, and the school also held a mock convention every four years in parallel to the national election. Classes were canceled for three days, and groups of students would represent the candidates of the party up for primary election. To stay informed, both the student body and the Academy had to actively integrate current events into conversation in and outside of the classroom.

In the late 1980s, nuclear threat hung over Deerfield and over the nation, Edward Harvey ’88 described. “It’s hard to explain to people who haven’t lived through it, but there was this sense that any day we were going to die from a nuclear war,” said Mr. Harvey, who currently works at a classified facility after spending 24 years as a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force. When he was at Deerfield, the Young Republicans club stood at the center of social dialogue, but he and other students also formed STOP, the Students and Teachers Organization to Prevent Nuclear War, and protested on Boston Common to advocate for the end of nuclear threat.

Mr. Harvey also traveled to the Soviet Union in the spring of 1987 through a Deerfield travel program and spoke with Russian students. “What was eye opening for me was … realizing they [the Soviet students] didn’t want nuclear war either. And in America, we kind of thought the Soviets wanted to kill us,” he said, adding, “I think that cultural alienation … drove a lot of the animosity and the fear that existed between the two countries.”

The Cold War was coming to an end. In 1989, then-President Reagan met with General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavík, Iceland. In the next year, the Soviet Union split into a series of independently-governed countries, ending the Cold War.

Regan’s Americanism of the late ’80s spread into the early ’90s with the beginning of the first Gulf War. “The entire emphasis changed from a focus on the Soviet Union to a focus on the Middle East,” Mr. Cary said. The first Gulf War began with the United States’ bombing of Baghdad, Iraq in 1991.

At the time, the student body remained conservative, Mr. Scandling remembered, and for the most part, firmly in favor of President George H.W. Bush’s bombing of Iraq. “I was in Barton the first night when we were bombing Baghdad, and it was like a football game… boys were sitting in the lot in the common room, cheering as the Wolf Blitzer was reporting from downtown Baghdad,” he said.

“The new point student viewpoint was distinctly pro-American; they thought that President George H.W. Bush had absolutely done the right thing,” Mr. Cary said. He added that students would chant “USA,” a cheer that originated in the Winter Olympic Games of 1980 against the Soviet hockey team, in the dining hall. Boys would dare each other to enlist and ask each other if they had the courage to fight, Mr. Scandling described. Soon, however, Scud missiles started to land in Aramco, Saudi Arabia, where a few students at the time were from. “That same space that had been full of tears two nights earlier … suddenly was solemn and quiet beyond belief, because the nature of the war became closer to home,” Mr. Scandling said.

As Mr. Cary described, the introduction of girls in 1989 brought moderation and diversity of perspective. The faculty, too, brought in a handful of guest speakers during the first Gulf War to provide an anti-war perspective, which riled up the student body. “The other side of the story is Iraq has missiles too, and some Americans might die,” Mr. Scandling said.

From the Vietnam drafts of the ’70s through the first Gulf War, the decision to fight remained at the forefront of many boys’ minds—and throughout Vietnam, in particular, the decision hung over Deerfield boys, and boys across the country. “Those were pretty serious conversations… the moral test that you would face as a young person at your age, 17 or 18,” Mr. Scandling said.

“Imagine the seniors at Deerfield having to make that choice now,” he added.

Which Game is the Most Exciting to Attend on Choate Day?

ZARA ALI
Associate Editor

On November 8th, Deerfield Academy will host Choate Rosemary Hall in the Valley to commence the annual rivalry day, where athletic teams from both schools compete to win the majority of their games. Known as “Choate Day” to Deerfield students and “Deerfield Day” to Choate students, the event brings students and faculty together to relish in competition that has lasted over a century. Some sports draw larger crowds of Deerfield students because of their exciting atmosphere; nonetheless, Deerfield’s students support their peers with the shared goal of beating Choate in mind.

The environment in the gym during volleyball games is especially packed because of the competing student sections and cheers that are shouted between the two crowds. “The students go wild in the student section with many crazy, yet very creative, chants,” Annie Egleston ’27 shared. She observed that the energy brought to the student section “lights a fire in the players to perform at their best.”

Egleston further stated how much of Girls’ Varsity Volleyball’s success comes from the bond they have on the court. Plum Schiff ’27 attested to the unity of the team, admiring how “they all work and rely on each other.” She believes that the energy they bring to the game is what makes them “such a fun team to watch on Choate Day.”

Captain of Girls Varsity Volleyball, Harmoni Dobbins ’26, expressed her excitement for Choate Day, as this season has been one of their best yet with a record of 13 wins to 1 loss. Dobbins looks forward to the match against Choate, saying, “I am so excited to see where the rest of the season takes us [Varsity Volleyball], and especially excited for Choate Day!”

Adannia Okpokwasili ’27, mentioned that the Girls Varsity Soccer game, “is always a good game.” As a player on the Girls’ Junior Varsity Soccer team, Okpokwasili was inspired by the elevated skill level that the Varsity team plays at, saying that “all the players are so talented.” Meryl Gilbert ’27, a player on Girls’ Varsity Soccer, explained the team dynamic as, “a team with constant energy and determination.” Gilbert believes they can “play to the level of any team we [Girls’ Varsity Soccer] want, especially Choate. I’m so excited to see what happens and am positive it’s going to be a super fun and competitive game.”

Sharing the same passion for the sport, in addition to managing Girls Thirds Soccer, Emmanuel Atiegha ’27 enjoyed watching Boys’ Varsity Soccer on Choate Day, “not just because it’s great to see Deerfield beat Choate, but it’s also great to see the excellent sportsmanship and teamwork that a sport like soccer develops in action.”

Theater Department Prepares to Put On Fall Production of *Blue Stockings*

TESS HO
Associate Editor

Deerfield Academy’s fall theater production: Blue Stockings, by Jessica Swale, premieres on Tuesday, October 28 in the Black Box Theater and continues through November 1st.

Set in 1898 at Girton College, Cambridge, the first college in England to admit women, Blue Stockings explores the adversities women faced during the suffrage movement. Visual & Performing Arts Department Chair and Director Mrs. Catriona Hynds explained that many of the themes in the play remain “frustratingly relevant in terms of rights being rolled back.”

She selected this “high drama” to “kick the year off with something bold” and to provide opportunities for actors at a variety of experience levels. This year’s production will feature “eight new actors who will be making their Deerfield debuts with this show,” she added.

Blue Stockings extends beyond a historical drama, serving as a socially resonant piece. Henry Cron ’26, who plays Draco Llyod, expressed that “our fall production encourages audiences to reflect on contemporary social progress.” Cron plays a character described as a wealthy, sexist male who opposes women’s educational efforts and his role requires portraying a person with deeply prejudiced views against women’s rights. Meanwhile, EC Tate ’29, who portrays the lead role of Tess Moffat, described her character as a “curious, audacious, and tenacious” middle-class female scholar who challenged the social expectations of her time.

In the previous years, Mrs. Hynds has chosen fall productions such as Dracula and The Crucible, both of which carried distinct thematic focuses. This year, however, Will Wichern ’27, who plays Will Bennett, describes that this fall’s production differs from previous ones due to “its large cast and intricate scene changes.” In comparison to The Crucible, which had four scenes, Blue Stockings includes 24 scenes, and each scene spans from five to ten minutes, so “the scene changes occur quite swiftly,” Wichern said. The production’s technical side also involves logistical settings: “Moving furniture is one of the most difficult things to execute properly,” said Sophie Brennan ’27, who plays Carolyn Addison.

Cron said, describing the play’s core theme, “I think it [Blue Stockings] is more so a thinking piece of how we can relate to the people of that time in some aspects.” He invites the audience to reflect on our current day and age and look towards how “we should continue fighting for societal problems.” Skylar Ricketts ’27, who plays The Lady in the Tea Shop, added, “I hope that the audience is able to understand the detrimental effect of misogyny on women as they are fighting for education.”

Tate hoped audience members would walk away still thinking about the play’s main themes. Mrs. Hynds said that Blue Stockings has “some haunting parallels to our modern world.” She encourages reflection on the question: “Is society regressing in terms of rights being rolled back?”



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The New Phone Policy is Killing Dorm Culture and Healthy Habits

NICHOLAS XU
Associate Editor

Imagine this: you're a sophomore dorm resident and you've just spent half of study hall baking a batch of cookies for the feed after study hall. Excitedly, you bring out the steaming tray of cookies and set it on the common room table. As the clock strikes 9:45 pm and study hall ends, the sophomores on your floor filter out into the common room…with their eyes locked on their phones. With the minimal exchange of formalities, they grab a cookie and return to their rooms, where they scroll away until they're required to turn in their phones at 10:30 pm.

Unfortunately, this is a real picture of a typical night. Deerfield's new phone policy this year collects all 9th and 10th graders' phones at night from 10:30pm to 5:30am. I believe the expansion of the phone policy is directly responsible for this sobering scene.

However, I first want to acknowledge the spirit of goodwill the administration had in mind when they crafted the new cell phone policy. Nevertheless, policies must be judged by their effects rather than their crafter's intentions.

I also want to distinguish between the new daytime and nighttime policies. I believe that the daytime policy, which prohibits phone usage from 8 am to 6:30 pm, is a mostly reasonable extension of an existing policy. I believe that almost all students already buy into the notion of being present during the school day and keeping their phones away. Many coaches I spoke to also appreciate the new policy because it increases engagement during practices.

The main complaint I have centers around the rigidity of the policy. There are many scenarios where having a phone would be reasonable: a cross-country runner listening to music on a long run down Mill Village Road, or a student on a two-hour bus ride to St. Paul's using a hotspot to finish a project. I believe that explicitly giving coaches and faculty the right to discretion would accommodate for the practical day-to-day. Respecting the spirit of the policy will also show that the administration cares more for the principle of face-to-face interactions than rigid rules.

On the other hand, I firmly believe the nighttime policy has been a substantial overreach. The administration intended the nighttime policy to promote better phone usage habits, but in reality, the policy has made screen time rare and precious for freshmen and sophomores who use now their devices in a binge-like fashion. Multiple dorm residents, proctors, and underclassmen I spoke with described how feed culture has disappeared. Spontaneous, spirited conversations over grilled cheese have been replaced by silent scrolling. The policy didn't eliminate distractions—it eliminated genuine social interactions.

In addition, this new policy makes it more difficult for underclassmen to stay in touch with their families. For new students struggling to form deep connections and students thousands of miles from home, phones can give them access to parental support. As an institution that stresses mental health, Deerfield should consider the impact the policy has on this essential connection.

Fundamentally, I believe that the nighttime policy is flawed because it does not build the good phone habits the administration claims it will. Good habits cannot be imposed upon high school students as one would with young children; students must actively choose to build them. It is thus ironic when the administration takes this agency away from students. When students think of the policy, they see an inconvenience instead of a chance for self-improvement, fostering resentment rather than the buy-in mentality needed to build habits.

The new policy doesn't make social media less addictive either. By stopping underclassmen from developing the agency and will to choose their health over the negatives of social media, the current policy creates a steep cliff that we should be fearful of. Junior year comes with a myriad of challenges, including a much tougher course load, no study hall, and unprecedented freedom with phones. It is not the year for students to be trial-and-erroring their way to habits that work for them. If the administration encourages students to grapple with unfamiliar concepts and arrive at their own understandings in classrooms, why are underclassmen denied the opportunity to grapple with their phone habits during the years they have lighter course loads?

I believe we should return to the old study hall phone system, which worked well because it transferred responsibility to students gradually. Freshmens' phones were collected and held in the common room, inaccessible during study hall; sophomores were required to leave their phones just outside their rooms—usable, if necessary; juniors were given full authority over their devices. When considering the cell phone policy, the administration should aim to create a similar, gradual program that encourages the thoughtful development of strong, personalized, and lifelong habits, not just uniform, temporary compliance at Deerfield.

Preventing "Music Making": Practice Rooms Now Locked at Night

JOHN COMITE
Buzz Editor

There are many activities to partake in at night at Deerfield with oh-so-special friends. From playing spikeball to laying in hammocks, there are plenty of things to do to stretch our minds and learn new things. However, one special Deerfield pasttime has unfortunately come to an end. The practice rooms in the basement of the Hess Center for the Arts are now locked at night. How is one supposed to practice playing their musical instruments if the quiet and secluded rooms are locked? Many students, whether after sit-down dinner or on a Friday night after spending time in the Greer, rush with their instruments from around campus and converge on the Hess. Sometimes the instruments are new and sometimes they are old, but there you can always count on the practice room walls to muffle the noise as students get to work composing rhythmic and emotional pieces of music.

The people who practice their musical skills are not the only ones who enjoy this activity. One group of students, who call themselves the "Hess Hunters," will also head for the Hess in search of their friends playing music. They just enjoy hearing music in their free time even if the musician doesn't enjoy having listeners. Some people are shy. Alas, this activity has also come to an end since the practice rooms are locked by security at the previously designated practice times.

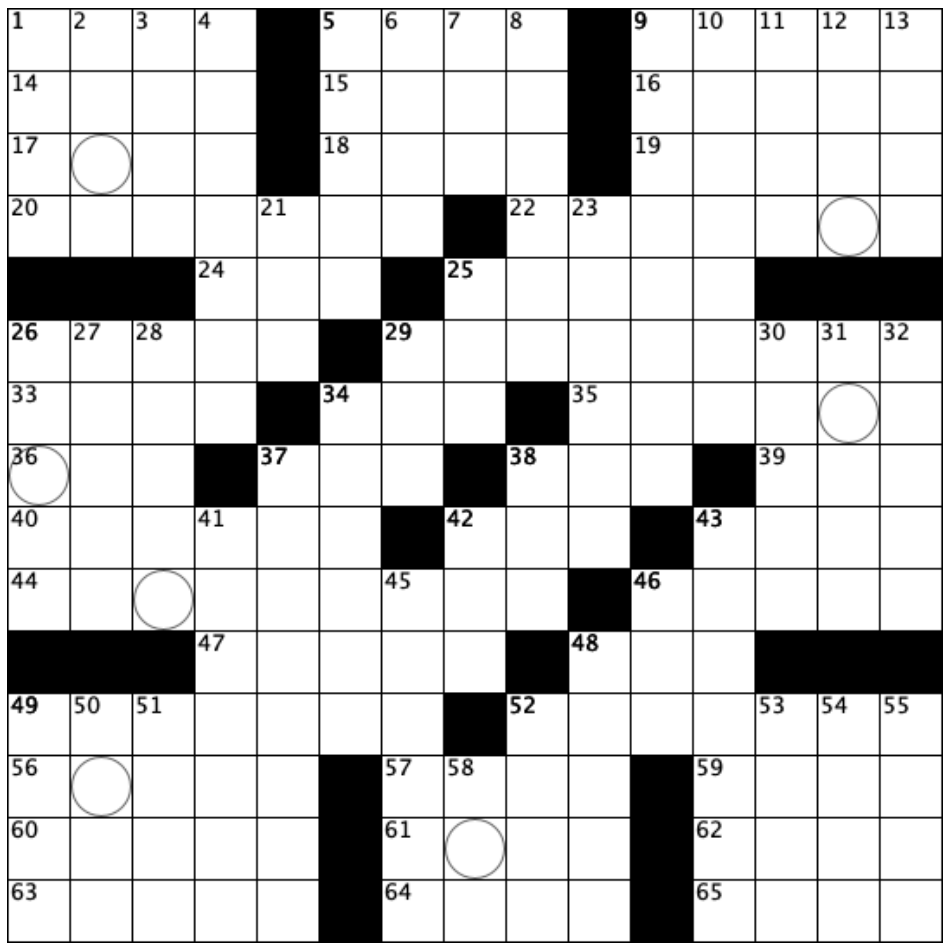
One anonymous student in the Junior class recounts a journey to the Hess with a desire to play music, obviously. Much to his disappointment, the room was locked and he could not partake in one of his favorite activities of the week.

Now, students must instead practice their music skills in other parts of the school such as their dorms, basements of other buildings, the CSGC office, or even the third floor of the MSB. Needless to say, it is unclear if musical talent is being stifled by these new regulations. Given that students are quite ingenious when they have to be, even if their averages on DAinfo do not reflect their ingenuity, it is doubtful the regulations will do anything to halt the music creation on campus.

Battle Cry

Sam Leitermann-Long

In a correctly solved puzzle, the circled letters will anagram to a common Deerfield cheer.



ACROSS
1. Type of science taught by Mr. L.
5. Latin lover's word
9. Member of a major Muslim sect
14. One going to the ITS help desk, for example
15. Type of road through East Campus
16. Hurl
17. Weapon in boxing
18. Collection of online posts
19. Encourages
20. Feeling of DA students after a long night of homework
22. What you might cheer on 44-Across
24. Surveillance device
25. Jordanian's neighbor
26. In the Evensong, what we will soon be leaving.
29. Poser (like those Choaties)
33. What you might need after a sunny day at the river
34. Faux ____
35. Winter holiday decor
36. Former soldier
37. Ref. book in the Arms
38. Member of the fam
39. Letter in Doc Houston's class
40. What some seniors might do with the AP exam
42. Appropriate
43. Part of the face
44. November 9th, 2024
46. Teenage Malfoy
47. Asian peninsula
48. Digit used for kickoffs
49. '50s car feature
52. Group of devotees
56. Scrawny one
57. Participant in a reality TV singing contest
59. Country on the Persian Gulf
60. Scandinavian coin
61. Fictional Jane
62. "Sharknado" actress Reid
63. Mails
64. Ball team from Cinnicinati
65. Goof

DOWN
1. Hilary of "The Lizzie McGuire Show"
2. Home of about 60% of the world's population
3. Assessment for DA students
4. Item for the Scroll, perhaps
5. Record
6. Members of OBC or LM, typically
7. Singer Yoko
8. Music Genre for Marley
9. Shivers
10. 61-Across, for instance
11. Shakespearean villian
12. State as fact
13. Where Blue Stockings was performed
21. Type of station where DA students might acquire snacks
23. What DA students might do to beat the Choaties
25. Fourth yrs at DA
26. Pandemonium
27. First letter in Hebrew
28. Game with a jackpot
29. Place to crash
30. Russian summer cottage
31. Moral code
32. Horned African creature
34. Russian czar known as "the Great"
37. Running on empty
38. Catch a glimpse
41. Former home of the Raiders
42. Org. for drivers
43. College students earn them
45. One who may not believe the truth
46. Put on
48. Stories
49. Sounds of dissaproval
50. DA is built on 330 of them
51. Waffle maker
52. Rival of Ferrari, in the movies
53. Type of exam
54. French spouse
55. Lose it
58. Add blonde highlights, for example