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CHOATE WELCOMES FAMILIES FOR FAMILY WEEKEND

By **Eliana Li '26**
Copy Editor

On October 24–26, the School hosted its annual Family Weekend, giving students' family members a sneak peek into life on campus. From class visits and parent-teacher conferences to activities like family bingo and an ice cream social, campus was packed with opportunities for families to connect and learn more about the Choate community.

Led by Parent and Community Relations Manager Ms. Cheryl Madden, the planning for Family Weekend involved various departments and took many months of preparation. "From the very beginning, we partner with [Director of Studies] Ms. Ellen Devine, who is integral in building the parent-teacher conference schedule and special schedule for the week. Once that is pinned down, the rest of the schedule can be penciled in. I connect with each department to coordinate events, but they each take the reins on their respective parts of the weekend," Ms. Madden said.

This year, Family Weekend included family members attending students' classes and new events that gave a wider glimpse into life at Choate. New additions included family bingo, an ice cream social, a viewing of the documentary *LIKE*, a mock School Meeting for parents, a visit by Authentic Connections speaker Ms. Nicole Hagar, lawn games, and the introduction of the "Taste of the Town" program.

During the week leading up to Family Weekend, teachers hosted virtual parent-teacher conferences. With limited opportunities for interaction between teachers and parents during the regular school year, these meetings often serve as "one of the first times teachers get to talk to a lot of the parents," Math teacher Mr. Sam Jonynas said. "It's nice for them to see that I'm a real person before coming to campus," Spanish teacher Ms. Le'ah Griggs added, "[These conferences] are important for parents to have a good rapport with



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Families gather for the Family Weekend Welcome Reception.

the teachers ... It's important for them to know that their students are in good hands."

For students, Family Weekend was especially meaningful because it allowed their family members to catch a glimpse of their daily lives. "It was nice to bring my world from home, my parents, to my life at Choate. It's a part of me that they don't get to experience a lot," Emma Bowles '25 said. It was also a chance to showcase the growth that many students have experienced during their time at Choate. "It was really great for them to see how I've progressed and become a better, more mature person," Adrienne Prater '28 said. Likewise, Bowles said, "It was nice for them to see how, through my time at Choate, I've become a leader on campus."

For many students, bringing their families to classes was the most enjoyable part of Family Weekend. "I enjoyed having my parents in my classes and for them to understand my day in the life at Choate. I was really excited for them to see what I was doing in my Algebra II class [and] my Physics class," Prater said. Elliana Patel '26 echoed this sentiment: "I think I have a really amazing set of teachers this year, so being able to have my parents interact with them and understand what classes I really enjoy being in was nice," she said.

Student-athletes and performers could also showcase their

talents outside of the classroom during various athletic games and the Fall Ensembles Concert, which took place on the evening of October 25. "I really enjoyed getting to showcase the hard work we put into [the] Wind Ensemble for my family. It turned out to be a great performance," Jayden Dai '25 said.

Many parents reflected on Family Weekend with gratitude. Bowles's parents, Dr. Claire Bowles P'25 and Mr. Jesse Bowles P'25, said, "We really appreciated seeing [our daughter] 'in her element.' It gave us the chance to understand what sending her to Choate really means. We were really impressed to see that it has all paid off." Chief Communications Officer Ms. Alison Cady, parent of Annie Cady '26, also described the weekend as rewarding. "I enjoyed the opportunity to visit classes and attend activities with my daughter. It honestly reinforced the value of a lot of the work we do the rest of the year," she said.

Over the span of three days, Family Weekend allowed families a chance to experience life at Choate. "It gave the School an opportunity to share some of the experiences that make attending so special," Ms. Cady said. Reflecting on the event's impact, Ms. Madden added, "Choate is more than just a community — it's a family."

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2024 PHILLIPS SPEAKER SPOTLIGHTS THE POWER OF GEN Z

By **Eliza O'Neill '27**
Reporter

Choate welcomed this year's Phillips Speaker, Mr. John Della Volpe, to campus on November 1. Mr. Della Volpe, Director of Polling at Harvard's Kennedy Institute of Politics, is an expert in political analysis and generational engagement. During his visit, he addressed the Choate community during School Meeting, hosted a Q&A, attended individual classes, and conversed with students. His visit was an opportunity for members of the community to explore the concerns of today's youth, the polarization of political discourse, and the growing influence of Gen Z.

The process of selecting a Phillips Speaker is intricate. Each year, members of the HPRSS Department aim to identify an individual who can speak to current issues in ways that will resonate with students and offer valuable insights into present-day challenges. According to Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine, the selection committee works closely with faculty, students, and senior leadership by conducting a thorough review of current events to find a speaker who can engage with relevant topics.

This year, the committee sought to highlight the ambition and resilience of Gen Z, a generation often misunderstood by older generations. Ms. Devine said, "This generation has the capacity to be the change they hope to see in the world. Mr. Della Volpe's work focuses on this directly, and with the timing of the election, he was the ideal person to come to campus."

Mr. Della Volpe's presentation featured compelling personal insights and research-based observations. He emphasized the shared concerns of young people across the political spectrum, noting that while the media often portrays political divisions among them, Gen Z is united by a collective desire to create a better future. "Gen Z is incredibly resilient," Mr. Della Volpe said. "While they are deeply concerned about their future — particularly regarding climate change, economic instability, and mental health — they also demonstrate a strong desire to shape the future in a positive direction."

He also addressed the misconception that Gen Z is politically disengaged. Mr. Della Volpe highlighted that young people are more politically active than previous generations, mentioning the statistic that Gen Z's participation rate in midterm elections is double the percentage of Mr. Della Volpe's generation when they were the age of Gen Z. He also pointed out the widespread success of social movements driven by the youth, such as those addressing gun violence, climate change, and student debt.

Mr. Della Volpe also emphasized the ability of young people to influence other young people socially and politically. Even though Gen Z is often perceived as burdened by various challenges, Mr. Della Volpe reminded students that this generation has a unique capacity for mobilizing change. "The future is in their hands," he said. Gen Z is already playing a major role in advocating for social, environmental, and political change, from local to global movements. Mr. Della

Volpe called on older generations to support the efforts of Gen Z by empowering them to lead in ways that reflect their values.

Mr. Della Volpe's message resonated well with the Choate community. Sofia Schmidt '25 said, "The fact that [Mr. Della Volpe] emphasized how impactful Gen Z is as a voter base gives me hope personally. The fact that Gen Z played such a large role in the [2024 Presidential Election] also makes me feel like I have more of a say and a voice."

Andy Stahlman '26 reflected on Mr. Della Volpe's argument that young people are ultimately concerned about the same issues regardless of political beliefs. "I felt like the core message that Mr. Della Volpe got across was [that] our generation, regardless of political affiliation, cares more about each other than about being divided by politics," he said. "We are all founded on the same moral values of empathy, and our generation is united unlike any before."

Mr. Della Volpe's visit left a lasting impact and a sense of heightened responsibility on the Choate community. His insights into Gen Z's shared concerns, the importance of political engagement, and the potential for positive change left students feeling inspired to shape the future. "Mr. Della Volpe opened my eyes up to the resilience of our generation. Especially in such contentious and uncertain times, our generation needs to step up to lead," Stahlman said.

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Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Mr. John Della Volpe presents to the community about the power of Gen Z.

Annual SLS Presentations Share Findings Across Multiple Fields

By **Deyi Meng '26**
Copy Editor

Curiosity and excitement lit up the Getz and Elman Auditoriums on November 3 and 7 as students attended the annual Student Lecture Series (SLS). Members of the Science Research Program (SRP) in the Class of 2025 gave 15-minute-long TED talk style presentations on di-

verse research topics, ranging from neuroscience to astrophysics to cancer biology.

SRP is a four-term signature program, spanning from a student's fifth-form year to their sixth-form fall, designed to provide them with an authentic scientific research experience. The program is split into two cohorts, one focusing on the quantitative sciences and the other focusing

on the biological sciences, with eight members in each cohort.

Students delve into complex topics, analyze primary scientific literature, and learn common laboratory techniques. During the summer between their fifth- and sixth-form years, students complete an internship at a professional laboratory of their choice for 8-10 weeks, witnessing and conducting cutting-edge scientific research. In the fall of their sixth-form year, students write a lengthy review-style article and prepare to give a 15-minute presentation during SLS summarizing their summer work.

SRP differs from other offerings at Choate by providing students with real-world experiences outside the classroom. "This is one of our few programs where students go outside the Choate community and are being evaluated by people outside the Choate community," Dr. Chris Hogue, director of the quantitative co-

hort, said. Echoing this sentiment, Dr. Selena Gell, director of the biological cohort, said, "Not only do you learn about science in class, but you actually get to go out and do real science in the world."

SLS allows student researchers to share their findings with the Choate community in an accessible manner. "The primary goal is that the people who come to SLS are entertained, that they learn a lot, and they come away with a greater sense of what it's like to be a scientist and the kind of work that's being done in the world right now," Dr. Hogue said. Students start creating their slideshows during the summer and spent the fall term refining their talks and receiving feedback from their classmates and teacher.

However, preparing for the presentations can often be challenging, as students

are tasked with simplifying complex information for audience members unfamiliar with their research topics. Worth Denison '25, a member of the quantitative sciences cohort who presented on the bulk synthesis of carbon nanomaterials utilizing flash joule heating, said, "You've gotten so used to your topic and spent so much time researching that it may seem easy to you, but to others, it becomes difficult."

Audience members reacted positively to SLS because it allowed them to learn about topics different from those in a classic high school curriculum. "I think they did a really great job breaking it down so that even people like me, who do not know anything about these subjects, were able to understand what they did," attendee Chloe Lee '26 said.

Through SRP, students acquire important skills such as working in a professional en-

vironment, technical writing, public speaking, and critical thinking. "I definitely learned a lot, not just about the scientific field I was interested in, but also about myself and my work habits, and how to be more confident in the work that I do," Teniola Obayomi '25, a member of the biological sciences cohort who researched mechanical force transmission along the chromatin fiber in soft nuclei, said.

The program also emphasizes collaboration as a critical component of the scientific research process. "You have to learn how to think and listen to others, and how to propose ideas and refine them through conversation and input. So learning to work collaboratively is a really important part of SRP," Dr. Gell said.

Sixth-formers noted a particular appreciation for the ca-

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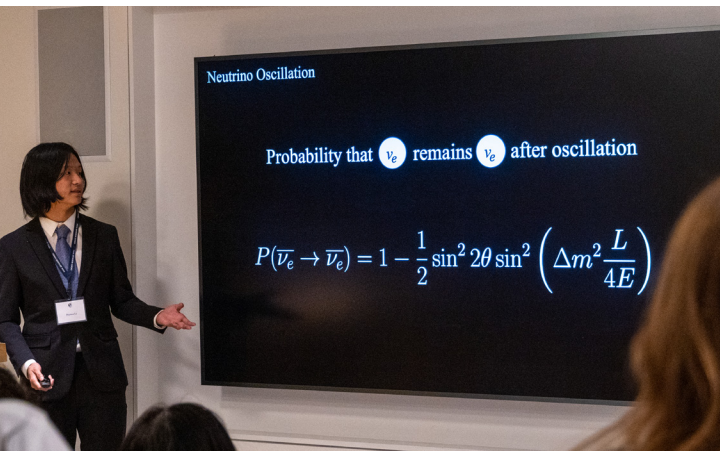


Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Peyton Li '25 presents on neutrino oscillations during SLS.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Richard Straub, Leah Han '27, and @gochoate on Instagram.

CHOATE FRINGE FESTIVAL
2025
AUDITIONS WILL BE HELD ON DECEMBER 4TH AND 5TH IN GELB AUDITORIUM

CHOATE LIGHTS UP WITH DIWALI FESTIVITIES

By **Eshana Hora '27**
Reporter

On November 1, the smell of aromatic Indian food wafted through the air of Ruutz-Rees, where the Choate South Asian Association (CSAA) celebrated the festival of Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights. This five-day festival, which started on October 31, commemorates the triumph of good over evil in South Asian culture.

Throughout the year, CSAA shares South Asian culture through celebrations of holidays, with Diwali being their biggest annual event. Junior Officer Zahabiya Khokha '27 emphasized that the goal of celebrating Diwali at Choate was not only to share South Asian culture with community members

who are less familiar with it, but also to “give people the feeling that they’re back at home, still celebrating with their family and friends.”

In addition to providing Indian food and drinks, including piping hot samosas and sweet mango lassi, there were opportunities to paint traditional Indian lamps and receive a henna tattoo, a traditional South Asian red dye. These were done by Ms. Adila Khan, the founder of a local henna business called The Art of Henna. Upbeat Hindi music echoed throughout the entire building, adding to the lively atmosphere.

In previous years, the event was held in the Andrew Mellon Library; however, this year, due to the Library’s new renovations, it was held in Ruutz-Rees, a slightly

smaller space. Despite this limitation, Ruutz-Rees was filled with the buzz of students and faculty alike. Biology teacher and faculty club adviser for CSAA Ms. Mallika Beach-Mehrotra shared that the turnout rate was incredibly high, and students stayed for hours. “Everyone had a really nice time just sitting and talking and getting to enjoy each other’s company,” Ms. Beach-Mehrotra said.

Attendee Eliza Aldrich '27 appreciated the event. “It’s just a really nice, warm atmosphere ... I think it’s so cool to have some awareness of other traditions,” she said. This sentiment was echoed by other event attendees, including Rielle Reyes '27, who found the importance of Diwali to be “celebrating each other’s cultures and how much you can enjoy learning from one another.”

Despite its success, the CSAA cabinet faced challenges while organizing the Diwali event. Khokha said, “I think the toughest part of planning was probably finding the right time because so much stuff has been going on recently, and it’s hard to celebrate Diwali on the day of Diwali.” The Phillips speaker on November 1 also limited the cabinet’s opportunities to promote the event.

Nonetheless, according to CSAA Vice President Sundari von Wentzel '25, seeing the Choate community come together and celebrate Diwali has been “incredibly rewarding.” Von Wentzel said, “What I love about this event is that many non-South Asian community members come to celebrate their friends’ and community members’ cultures, which, as a South Asian student, makes me feel so seen and appreciated.”

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Photo by Eliza Aldrich '27/The Choate News

Students enjoy Indian food and drinks during the Diwali event.



Photo by Eliza Aldrich '27/The Choate News

Students showcase their henna tattoos.

SRP Band Dazzles Community with Musical Performance



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

SRP students perform “Starman” by David Bowie during School Meeting.

By **Harry Kim '28**
Reporter

Amidst one seemingly normal School Meeting, the Colony Hall stage curtains slowly drew open, revealing a group of senior students holding various instruments. Under the name “SRP Band,” the senior biological and quantitative cohorts of the Science Research Program (SRP) performed “Starman” by David Bowie.

Following a year of scientific research and a summer of interning at professional laboratories in various realms of science, this year’s SRP students continued the tradition from last year of holding a musical performance to announce the annual Student Lecture Series (SLS), where they present their summer work to the Choate community.

Andrew Kim '25, who played the trombone for the performance

and studied particle physics over the summer, said, “The plan all started with our motivation to top SRP '24’s musical performance last year.” The idea to perform “Starman” came from Stan Cho '25, who played the drums for the performance and researched inflammatory proteins in arteriovenous fistulae. Joyce Liu '25, who played the acoustic guitar and researched astrophysics, wrote the musical arrangements for Emma Bowles '25 and Alex Hong '25 on the electric guitar, Katerina Karathanasis '25 on the bass, Kim and Andrew Ju '25 on the trombone, Jeffrey Moon '25 on the trumpet, Cho on the drums, Teniola Obayomi '25, Worth Denison '25, Rio Federman '25, Justin Lee '25, and Caroline Kim '25 on the maracas and tambourine, Libby Dai '25 on the electric violin, and Peyton Li '25 on the keyboard. Kim and Liu were also responsible for singing the lyrics to “Starman.”

Although the group only had two rehearsals, they still delivered a spectacular performance, which served as a bonding moment for members of both SRP cohorts. “We had obstacles along the way with scheduling due to everyone’s commitments, but I feel like we eventually figured it out,” Kim said. “[I] definitely feel like I got closer with the other cohort [the biology cohort].”

The SRP band’s musical performance garnered positive feedback from the community. “The performance was incredible, and it definitely drew my attention,” Daniel Shim '28 said. Although the main focus of the performance was to introduce SLS, the group managed to showcase their talents in other areas and their wide array of interests.

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CONNECTICUT ATTORNEY GENERAL VISITS CHOATE

By **Matthew Zhang '28**
Reporter

On November 5, Choate welcomed Connecticut Attorney General Mr. William Tong to campus during the election programming block. Mr. Tong spoke about his childhood, his path to becoming attorney general, and his thoughts about the 2024 presidential election, culminating with a discussion moderated by Quinn Farmer '25 and Nilan Kathir '25.

Head of Academic and Student Life Ms. Jenny Elliott, who coordinated the election programming block in close collaboration with Humanities teacher and Third-form Dean Mr. Jonas Akins, hoped to bring Mr. Tong to campus after their work together as peers and former classmates at Phillips Andover Academy. “I thought his story was compelling, accessible, and inspiring. It felt to me that [it] was a good perspective

from which our students could learn,” Ms. Elliott said. “I also felt super lucky to be able to be in touch with someone who’s serving in this state at this time during the election.” Reflecting upon the goal of this event, Mr. Akins said, “You’re only here [at Choate] for one presidential election cycle, and so we feel it’s pretty important to help folks understand what that election process involves.”

Mr. Tong began his visit by speaking about how his experience working in the kitchen of his immigrant parents’ restaurant defined him and inspired him to become a lawyer. Instead of simply serving customers and being invisible behind kitchen doors, Mr. Tong wanted his family’s hard work to be recognized by community members, which led him to work towards becoming an attorney. For Mr. Tong, the possibility to move from working in a restaurant kitchen

to serving as an elected official in a single generation represents the importance of democracy in the United States.

Following Mr. Tong’s introduction, Farmer and Kathir moderated a Q&A session with Mr. Tong. They discussed Mr. Tong’s daily work as the Connecticut Attorney General, such as conducting investigations into social media companies, pharmaceutical companies, and the opioid crisis, as well as how his political insight was shaped by his experience at boarding school.

Reflecting on the conversation, Farmer said, “It was interesting to hear about how bipartisanship works between attorney generals in different states.” The audience similarly appreciated Mr. Tong’s visit. Eli Cain '28 noted that his favorite part was when Mr. Tong talked about going to the voting boxes. “He went straight to the Repub-



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Connecticut Attorney General Mr. William Tong speaks about his responsibilities.

licans, even though he is a Democrat, and he cracked up a few jokes,” he said. “I like that because a lot of people, especially nowadays, would just go to the people that like them and stand by them, but I think it’s important to respect the other party.”

Mr. Tong’s visit to Choate provided students and faculty with new insights about the inner workings of being an attorney general and the significance of election day. “I hope that [students] felt energized to engage actively in democracy, and I hope

that they take seriously their responsibilities to form their own opinions about political platforms [and] political views on voting decisions,” Ms. Elliott said.

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LIBRARY SPOTLIGHTS NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

By **Casey Lippmann '26**
Reporter

This November, the Andrew Mellon Library team curated a display of books by Indigenous authors and historical resources in honor of Native American Heritage Month. The team worked to choose a collection of books that represent the Native American people and the connection of their community to Choate.

The main goal of this display is to raise awareness and represent the different traditions and customs of Native American tribes across the United States. The main poster displays an example of a basket woven by the Quinnipiac Tribe, which is local to New Haven County. Furthermore, this display strives to keep students engaged and provide accessible information to help them learn new things.

The arrangement showcases a multitude of books, ebooks



Photo by Scarlett Park '27/The Choate News

Library highlights Native American Heritage Month with display.

with QR codes, and carefully selected databases, including *There There* by Tommy Orange and *A Council of Dolls* by Mona Susan Power. Teaching and Resource Librarian Ms. Nicole Brothers, who curated the display, said, “There are a lot of fantastic resources, but we wanted

to be sure that we [chose] what fits best within the community.”

The display also includes insight into Choate’s history of celebrating Indigenous cultures. According to an archived issue of *The Choate News* dated November 11, 1994, Choate hosted the Navajo Nation exchange program

in which nine students from Window Rock High School in Window Rock, Arizona, the capital of the Navajo Nation, visited Choate for a few weeks to attend classes and experience a different schooling environment. Likewise, nine Choate students traveled to Window Rock High School to engage with Indigenous culture through community service projects, classes on Navajo language and literature, and opportunities to speak with tribal elders about Navajo life.

Ultimately, Ms. Brothers hopes that “people take away that [Native American people] are here, and [that] they are a part of their community as well.” The Library hopes that through the display, students can learn more about Native American Heritage Month and walk away with more knowledge than they came in with.

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SRP Students Present Research Through SLS

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maraderie fostered within the cohorts. Joyce Liu '25, who presented on using the tip of red giant branch stars to calculate the distance to an isolated dwarf galaxy, said, “Working with the other seven members of the cohort makes everything easier; it makes you feel a lot better, and [it’s] a lot more comforting when you’re talking to them because you’re all going through the same [experience].”

Despite the successes that come from SRP, the program also presents numerous challenges. Libby Dai '25, a member of the biological sciences cohort who presented on computational analyses of postmortem retina cells, said, “The independent learning part is definitely really difficult, especially when you first begin reading papers; there are so many ways to learn

that you haven’t figured out yet.” Moreover, SRP typically involves a heavier and more demanding workload than other classes. “One of the most daunting things about SRP is the spring research article we have to write that ends up being dozens of pages long,” Denison said.

SLS proved to be a valuable experience for the Class of 2025 cohort, allowing members to present their findings from hours of hard work and exposing the community to unique research topics. “It’s a culminating event to this SRP experience. For me, it’s just a moment to be proud and reflect on how far these students have come over the course of their SRP journey, and I’m really grateful that we have this platform where we can share that with the whole Choate community,” Dr. Gell said.

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CONNECTICUT RECOVERS FROM ROCKY NECK STATE PARK WILDFIRE

By **Rachel Fan '27**
Copy Editor

On November 2, a brush fire consumed approximately 46 acres of Rocky Neck State Park in East Lyme, Connecticut. The fire prompted immediate action from local and state authorities, and the trail system closed as firefighters took on the flames.

Although the cause of the fire is unknown, its origin was traced to the park's hiking trails, an area frequented by visitors for its natural beauty. With record-setting warm temperatures and strong winds throughout Connecticut, the risk of fire increased in East Lyme, which may have contributed to this incident.

Upon receiving reports of the fire, the East Lyme Fire Department, in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), swiftly mobilized to contain the flames. Mr. James Fowler, DEEP's Senior Advisor on Outreach and Engagement, emphasized the severity of the situation, stating, "Connecticut is experiencing one of the driest fall seasons on record, with minimal rainfall since August."

The rapid spread of the wildfire necessitated additional support. A specialized 20-person crew from California, known as the "Hotshots," was deployed to assist in containment efforts. Their expertise proved invaluable in establishing fire lines and conducting backburns to prevent further spread. "They're working on making a box around it to help hopefully contain it. We're also going to start what we call 'back burns' to try to burn some of the areas towards the fire



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

to prevent it from spreading," Deputy East Lyme Fire Chief Mr. Eric Quinn noted.

The park's closure was necessary to ensure public safety and to facilitate firefighting operations. Residents in the nearby Giants Neck neighborhood were advised to remain vigilant due to the thick smoke permeating the area. "People that live in the Giants Neck [Niantic] neighborhood, just be mindful that there's going to be a lot of smoke coming through the area," Mr. Quinn warned.

This incident at Rocky Neck State Park was not isolated. This season, Connecticut faced an alarming surge in brush fires, with DEEP monitoring 126 brush fires statewide and actively managing 106 of them. The unprecedented dry conditions led Connecticut Governor Mr. Ned Lamont to declare a state of emergency and implement a statewide burn ban. This ban prohibited using out-

door grills, fire pits, campfires, and flames outdoors in state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas. "The dry foliage and windy conditions significantly increase the potential for fire spread," Mr. Fowler said. "DEEP is closely monitoring these conditions to protect the state's 1.8 million acres of forested land."

By November 3, the firefighting efforts at Rocky Neck transitioned into the "mop-up" phase, which focused on extinguishing remaining hot spots to prevent re-ignition. This thorough process involved digging up and dousing smoldering areas, which was complicated given the park's challenging terrain. "Resources are currently engaged in mop-up activities today, and progress is going well. Crews plan to work until dark and to return tomorrow to monitor and continue with mop-up operations," Mr. Fowler explained. Fire Control Officer Richard Schenk

explained the importance of containing the fires' spread, even if they haven't been completely extinguished. "We're not out of the woods yet. What we've been doing is holding fires really small," Officer Schenk said.

As the state grappled with these environmental challenges, DEEP emphasized the importance of public awareness and adherence to safety guidelines. Residents were urged to avoid activities that could inadvertently ignite fires, such as improper disposal of smoking materials or using equipment that could generate sparks. Mr. Fowler highlighted the human impact on wildfires, noting, "Nine out of ten ... wildfires are started by humans." As we move forward from this disaster, it is important to do all that we can to take care of our Connecticut forests.

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Honoring Local Veterans

By **Reid Bock '27**
Staff Reporter

Wallingford hosted its annual Veterans Day Service, an event dedicated to honoring those who have served in the United States military, on November 11. This gathering aimed to recognize and pay tribute to veterans from all branches of the armed forces, including the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Reserves.

The Wallingford Veterans Memorial Committee, a devoted group of local veterans, planned both this event and a Memorial Day observance. Mr. George Messier, a member of the Veterans Memorial Committee, said, "[The Committee's responsibilities are to] organize and script ... and have ceremonial pageantry, such as it is appropriate to the event." In doing so, they hope to "recognize that sacrifice, that service, and honor [veterans] for what they've done," he added.

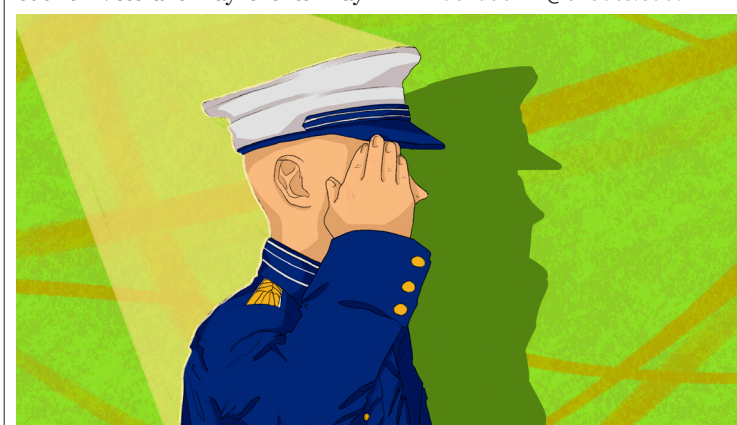
Unlike Memorial Day, which explicitly honors fallen service members, Veterans Day has a broader focus: it celebrates all veterans, including those who have returned from service. While turnout for Veterans Day events may

be smaller than Memorial Day celebrations, which often include parades and floats, the Wallingford community continues to support its veterans and their contributions through the annual service.

The hard work Wallingford has poured into this year's Veterans Day Service is a reminder of the town's ongoing commitment to recognizing and supporting those who have served in the military. Mr. Messier noted, "The veterans population is relatively small [in Wallingford] in consideration of the whole country, but their sacrifice is great." The Wallingford Veterans Memorial Committee hopes to foster a sense of inclusion and gratitude within the community and commend the diverse experiences of veterans from different wartime eras.

The Veterans Memorial Committee encourages all Wallingford residents to attend the service and show their support for local veterans in the future so that all veterans are shown the appreciation and respect they deserve.

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

WPHT Ceremony Highlights Funeral and Medicinal Practices of the Past

By **Maia Shah '27**
Staff Reporter



Photo courtesy of Richard Straub

The reenactment at the Nehemiah Royce house.

In light of the spooky season this fall, the Wallingford Historic Preservation Trust (WHPT) held a community event in the town's oldest house to educate the public on illness and death in colonial Wallingford. Located on North Main Street, the Nehemiah Royce House contains a piece of Wallingford's rich history, dating back to the first settlers of New England in 1670. What many don't realize, though, is the short lifespan of the house's earliest inhabitants — many died quite young due to the rapid spread of communicable diseases, inadequate medical attention, and, subsequently, the escalation of minor illnesses.

Because disease was so prevalent in the 1600s, WHPT members organized a ceremony featuring a reenactment of the funeral practices of 17th-cen-

tury Wallingford, while simultaneously displaying the splendor of the newly renovated Royce house.

The ceremony took place on October 24 and was open to the public. It featured acting by members of WHPT and was complete with historically accurate costumes and props. The actors highlighted aspects of the house designed for funerals, such as a small side door used exclusively for ceremonies, positioned in such a way that a coffin would fit perfectly through the opening.

The event was held in honor of Robert and Mary Royce's daughter, who passed away in the 1690s. Volunteers replicated her coffin, which was adorned with rosemary and juniper, and hung a black wreath on the main entrance. There were refreshments for attendees, followed by a briefing on the medicinal practices of early Wallingford residents.

Mr. Jerry Farrell '86, a WHPT board member, ap-

plauded the success of the event and hopes to continue it as an annual tradition. He said, "The Nehemiah Royce House was constructed in 1672, so we are trying to educate people about life during that early period in Wallingford." He hopes attendees were "reminded how invaluable medical care is to life in American society." He added, "Without good medical care, people died...from things that today we would easily cure."

HPRSS teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano attended the ceremony. Reflecting on her experience, she said, "Wallingford is rich in history, particularly regarding the first colonial settlers of New England. Through events put on by the WHPT in an effort to educate the community, the Royce House helps showcase the progress and stark contrast between our ways of life and that of the town's original inhabitants."

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LITERACY VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF EDUCATION

By **Alexis Lee '28**
Reporter

Literacy Volunteers is a nonprofit organization that provides free literacy education to adults in New Haven, Meriden, Wallingford, and Naugatuck Valley. The organization trains volunteer tutors to teach adults who could not receive or complete a formal education.

Founded nationally in 1962 by Mrs. Ruth Colvin, who passed away this August at the age of 107, Literacy Volunteers was expanded into Connecticut by Ms. Elizabeth Gumbart in 1975. Now, the organization has recruited and trained over 6,500 tutors, who have educated more than 22,000 adults.

The mission of Literacy Volunteers began with a focus on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). As Ms. Erica Hoffman, the Regional Program Director, explained, "Literacy was the primary reason they established [the organization]." Today, Literacy Volunteers offers two main programs: basic literacy for U.S.-born individuals and ESOL for people whose first language is not English. Students in these programs can learn reading and math skills, acquire a second language, work toward citizenship, or prepare for job training programs.

Working closely with the Connecticut State Department of Education, Literacy Volunteers focuses on workplace literacy and offers one-on-one tutoring for job placement and military entry exams. It also partners with local businesses and nonprofits to provide on-site English classes. Ms. Hoffman noted, "We utilize all volunteers — they don't have to be certified teachers; however, the Connecticut State Department of Education requires us to assess students with the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems to help guide tutors in working with them."

Executive Director Ms. Mary Lou Roels highlighted the need for programs like Literacy Volunteers, pointing out that "48 million adults in the U.S. have low literacy skills." Through their work, Literacy Volunteers has helped residents in Wallingford and the Greater New Haven area achieve their goals — whether that be earning their GED, accessing job training, or navigating their communities more confidently.

Ms. Hoffman shared the notable success story of one of her students: "He joined Literacy Volunteers seven years ago wanting to read the Bible. With the help of his tutor, he became a pastor and is currently writing a book. He also voted [early] for

the first time this past Saturday," she said.

Like many nonprofit organizations, Literacy Volunteers faces challenges finding funds. Ms. Hoffman explained, "New Haven, as a sanctuary city, has a growing number of refugees, which affects our programs. Sanctuary cities like New Haven limit reporting of immigration status to national agencies. We have large waitlists but not enough textbooks." During the Covid-19 pandemic, their training shifted to Zoom online, which helped bridge these gaps. Now, 75 percent of its tutoring is online, utilizing online resources and tools.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the organization aims to expand its reach, seeking additional funding from public and private sources to improve resources and enhance the quality of instruction. Ms. Roels expressed optimism for the future: "Literacy Volunteers is climbing this mountain of making wonderful changes." They will continue to foster partnerships with adult learners, tutors, and community members to help individuals and families thrive.

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Graphic by Ann Ma '28/The Choate News

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF CHOATE'S ART REQUIREMENT

By **Ethan Zhang '26**
Copy Editor

Many students critique Choate's mandatory art requirement, complaining that their schedule is too busy or there just isn't any point in them taking an art elective. However, such complaints ignore the reasoning behind the requirement: to help students find new ways to express themselves and to try new things.

In the summer before my freshman year, I remember frantically scouring over the course catalog to find the spe-

cific art elective that would interest me among the multitude of options offered at Choate. As not a particularly artsy person, I signed up for the course that seemed easiest to me: Ceramics: Wheel Throwing I.

Due to the high demand for that class the following fall term, I was placed in the introductory acting course, Improvisation. As an avid journalist, I found writing to be an easy method of expression, unlike acting, which I thought to be nothing but an easy way to embarrass myself.

After awkwardly singing in front of my new classmates and

failing to juggle on my first day in Improvisation, I hated it. However, I was required to return and finish the class to fulfill my graduation requirement. Throughout the term, my acting teacher, Mr. Bari Robinson, taught me much more than how to simply act or improvise a scene; he taught me to be comfortable being uncomfortable — to embrace the impact of the floor as I attempted my first handstand, to love the awkward silence when my mind blanked in an improvised scene, to appreciate every ball I dropped as I improved my nearly non-existent juggling skills.

By challenging myself three times a week and fully engaging in the class, I discovered that acting serves as another form of expression — almost like a physical form of journaling. Without Choate's graduation requirement of three art course credits, I would have immediately dropped Improvisation and never stepped outside my comfort zone. Consequently, I wouldn't have learned how valuable acting could be.

While this is just my experience, Choate's art requirement can help every single student embrace discomfort or, at the very least, learn something about themselves. The students who are hesitant to try something new related to art, like the younger me, must embrace the challenge of trying something new. Doing something challenging has so much value, and Choate's requirement helps foster it.

The most important thing I did in Mr. Robinson's class was to apply myself. Choate's requirement helps students by forcing them to be in an environment that allows them to grow every day, but only the student can determine how much they gain from the course. It is such a blessing to have the opportunity to learn and find new ways to express yourself, and since it's rightfully a graduation requirement, why not give it everything you have?

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Graphic by **Rielle Reyes '27**/The Choate News

A CASE FOR ADDED ELECTION PROGRAMMING



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

Election Day is a crucial event in America: it is the day when citizens exercise their civic duty and vote to elect leaders to shape the country's future. For Choate students, Election Day brings a wide range of emotions: curiosity, excitement, and maybe some nervousness about the future. It is a day when many want to understand what's happening in the country and the effects of certain candidates' success. Given these needs and opportunities for learning, Choate should increase the amount of programming on Election Day. In particular, rather than putting all election programming on Election Day, the School should implement discussions and programming in advance to create a space for constructive dialogue for learning about differing viewpoints.

The tension surrounding elections builds up over the four-year campaign cycle. Many students feel nervous or even stressed about politics when elections arrive, especially if they worry about changes that may come after an election. Having spaces at school where we can talk about our feelings with the community could help students feel more at ease amid a rollercoaster of emotions.

Whether it is additional advising blocks, dedicated form meetings, or school-run events through political clubs, such forums would provide an alternative to processing intense emotions alone or with close friends where it's easy to fall into echo chambers and only hear perspectives you already agree with. Students need spaces to openly share different voices and viewpoints, and Choate needs to create these opportunities to process elections healthily and constructively.

Additionally, increased programming before Election Day would allow Choate to promote restorative conversations, engagement, and understanding of opposing viewpoints over a more spread-out period of time. Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 explained reasons for Choate's election programming: "We want you to understand the value and importance of elections and understand your local elections and how powerful those are," he said. "[It is important] to have conversations that are nuanced without disparaging someone's identity or not recognizing their humanity."

The Administration clearly has the right intent with election programming; however, by adding discussions about respecting varying political perspectives before election day, students can be better acclimated to the values that the School is promoting. Having more structured discussions and reflections ahead of time will build a culture of respect and empathy. In addition to promoting open-mindedness and respect within the Choate community, increasing election programming before Election day will help prepare students navigate difficult conversations beyond the election cycle and their time at Choate.

Ultimately, increased and earlier programming at Choate before Election Day will enhance students' understanding of the election process and alternative perspectives, support emotional well-being, and strengthen Choate's community.

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WHICH IS WORSE? JUNIOR SPRING VS. SENIOR FALL

By **Chelsea Branch '25**
Copy Editor

Junior-year spring and senior-year fall are widely known as the two most intellectually and emotionally strenuous terms of a student's Choate career. Don't believe me? Look into any upperclassman's eyes and try to find a glimmer of the wonder that characterizes freshmen and sophomores. Spoiler alert: You won't! There's no denying that both periods are grueling, yet the question remains: which of these eras is truly the most harrowing? Having survived both, I am confident that senior fall takes the cake.

In the first few months of senior year, the pressure is on. Students bear the burden of cramming their entire life's story into one 650-word essay, hours of research go into responding to the infamous "why us?" question, and it feels as though we are expected to capture our life's purpose in a pamphlet of facts and figures. Not to mention, we are still responsible for keeping up with our extracurricular and academic responsibilities at Choate.

Indeed, the junior feels as though all eyes are on them; parents, peers, and social media constantly remind fifth-formers that "junior year matters most," pressuring students to begin bolstering their resumes and perfecting their grades. While this pressure is present for the entirety of junior year, the dreary weather makes it seem impossible to survive

the months of hard work ahead. However, juniors are asked to focus solely on afternoon activities and Choate's schoolwork. Dealing with college applications during your senior year is like adding another honors course to an already rigorous curriculum.

At Choate, teachers are incredibly understanding when a student needs a bit of grace. Didn't get much sleep last night? Maybe you can push that history essay a day. Or perhaps your previous test didn't go as planned. If you ace your quiz next week, you can still get your desired final grade.

In junior spring, ample opportunities exist to bounce back from difficult moments and improve. When it comes to college, there is no wiggle room. Your college application is one of the most significant first impressions you will make in your lifetime. Unfortunately, if your debut includes a typo or two, once you click submit, there is nothing you can do about it.

Many believe that the saving grace of senior fall is the finality of that October 15 or November 1 deadline. Once it passes, seniors can take a step back and breathe, right? We've poured our blood, sweat, and tears into meeting that due date, so we're left feeling burnt out and depleted by the time it arrives. It takes incredible resilience to continue bringing 100% to your classes, sports practices, arts rehearsals, and club meetings when



Graphic by **Rielle Reyes '27**/The Choate News

it feels like you have nothing left to give. Furthermore, another set of deadlines for even more schools comes on January 1.

In your junior spring, sacrificing social time for schoolwork is a no-brainer. To a junior, shutting out the world for a night or two in preparation for term-end experiences is no big deal — you have a year and a half of fun with friends left; what's one night without them? On the other hand, seniors are hyper-aware of the ticking clock. Every second spent with those we love counts. We long to create lasting memories with our friends and favorite teachers, but a schedule that allows for anything but maintaining a healthy work-life balance becomes exhausting.

While my senior fall has been the most daunting portion of my Choate career, that does not discredit how taxing junior spring

was. The dreary weather, the hefty course load, and the one too many all-nighters were rough. However, I made it through, and so will every class of seniors.

I encourage juniors and seniors to take care of themselves as they work through these stressful times, and I ask the rest of the community to give us the space we need to do just that. Now is not the time to ask your senior friends how college applications are going, and when spring rolls around, it will be best not to talk about grades with juniors. And who knows, with the help of our incredible community, perhaps the Class of 2026 will flip the script and have the best junior spring and senior fall in history!

Chelsea Branch is a sixth-former from Phillipsburg, NJ. She may be reached at cbranch25@choate.edu.

Empowering Voices: Why We Should Hold Mock Elections at Choate

By **Steven Kee '27**
Copy Editor

Civic education at Choate mustn't stop in the classroom. While many American students above 18 may have voted in this past election, those under 18 or non-Americans could only observe the process. Some students who are eligible voters feel unprepared for their first time in the voting booth. A hands-on experience, such as mock elections held by many international schools overseas, would foster a better understanding of the election and extend voter education even further. However, if Choate were to host a mock election, it must be approached with caution.

A mock election would benefit both the students and the Administration. It would educate Choate students about the voting process, prepare future voters, and improve students' political knowledge by encouraging them to explore different candidates and their policies further.

The current student representative elections on Google Forms are not an accurate representation



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

of what a real-life voting experience is like and are insufficient at educating students about the election process. A realistic simulation based on actual elections will give students a better taste of the real deal. A mock election would also help the School gauge students' political views and have a clearer understanding of perspectives across campus, which could help the School better support students with varying viewpoints in and out of the classroom.

In a mock election that would occur before the actual election, realistic ballots that reflect those of real-life elections should be printed to familiarize students with the format. Voting booths can be set up, and realistic voter registration and protocol should be followed

to introduce students to what the election process will look like. As it would be difficult to mimic the actual election process with an electoral college fully, the election results could be based on a more straightforward, popular vote, as the primary objective of the exercise is to simulate the voter experience anyway, rather than of the election as a whole.

The results of this election should be revealed only after the winners of the actual election are declared and after tensions have eased. This approach will help prevent setting unrealistic expectations and minimize tensions going into the actual election.

The School should not directly host elections but outsource the responsibility to student political or-

ganizations such as Choate Young Republicans, Choate Young Democrats, and Choate Political Union. In polarizing election years such as 2024, the candidates — and, inevitably, the results — are controversial, and the mock election's results will not be ideal for many.

To ensure students don't feel marginalized or underrepresented if their candidate loses, the mock election results should not be given too much weight, as the School must remain neutral and not appear to endorse any candidate or outcome. In future election cycles, the Choate community should host mock elections to further civic education, improve student political awareness, and assess student political preferences. The timing, logistics, and organization should be carefully considered to prevent political polarization or marginalization. If done correctly, mock elections have the potential to be an excellent tool for political learning at Choate.

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From Ping Pong to Basketball: Bridging Divides Through Sports Diplomacy

By **Brendan Beng '26**
Staff Contributor

In the 1970s, a chance encounter between American and Chinese ping-pong players catalyzed a diplomatic breakthrough known as “ping-pong diplomacy.” Given the onset of basketball all around the globe, there exists another opportunity for these two nations to induce cultural exchange and relieve political tensions using sports.

During a tournament in Japan, U.S. player Glenn Cowan missed his team bus and was invited onto the Chinese team’s bus instead. This small act of sportsmanship has paved the way for a monumental shift in global politics. Shortly afterward, American and Chinese table tennis teams exchanged visits, ultimately culminating in President Richard Nixon’s historic visit to China in 1972. Nixon’s visit marked the first significant step in opening relations between the two nations, which had been estranged for over 20 years. “Ping-pong diplomacy” showed the world that sports could be a neutral ground for building goodwill and reducing hostilities between different countries.

Fast forward to today, when tensions between the U.S. and China are on the rise again. The two superpowers are entangled in conflicts over trade, technology, and human rights, with both governments engaging in sharp rhetoric and actions that amplify nationalistic sentiments. With this geopolitical backdrop, basket-



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

ball, which is especially prominent in American society, has slowly emerged as a significant cultural force in China, thus offering a rare common ground between the Chinese and American people.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) has amassed a massive fanbase in China, with hundreds of millions of viewers regularly tuning into games and participating in basketball fandom. With the NBA making an effort to build part-

nerships with Chinese teams and brands, they’ve created a lucrative international sports market. Basketball courts are now familiar sights in Chinese cities, and many Chinese youth wear jerseys featuring American players like LeBron James and Stephen Curry. This popularity highlights a potential avenue for cultural diplomacy that could help ease tensions between the U.S. and China, similar to table tennis back in the 1970s.

One of the most unusual examples of sports bridging political divides is the unlikely relationship between NBA Hall-of-Famer Dennis Rodman and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Despite the severe political rift between North Korea and the United States, Rodman and Kim, who are both passionate about basketball, have managed to build a rapport. Rodman’s visits to North Korea have been controversial, but they highlight how sports figures can some-

times open doors that even diplomats cannot. While North Korea remains isolated from most of the world, the Rodman-Kim dynamic reminds us that sports can sometimes bypass official channels and serve as an entry point for conversation, mutual interest, and diplomacy, even in highly strained political environments.

With these examples in mind, it’s worth considering how a “basketball diplomacy” approach could help improve

Chinese-American relations. While table tennis opened doors in the 1970s, basketball could do the same in the 2020s. Organized exhibition games, youth training camps, and cultural exchanges between NBA players and Chinese athletes could foster a sense of camaraderie and understanding between the two countries. Such events would celebrate a shared love for the sport, creating positive associations that can extend beyond basketball courts. This type of grassroots diplomacy, centered on people-to-people connections, can often be more effective than formal negotiations in changing public perception and easing hostilities.

In an era marked by global division, it’s important to remember the lessons of ping-pong diplomacy. As *The New York Times* once said, “When politics and sports intersect, they offer a glimpse of a different reality, where nations meet on the court instead of the battlefield.” Through basketball, the United States and China have a unique opportunity to build bridges at a time when global harmony seems increasingly fragile. If embraced thoughtfully, “basketball diplomacy” could pave the way for a new chapter in Chinese-American relations, reminding both nations of the power of shared human experiences and the potential for mutual respect.

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TAX THE RICH: MAKE THE WEALTHY PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE

By **Zaki Shamsi '26**
Opinions Writer

Let’s stop pretending that the ultra-wealthy will ever willingly pay society what they owe. They won’t, and it’s time to face that reality. The solution to this problem is simple: tax the rich until it hurts.

Billionaires like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and President-elect Donald Trump P’oo can afford to shed a few tears. While they’re sobbing into their luxurious yachts, the rest of us can finally fund public schools, healthcare, and infrastructure without relying on bake sales or crowdfunding for medical bills.

Here’s the truth: the tax system isn’t just broken; it was designed to let the wealthy off the hook. Take Elon Musk — the poster child for tax evasion. Instead of taking a salary, Musk gets paid in stock options, meaning that he is exempt from paying income taxes. When Musk needs cash, he borrows against his stock, avoiding capital gains taxes. The average person can’t borrow against billions in stock; they’re stuck paying taxes on every dollar and coin they earn, while Musk uses his wealth as a tax-free piggy bank.

And then there’s Donald Trump. Trump has declared bankruptcy six times, using the system to dodge responsibility while everyone else picks up the bills. His casi-

nos fail, his contractors go unpaid, but Trump walks away with his personal wealth untouched. Bankruptcy laws weren’t meant to be a billionaire’s safety net, but Trump’s turned them into just that. Regular people lose their homes and savings when they go bankrupt, whereas Trump loses a bad investment and gets to keep his fortune.

Now, I can already hear the excuse: “But billionaires are job creators! If we tax them too much, they’ll stop investing, and innovation will die.” Let’s dismantle that myth right now. Billionaires don’t create jobs out of altruism. Take Jeff Bezos’ Amazon: Bezos didn’t build a logistics empire because he wanted to create jobs — he did it to make a fortune. Yes, Amazon employs thousands, but many of those workers face grueling conditions and minimal benefits. Meanwhile, Bezos has seen his wealth skyrocket, all while Amazon pays little to no federal taxes.

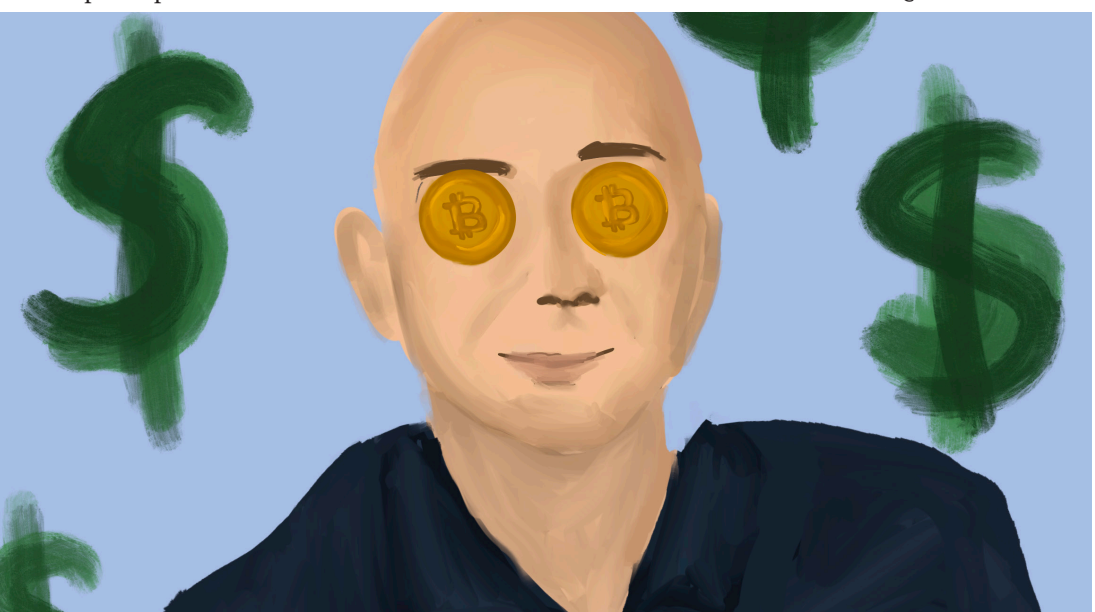
Billionaires would never stop investing in their companies despite increased tax rates, as these companies are simply too profitable, making it senseless for them to abandon innovation due to increased taxes. Moreover, innovation wouldn’t grind to a halt. Companies invest because there’s profit to be made, not because tax policies are too lenient. The reality is that higher taxes won’t stop innovation, but rather ensure that wealth is redistributed to fund

public systems like roads, education, and healthcare, which these companies rely on to make their operations possible.

Raising taxes on billionaires won’t kill jobs, and it won’t stifle innovation. What it does is ensure that those who benefit the most from our economy properly contribute to the society that allows them to thrive. If a billionaire sheds a few tears over higher taxes, so be it; they’ll still be billionaires. Meanwhile, we’ll have the resources to fix roads, fund schools, and provide healthcare for millions of people who need it.

Tax the rich, and tax them hard. Close the loopholes, tax stock options as income, and make billionaires pay capital gains taxes like everyone else. Will they cry? Absolutely. But their tears won’t dry up any faster than their bank accounts will. They’ll still be richer than 99.9% of Americans, even after paying their fair share. In the meantime, we can start fixing the systems they’ve prevented funding for for far too long. If we don’t start holding the ultra-wealthy accountable, the “middle-class” politicians so keen on name-dropping will be left picking up the pieces of a broken society.

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Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/The Choate News

DONALD TRUMP’S IMMUNITY IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

By **Josh Pan '27**
Opinions Writer



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

It’s natural for humans to yearn for steadfast leaders. During his near-decade-long political career, President-elect Donald J. Trump P’oo has positioned himself, literally and figuratively, as an invincible figure through exploitative methods and sheer luck. And yet, it’s important to reflect on how such conclusions can skew our understanding of politicians.

Recently, we witnessed two attempted assassinations of Trump within the span of three months: one at a rally near Butler, Pennsylvania, and the other at his golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida. What seemed like a typical Trump rally held in Pennsylvania on July 13 quickly turned into chaos when the shooter, 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, fired at the stage. Stray bullets killed a spectator, critically wounded two others, and grazed Trump across his right ear.

Before Trump was promptly escorted off the stage, photojournalist Evan Vucci of *The Associated Press* captured what may be the most memorable picture of the year: Trump with a bloodied face and blood dripping down his ear, his fist pumped valiantly in an act of defiance against political violence, and a patriotic American flag waving

in the background. The media coverage around his assassination, both in the realm of social media and diplomatic conversation, garnered sympathy and subsequently political support for Trump’s campaign.

The news instantly became viral online. Images of the assassination attempt circulated with Trump dancing to 50 Cent’s “Many Men (Wish Death),” which jokingly draws parallels to an earlier sensation surrounding the delinquent nature of Trump’s mugshots. In fact, Trump is no stranger to controversy — from his 1995 tax filings declaring a loss of \$915 million, which could have exempted him from taxes for up to 18 years, to the two articles of impeachment for which he was tried by the House of Representatives, to his harsh immigration regulations made on border security.

And yet, Trump has risen back to power. Time and time again, he has been acquitted and pardoned, allowing him to continue engaging in American politics. Trump has become the first president in American history to have been a convicted felon, and yet he’s still managed to run as a major-party candidate to seize the 2024 presidential election.

To the public, it may seem that Trump is immune to the widespread and vicious criticism made

by his dissidents. And yet, this isn’t exactly accurate. He has exploited legal loopholes, employed his presidential power, exercised the checks and balances inherent to our government structure, and experienced great luck in surviving all attempts made on his life throughout his political career.

It’s essential to make the distinction that while Trump is incessant, he is not invincible. Positioning any political leader as someone immune to censure and condemnation may encourage the public to abstain from ever making an effort to criticize these politicians. The result would be the devastating destruction of democracy — a lack of discussion due to people having given up trying to resist whom they disagree with.

Once a politician is widely regarded as invincible, they become increasingly immune to the checks and balances in our federal government meant to curb corruption and ensure democracy. In order to encourage our politicians to consider a wide array of perspectives and to collectively strive towards a better future, it is essential — regardless of partisanship — that no one, and certainly not Trump, is exempt from critical commentary.

Josh Pan is a fourth-former from Claremont, CA. He may be reached at jpan27@choate.edu.

TEACHING TOGETHER AND FRIENDSHIPS FOREVER: CHOATE'S FACULTY DUOS

By **Deyi Meng '26**
Copy Editor

Between creating lesson plans, grading tests, and attending meetings, faculty friendships are bound to blossom. While students may not give much thought to their teachers' BFFs, faculty members forge bonds that extend beyond professional collaboration. Here's a look at some of Choate's most cherished faculty friendships.

Mr. White and Ms. Salot

English teacher Ms. Amy Salot and Humanities teacher and Director of Athletics Mr. Tom White share a long-standing friendship rooted in their similar personalities and shared passion for co-teaching the American Studies course. "We both really love teaching and learning," Ms. Salot said.

The two are supportive of each other, offering advice both inside and outside the classroom. This collaboration has shaped their teaching over the years and encouraged professional growth. "We have a really good rapport in terms of thinking about how we're both teaching our material and what we can learn from each other ... that has helped my teaching evolve tremendously over the years," Mr. White said.

Ms. Salot admires Mr. White's "exuberance to learn." She said, "He is a teacher who will never allow himself to just go through the motions or do the same thing every year. He is constantly learning and challenging himself."

In turn, Mr. White appreciates Ms. Salot's sense of humor, thoughtful insight, and imagination. "She brings such tremendous energy and enthusiasm to



Photo courtesy of Ms. Courtney DeStefano

Mr. Jesse Minneman, Ms. Kyra Jenney, Ms. Courtney DeStefano, and Mr. Jonas Akins dress up as one another for Halloween in 2018.

both the material but also just working with students and colleagues," Mr. White said.

Ms. DeStefano and Ms. Jenney

Humanities teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano and HPRSS Department Head Ms. Kyra Jenney connected in 2013. They share many interests, including a love for dogs, live music concerts, Indian and Mexican cuisine, travel, and true crime documentaries. During the summer of 2023, they journeyed to Europe together for a curriculum development project on the Holocaust, World History, and European History courses at Choate and attended a music festival in Germany featuring rock bands Queens of the Stone Age and The 1975.

Ms. Jenney values Ms. DeStefano's generosity, noting the latter's thoughtful actions, such as bringing soup to her when she's sick. "She's a really kind and generous person and very thoughtful in how she thinks about the

way others are experiencing the world," Ms. Jenney said.

Similarly, Ms. DeStefano said, "Ms. Jenney is so smart, she's deeply kind and empathetic, she's really funny and quirky, [and] she is very genuine and authentic."

Dr. Hodge and Dr. Roca

Coming to Choate in the same year, English teachers Dr. Amber Hodge and Dr. Mary Roca immediately connected through a professional development program and faculty meetings. Their shared experiences of attending PhD programs in the South and teaching at high school for the first time cemented that connection. Dr. Roca appreciated the parallels between her and Dr. Hodge: "It was really nice to come here, ... and meet somebody who felt very familiar and had a similar approach to teaching and a similar understanding of academia," she said.

The two also share research interests in gender identity and how texts interact with society and culture. They often joke with



Photo by Elizabeth Burgstahler '26

Faculty duo and long-time co-American Studies teachers Ms. Amy Salot and Mr. Tom White strike a pose.

each other about being the light and dark versions of each other, as Dr. Hodge delves into horror and darker themes, whereas Dr. Roca prefers more uplifting perspectives.

Their friendship has also grown into a strong support system for one another. "It's nice to have somebody who can give you another perspective and somebody who has my back," Dr. Roca said. They remind each other not to take on too much work and serve as a listening ear for one another. "Dr. Roca is awesome, a great listener, and [though] Dr. Roca will not talk about it, she's absolutely brilliant," Dr. Hodge said.

Mr. Akins and Mr. Minneman

Humanities teachers Mr. Jonas Akins and Mr. Jesse Minneman also share a unique bond. Coincidentally, when Mr. Minneman left Kent School and came to Choate, Mr. Akins took his place at Kent, teaching the same classes and even sitting at his old desk before arriving at Choate in 2017. However, their connection

extends beyond just boarding school; both teachers coincidentally chose the same venue for their weddings!

Since Mr. Akins' arrival on campus, their connection deepened through living together in Spencer House. In addition, Mr. Akins and Mr. Minneman share many common interests, such as history, coaching, and golfing. Their families enjoy socializing over dinners cooked by Mr. Minneman, beach trips, and skiing. Recently, the pair also joined a trivia night team within the HPRSS department called the Quizly Bears.

The two regularly support each other at Choate while keeping things light-hearted during busy boarding school life. "Places like this can be a lot ... [Having] somebody who has done many of the same things and who is living in the same sort of environment makes it that much easier to feel close and supported," Mr. Akins said. Mr. Minneman echoed this sentiment: "[Mr. Akins] does a great job of balancing playfulness joking with

being willing to think seriously about things," he said. "He's got a pretty [great] sense of humor, ... so it becomes sort of a release valve to hang out with him."

Dr. Pfeil and Ms. Sorrells

Math teacher Dr. Jessica Pfeil and Math Department Head Ms. Andrea Sorrells became acquainted with each other after Dr. Pfeil joined Choate in 2016. Their relationship has evolved over the years from mere colleagues to friends as a result of shared experiences, such as having children in elementary school and attending teacher conferences across the country in San Antonio, San Diego, and Seattle. The two also share many hobbies, including interior design, shopping, eating out, going to Starbucks, and hosting intramural hiking in the Spring. They even journeyed together to Greece during the summer of 2024!

Dr. Pfeil and Ms. Sorrells rely on each other as support systems. Dr. Pfeil said, "We've each had our really tough times, and we're there for each other." Sharing this idea, Ms. Sorrells said, "[Dr. Pfeil] is just an amazing person who really cares about people, and when she's your friend, she's your friend for life. And you know you can count on her for everything."

Behind office doors, friendships between teachers are more common than you may think. While they often go unnoticed, these relationships play crucial roles in supporting faculty mental health and facilitating a happier Choate community.

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THE BOARS BEHIND WHAT'S SHAKIN', BACON?



Photo courtesy of Dana Tan '25

The 2025 *What's Shakin', Bacon* team (Virginia Nelson '25, Ignacio Granda '27, Jayden Park '27, Izzy McGehee '27, and Dana Tan '25) pose for a photo.

By **Kaitlyn Yu '27**
Staff Reporter

"What's Shakin', Bacon?" is a catchphrase you'll hear often on *The Choate News's* Instagram page. It's the title of a short-form video series where students interview people around campus to get their opinions on a "question of the week." With topics ranging from helpful advice for new students to fun introductions of faculty pets, this campus-wide sensation provides a fun outlook on our School and brings the Choate community together. Let's take a look at the team responsible for *What's Shakin', Bacon?* and find out what goes on behind the camera.

Co-head of Outreach Virginia Nelson '25 began the program in the winter term of her sophomore year after becoming the Social Media Manager of *The Choate News*. "Before coming to Choate, my dad and I were joking about me making a podcast ... called *What's Shakin', Bacon?*," Nelson recounted. This idea became a reality when Lauren Kee '24 and Jacqueline

Yan '24, the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor of the 117th Masthead, created a larger Outreach Team to revitalize *The News's* social media presence. Since then, the team has grown significantly, improving over the years and continuing to produce quality content every week.

The *What's Shakin', Bacon?* team operates remotely via a group chat rife with creativity. Jayden Park '27, a member of the team, said, "We try to get ... the best out of each other's ideas and try to listen to everybody's viewpoints." The team has a list of questions queued for each week's video. However, anybody at Choate can suggest ideas to the production team. "Most of the time, people are like, 'Virginia, you should do this on *What's Shakin', Bacon?*'" Nelson shared.

As for the editing process, Ignacio Granda '27 describes it as a "group project." "Even though it's a quick one-minute video, there's a lot of work behind the scenes," he shared. One team member edits the video each week, and the final product is sent to the Instagram account to be posted every Sunday.

Throughout the production process, members of the team often face setbacks. "Finding people [to interview] ... gets hard," Granda shared. However, there are countless different opinions on campus, and many Choate community members are willing to share their ideas. "We try to diversify as much of the interview pool [as possible] ... so that [students of all] forms can interact with the video and feel more personal," Park said.

What's Shakin', Bacon? has provided the team with many memorable moments both within and outside of the short videos. "I found the courage to go up to random groups I don't even know," Co-head of Outreach Dana Tan '25 shared. "[*What's Shakin', Bacon?*] is helping people find fun in everyday student life."

Granda shared his experience meeting a freshman who told him that he decided to come to Choate because of the *What's Shakin', Bacon?* videos. "It's such a nice experience that my little contribution ... is what brings and attracts people to this school," he said.

Since its creation, *What's Shakin', Bacon?* has acquired a wider audience, bringing fun to people across the world. *The Choate News's* social media page has reached 45,000 different accounts globally and has gathered over 2,000 followers on Instagram. "We also have a lot of engagement and ... visibility on our reels," Tan said. Nelson added that new kids were sending the Admission Office emails titled "*What's Shakin', Bacon?*" as a reference to the program. "It's been really cool to see how it's expanded and grown and how the community's just really grown to love [*What's Shakin', Bacon?*]," Nelson said.

What's Shakin', Bacon? has introduced a fun, lively way to interact with the Choate community. Nelson invites everyone to contribute to the team's ever-growing list of video topics to spread the joy. She concluded, "If you have any ideas, let me know, and give us a watch every Sunday!"

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REVIEWING DEERFIELD DAY DELIGHTS

By **Eliana Li '26**
Copy Editor

a good complement to all the fun snacks," Ada Tieworn '26 said.

Deerfield Day was complete with exciting games, a friendly rivalry, and, of course, delicious snacks to fuel the hordes of students, teachers, and community members. Whether you were looking for something warm and cozy or a sweet treat to recharge, SAGE Dining kept everyone energized for the physically (and emotionally) demanding day. Here's a glimpse into some of the fan favorites:

Sink Cookies

Sink cookies—chocolate chip cookies with sprinkles, pretzels, and potato chips—were the ultimate sweet treat that kept students going on Deerfield Day. "It was so delicious to have right after the volleyball match," player Sofie Leenheer '27 said. The sugary taste, coupled with the snack's aesthetic pops of color, made sink cookies the perfect treat to snack on between cheering on your peers or catching a breath after a well-fought game.

Tacos

The taco station was a popular stop for those who craved something savory. With different meats, homemade sauces, and plenty of toppings to customize your meal, the tacos provided a perfect savory balance to the sweet offerings. "It was so good and definitely

Hot Chocolate

Rich, velvety hot chocolate was served by SAGE throughout the day, offering students a cozy drink to sip while watching the games or chatting with friends. Holding a cup of hot cocoa during the thrilling football game, Libby Dai '25 remarked, "It helped me warm up in the chilly weather."

Apple Cider Donuts

Although not from SAGE, the apple cider donuts were another fan favorite. Fans grabbed warm donuts from the truck, located on a trail leading up to the Class of '76 Field, as they motivated the players on the pitch. "They were really warm and tasted like fall," Emma Schwerin '26 said. With their sugary coating and quintessentially fall pumpkin spice flavor, these donuts made the perfect autumnal snack for Deerfield Day.

From the colorful sink cookies to the delicious donuts, these tasty treats perfectly complement Choatians' vibrant school spirit. As the day came to a close, students were able to savor the sweet tastes of both a Deerfield Day victory and their delicious snacks!

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Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27

Choate Fall Productions: *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals* and *Eurydice*

By **Elizabeth Burgstahler '26** and
Ha Jin Sung '28
Staff Reporter and Reporter

The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals

From October 31 to November 2, Choate students took to the stage with a rendition of *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals*. The musical follows the journey of Paul and his friends in their race to save humanity from a musical apocalypse.

Jordan Dodd '25, who played the characters Mr. Davidson and Sam, expressed how fun mentoring younger students as a sixth-former was. "I really liked how I was able to work with my prefectees on this musical," he said.

Dodd also explained how the cast bonded over activities beyond the musical. One of his favorite memories was when the entire cast recorded a TikTok trend during rehearsal. "The entire cast did that with our director. It was really silly, but it was the mark of a great, great era for all of us," he said.

Leanne Parks '25, who played Charlotte and Nora, explained how she and Dodd choreographed the musical together. "We did it last year as well [in the previous musical], and it was really fun being able to go in knowing what to do, because we've already done it before," Parks said. "Being able to be on that side of the creative process as well as putting the show together on stage was really cool."

Kaitlyn Yu '27 took on several roles in the musical, including a customer, a colonel, and a police officer. Yu ex-



An electric frame from *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals*.

plained how she enjoyed bonding and spending time with the cast during rehearsals. "Warm-ups are always fun," she said. "We would kind of just spontaneously burst into songs, sometimes just because we were feeling very happy and excited."

Benoit Bracey '28, who played Paul, had high praise for his fellow cast members. "Everybody in the theater team is awesome, I just love hanging

out with them. I can go on for hours — it's just funny interactions that really make up everything," he said.

Arts teacher and Director of *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals* Ms. Deighna DeRiu, said, "I hope [the audience] enjoyed themselves and that they appreciated the incredible amount of work that the students did." She added, "So much of it was student-run."

Eurydice

Eurydice by Sarah Ruhl blends together the nature of a traditional Greek tragedy and a lighthearted modern comedy. It retells the famous Greek tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice from Eurydice's perspective. Ruhl sets her show in the 1950s rather than ancient Greece, making the content of the show much more relatable to current audiences.

On November 14, Choate hosted the opening night for their rendition of *Eurydice* in the Little Theater. English teacher and Director of the play Mrs. Katharine Doak chose *Eurydice* because of its modern spin on a classic retelling, as well as the character's personalities. "The characters are so relatable," Mrs. Doak said, "and how they deal with love, loss, and the importance of holding

onto memories is a good message to be reminded of."

Because *Eurydice* is a blend of tragedy and comedy, the actors had to explore both sides of emotion for each character. Actor Maya Abeles '28 played one of the stones: a group of six cast members. Abeles said, "Especially as a stone, you fully play off of each other's emotions. It's such a small cast that if one person comes in and they're not into it, then no one's gonna be able to perform the way they want to."

From a technical perspective, *Eurydice* posed several challenges. Technical Director Mr. Mark Gostomski noted the size of the show as a particularly challenging aspect. "As far as the scale of the show, it's using almost every single stock piece of scenery that we have, which is something that we haven't done as much," he said. "there's just a lot of surface area that we were creating."

In the days leading up to the show, the cast and crew members thought about how the audience might perceive the show. It was hard to anticipate how the audience would balance their responses between the comedic elements and the tragic elements. "It makes you think about life, and how even in really hard times, there's something that brings humor to us," Mrs. Doak said. "We're always kind of balancing these paradoxes and so even at the end of the play, there might be sad in some ways. In other ways, there's a joy or a relief or escape."

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MEDIUM: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

By **Bruce van Wingerden '28**
Reporter

Capturing the essence of calm and leisurely East Coast summers, "Medium" is the newest Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) exhibition. It is brought to the community by Mr. Matt Kelsey, Choate's Digital Filmmaking I, Digital Media Design I, and Digital Photography I teacher.

Mr. Kelsey's inspiration for this shoot stemmed from his curiosity and desire to capture "society as it is at the moment," he said. "I like to take on something I haven't done before, and learn how to do it ... [I] wanted to capture the heat in the haze and how everything seems to slow down to a halt in the summertime."

Mr. Kelsey experimented with a traditional analog camera to take all his pictures for "Medium." This allowed him to explore different photography techniques while using his camera to connect with others. He recalled, "People will stop you and ask questions, like, what are you doing? What is that? And that leads, sometimes, to me asking if I can take their portrait."

Going into this project, Mr. Kelsey knew he wanted to travel to Washington D.C. "I wanted to capture the tone of ... the epicenter of a lot of political culture, ... and I wanted to meet new people," he said. In total, Mr. Kelsey took around 150 photos. "You have to be really picky about what you take a picture of because there's a lot of time involved," Mr. Kelsey said. After capturing the photos, the film has to be sent to a lab, where it is processed and scanned. It then undergoes an editing process, which can take up to a month and a half.

Choosing a select amount of images from his collection of 150 pictures was no easy task. Mr. Kelsey spent considerable time comparing pictures and making decisions related to the vibrancy, colors, and composition of each image.

When comparing two photos of a building, he said that he "couldn't justify putting both on the wall when [he] had a limited display." Mr. Kelsey also aimed to present images that would be "easily visually read and understood, [like] something that you can look at from across the lobby and [understand]." However, he

said, "If [I] didn't have a limited amount of space, [I]d put all of them up there."

One of the key messages Mr. Kelsey hopes to share with his students is that it's never too late to start learning something new. "I'm much older than [my students] ... [yet] I'm still learning brand new stuff, I'm still taking on new challenges, and trying tools I've never tried before," he said. He also emphasized that "exploration of [photography] doesn't necessarily have to end when the term ends ... they can continue and grow ... the idea of expertise doesn't end when your education is complete."

Mr. Kelsey shared that he's felt especially supported while at Choate. "I feel like this is a place that values one another ... you have to be feeling secure and happy in order to free yourself up to use your imagination, and take risks," he said. "This has been a really great opportunity for me to really do my own thing ... to show people what my point of view is."

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Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Mr. Kelsey poses in front of a photo in his exhibition.

CHOATE'S MODERNIZATION OF ARCHITECTURE



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Lanphier Center, opened in 2015, is one of the most modern-style buildings on campus.

By **Parker Jackson '28**
Reporter

From white picket fence houses to grand cathedrals, the world has a plethora of architectural styles. At Choate, the variety of architectural styles is reflected in the buildings on campus and the furniture inside them. While the School may have started with only New England-esque brick buildings, as seen in St. John Hall and the Paul Mellon Humanities Building, it has recently expanded to include more modern styles, such as the Lanphier Center and the Paul Mellon Arts Center.

As campus buildings are one of the first things prospective students see when they visit the School, people will naturally be drawn to the architecture that resonates with them the most. That is why modernizing such a historic campus could be controversial. While some students argue that the School should not be changing such a large part of its history, others argue that this change is necessary.

While the exterior of the SAC looks similar to the library and the dining hall, the interior is more modern. John Jannotta '25 argued that "[The renovators] have begun to do what I call 'SAC-ification.'

They take out the old furniture that had a really homey vibe to it, and then they're putting in this new, lifeless, SAC-like furniture, and I'm not a big fan of that." On the other hand, Kathy Atwine '25 said, "I'm pretty impressed by the SAC. It's very modern, looking inside the couch spaces. Also, the idea of boarding and day students having a place to come together, I like that."

Many students believe the shift to modern architecture is doing away with Choate's past. However, carrying over past designs into new designs has always been a focus when making renovations on campus.

The architecture on campus plays a key role in shaping prospective students' impressions. Science teacher Mr. Deron Chang said, "I think [the architecture] has a significant role when students can picture themselves walking the halls on campus...I think that makes them feel like this is a school that isn't so stodgy, but also one that has traditions."

Mrs. Kristen Chin, a math teacher who worked at Choate before and after the construction of Lanphier Center in 2017, reflected on this phenomenon. She said, "I think the School is trying to keep it looking clean and fresh so that

people will want to spend time there. I think the School has tried to keep itself modern and competitive, while still maintaining what is historic." These contemporary styles make the campus more functional and enjoyable for the community while maintaining the School's rich history.

Some architecture is designed to create the illusion of other styles. For instance, Mr. Chang described how some buildings and design features don't fully represent the aesthetics they seem to. "I'm less excited about things that are made to look old when they actually were not. The columns that we see associated with Memorial House, Hill House, and Archbold are Greek columns, but were obviously not built in the Greek city-state empire. So they're kind of fake [and] I'm not really as excited about things like that are not real."

The everyday buildings that Choate students pass on each walk to class reflect a diverse range of architectural styles and histories. While modernization remains a topic of debate, it is undeniable that Choate's campus has embraced a modern transformation.

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FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record
143 - 62 - 14

Varsity Games

Boys' Football (8-0)
vs. Deerfield, 41-0

Girls' Soccer (14-1-2)
vs. Deerfield, 1-0

Boys' Soccer (13-3-3)
vs. Deerfield, 1-0

Girls' Cross Country (4-3)
vs. Deerfield, 44-19

Boys' Water Polo (10-5)
vs. Deerfield, 15-8

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

Boys' Cross Country (2-5)
vs. Deerfield, 16-46

Girls' Field Hockey (7-10)
vs. Deerfield, 2-8

J.V. Games

Boys' Football (4-0)
vs. Deerfield, 28-0

Girls' Soccer (10-1-2)
vs. Deerfield, 2-1

Girls' Volleyball (12-1)
vs. Deerfield, 3-1

Boys' Soccer (10-1-3)
vs. Deerfield, 1-1

SIBLINGS BY CHANCE, TEAMMATES BY CHOICE

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

Siblings experience a unique blend of rivalry and camaraderie with one another when they play on the same team. While this dynamic isn't always easy, many sibling duos find that having a relative on the team pushes them to become better athletes, adding a new level of motivation to their game through their pre-existing sibling rivalries. The support and challenge of having a sibling as a teammate can be incredibly beneficial, fostering both individual growth and a deeper holistic team bond. Sarah Coyne '27 and Maeve Coyne '27, twin sisters on the Girls' Varsity Squash Team, and Justin Lee '25 and Jamie Lee '27, brothers on the Boys' Varsity Soccer Team, have experienced how sibling dynamics impact sports performance through competition, shared success, and the pressure of comparison.

One significant advantage of playing alongside a sibling is the natural, built-in competition. Siblings often compete over small, everyday things, from who gets the last piece of pizza to seating arrangements at the dinner table. This competitive spirit is amplified in the sports team setting, and Sarah and Jamie agree that their friendly rivalries have been an incredible motivator.

"Playing on the same team as my sister has definitely pushed me more and created a competitive environment each practice and game, which helps us both improve," Sarah explained. Jamie echoed this sentiment, reflecting on how far his brother has pushed him: "We've both been playing soccer since we were really young, and it's great to be on the same team now," he said. "When I was a freshman, having him around to show me the ropes was awesome. Now, when he's on the pitch, I can cheer him on, and when I'm on, he's cheering me on."

However, sibling rivalry on sports teams does create challenges. The intense competition can heighten tension between siblings, particularly during car rides after tough practices or challenging matches that determine their rankings on the team. "Having a sibling in the same sport pushes you to improve, but it also heightens the competitiveness, which can be frustrating," Sarah said.



Photo by Kazuma Iwata '28/The Choate News

Justin Lee '25 and Jamie Lee '27 compete for Varsity Boys' Soccer.

Jamie added that the intensified comparison because of their shared last name can be draining: "Sometimes it gets annoying, like when we're being compared, or who scores first in training. It can get frustrating," he said. The emotional ups and downs of competition can lead to moments of stress, but they are outweighed by mutual trust and keeping each other in their best interests. Jamie is grateful for his brother's presence and has benefited from his advice: "We help each other improve by giving tips and pointing out what's going wrong," he explained. "When Justin sees I'm doing something wrong, he'll tell me, and I do the same for him. It's just encouragement — pushing each other to get better." That mindset is central to every Choate sports team, whether players are siblings or not.

Despite the challenges, these siblings remain committed to supporting one another as teammates. They recognize that their bond extends beyond mere competition; no matter how intense the rivalry on the court or field, they consistently offer one another constructive feedback and help each other work through mental blocks. "Even though we are very competitive on the court, we both have the same goals and want each other to succeed," Sarah explained. This understanding creates a supportive environment where their sibling relationship can remain strong despite the competition.

These siblings' experiences have created memories they will cherish forever. Moments of pure bliss, like when Jamie scored his first varsity goal beside his brother on the field, make every tough practice session worth it. "When I scored my first goal, he was on the pitch too. And we celebrated together. That's probably the best moment," Jamie said.

Reflecting on the previous season, Sarah recalled her favorite athletic memory: competing in the National High School Team Squash Championships with Maeve. "That was a super fun and memorable experience, and I loved doing it with my sister by my side," she said. The thrill of competing at such a high level and the joy of sharing that experience with her twin has solidified their bond even further.

Ultimately, being a part of the Choate Girls' Varsity Squash and Boys' Varsity Soccer teams has profoundly impacted the Lees' and Coyne's time at Choate. The camaraderie of these teams, combined with their unique sibling dynamic, has created a space where both siblings can grow as individuals and as team members. Every moment spent together, whether celebrating victories or navigating challenges, has made their experiences all the more special. These journeys as teammates has been about deepening connections and creating memories that will last a lifetime.

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Senior Days Bring Mentor Moments

By **Rhea Doshi '27 and Suyeong Hahn '27**
Reporters

With the end of the fall season, each varsity team celebrated its senior members during their final home games through the cherished tradition of holding Senior Days. Amidst the cheers and celebrations, senior athletes prepare to pack up their gear and move on to the next chapter of their lives. Passing along their wisdom, these athletes have left a lasting impact on their younger teammates.

For Senior Day, the Girls' Cross-Country team planned an exciting celebration, complete with pizza and bouquets of flowers to send off the seniors. "We're all very excited for them to see the posters that we made, and I'm especially hoping that they'll like the notes each of us gave them," Kankan Adekoya '27 said. Reflecting on what she'll miss most, Adekoya added, "One thing I'll definitely miss about the seniors is how they constantly encourage the team. During the beginning of this season, the seniors, especially our captains, would always say 'good job' in passing during practices and races."

Boys' Cross-Country runner Jimmy McCaffrey '27 felt bittersweet about the swift arrival of the season's end. He shared his experience from a beloved Senior Day ritual the day before the championship: a symbolic baton pass, where each senior imparts advice to an underclassman. McCaffrey's main takeaway from the seniors was "courage in pride."

For Tofick Sheikh '27, a member of the Boys' Varsity Soccer team, this season has been as much about camaraderie as competition. The piece of advice he received on Senior Day that hit home for him was "Make the game yours." Having joined the team as a freshman, Sheikh credited the seniors' leadership as being pivotal, teaching him to focus on his own moves rather than getting caught up in the opponents. Thanks to the seniors' guidance and unrivaled teamwork, he already feels accomplished. "This season has been really good, and I'm proud [regardless of] the NEPSAC result," Sheikh said.

Boys' Varsity Football player Tanner Ruxin '27 echoed this sentiment, describing the seniors as "the heart of the team" whose energy and drive he'll miss most. "Do everything one play at a time" was the biggest lesson learned, allowing him to slow down a little and appreciate the memories made on the field.

Boy's Water Polo player Ethan Sun '27 shared some of his team's memorable moments and how he'll miss the seniors. Sun captured the spirited energy of the aquatic department's tradition, whereby everyone would rally together before each match with a booming chant: "Fight Choate fight!" But amidst the lively and energetic atmosphere, Sun also reflected on the lessons about the serious side of sportsmanship imparted by the seniors. "I will always remember to take practice seriously, as the little things add up to improvement," he said.

Girls' Varsity Volleyball player Sofie Leenheer '27 said, "I think I'll just miss the energy overall that [the seniors] bring ... always cheering, always smiling." Highlighting the special traditions, she shared, "We decorate the locker room [for Senior Day] ... making it the best we possibly can."

Sabina Cherry '26, a member of the Girls' Varsity Field Hockey team, explained the creative efforts behind their Senior Day celebration. With a lively "Party Animal" theme, the team decorated lockers and organized special activities to honor the seniors and make the day unforgettable. Cherry shared the piece of advice that resonated with her the most: "Everything's gonna work out. Everything's going to be okay." These pieces of guidance encapsulate the team's spirit of support and positivity.

Senior Days were a celebration of the senior athletes and their achievements that marked the end of their fall athletic journeys. While the seniors may have had their final moments on their sports teams, their legacies and impact on their teammates will not fade.

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MEET THE C-TRAIN'S CHOREOGRAPHERS

By **Karolina Zaccareo '27**
Reporter

On the eve of Deerfield Day, varsity teams and Senior Soccer gathered in Colony Hall for Pep Rally — a night of spirited skits and wild dance routines to get the School hyped. Each team hit the stage with their unique spin on the pre-game tradition. To perfect their moves, many teams called in Choate's seasoned dancers, such as Alyssa Montler '25 and Sophia Liao '25, who took on choreographing this year.

Montler, a two-year experienced hip-hop dancer and co-president of the Hip Hop Club at Choate, is also a member of the Girls' Varsity Field Hockey Team. She took charge of her team's choreography after Girls' Varsity Field Hockey Captains Cawthra Burns '25 and Elisabeth Hargett '25 asked for help. Throughout the process, Montler was very open to her teammates' ideas, and knowing that many people on the team had no background in dance, she "made it easy and incorporated hard parts but was very good at teaching [them],"

field hockey team member Mary-Jaine Malonis '27 said. Montler and Malonis were eager to see the crowd's reaction when Ellie Silva '26, disguised as the Lorax, arrived on stage. After weeks of preparation and learning Montler's choreography, Malonis's perspective around dancing shifted. "I'm very open-minded to dance, and it's not as scary as I used to think it was," she reflected.

Liao, a two-year Step Squad member, choreographed the Girls' Varsity Volleyball's dance number with a "light-hearted" approach. Even though there were some tricky parts to her choreography, Liao made sure that the team would nail it on stage. Team member Izzy McGehee '27 praised Liao's teaching skills and said, "She went out of her way to teach us the dance, and I'm really grateful for that ... I don't think we could have done it alone."

Throughout the choreographing process, Liao prioritized including the team's ideas in the dance. Before planning the choreography, Liao and the captains discussed aspects they wanted to include in the choreography, such as the banner that



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram

Senior Soccer performs their rehearsed dances at Pep Rally.

the seniors burst through at the end, the senior solos, the music choice, and partner work.

Because this year is Liao's first Deerfield Day attendance, it was particularly special to her and she was grateful to contribute to the "seniors being able to create lasting memories." Montler and Liao were super

excited to see their choreography being performed and their hard work come to fruition.

The school-spirit activities leading up to Deerfield Day bring students from all athletic interests at Choate together, and with the help of student dancer volunteers, another successful Pep Rally is in the

books. Whether you were a football player getting hyped for the big game or a dancer grabbing your pom-poms, the whole school came together to celebrate Deerfield Day.

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