The Choate News

The official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907

Choate Rosemary Hall
333 Christian Street
Wallingford, CT

Vol. CXIX· No. IV | Monday, November 17, 2025 | thechoatenews.choate.edu

BOARS BREAK DOORS ON DEERFIELD DAY

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor

Trumpets blared, chants echoed from every corner of campus, and it was impossible to miss students proudly parading in boar onesies. With blue and gold tinsel braided into their hair and face paint smeared onto their cheeks, Choate students proudly arrived on Deerfield Academy's campus on November 8 for the annual Deerfield Day.

The rivalry between Choate and Deerfield Academy dates back more than a century, rooted in tradition, pride, and the energy of hundreds of students dressed in their respective school colors. Alumni return to campus, students paint banners that are strewn throughout the campus, and teams step onto the fields and courts where generations before them have done the same. While the cheers, face paint, and spirited but respectful play take center stage, the energy of the day relies on seamless preparation behind the scenes. Before the first bus departs from campus, the day has already been well-coordinated.

Deerfield Day alternates between home and away games each year, and when the games are hosted at Deerfield, much of the planning effort focuses on logistics. "We work with Deerfield to schedule the games, so we make sure that we know what times the games are going to be, so we can coordinate transportation if it's at Deerfield," Assistant Athletics Director for Scheduling and Equipment Mr. Justin Whittaker said.

The planning begins early each fall. For the Student Activities office, the primary focus is on getting students to the games. "We have six school buses scheduled to bring fans up to Deerfield," Director of Student Activities Ms. Alexandra Long explained. "Each bus has at least one chaperone, and we make sure everyone is accounted for through REACH sign-ups before the trip."

"The biggest challenge is finding the balance — making sure we have enough seats for everyone who wants to go, but not so many buses that we're sending them half-full," Ms. Long said. "Coordinating chaperones can also be tricky, but this year we had a great response from faculty and staff volunteers, which made things much smoother."

The first half of organizing Deerfield Day focuses on coordination and preparation, while the second half is about bringing enthusiasm for the event itself. At last, the focus moves from planning to participation, as the energy of the Choate community bursts into motion. The energy Choate students brought to Deerfield was all built up the night before, during the annual Deerfield Day pep rally.

"[Pep rally] is one of the most uniting nights of the year at Choate," Gunther Stewart '27 said. "The atmosphere at the pep rally was electric. It felt like the entire school was celebrating as one." For Stewart, the night's highlight came with a signature reenactment: when Choate's boar mascot smashes through the green Deerfield door.

By the time the final cheers of the pep rally faded, the excitement had already begun to shift toward what awaited the next morning. As students packed their bags, painted their faces, and checked their REACH sign-ups one last time, anticipation transformed into action as all the work and planning were finally over. All that was left to do was to compete and cheer to the fullest. Deerfield Day had officially begun.



Boar Pen member Paul Stearns '26 waves a flag for Choate.
Photo by Ben Lee '27/The Choate News

For many students, Deerfield Day is as much about community as it is about competition. "It's a time to show up and support our friends, faculty, and everybody else on campus, and celebrate with everybody at our school," Malaika Fonkem '29 said. The buses emptied onto Deerfield's campus to a chorus of cheers and cowbells; the Choate students were a sea of blue and gold among Deerfield's green. Students filled the sidelines, cheering, waving signs, and shouting across the fields. "Everybody was super hyped to cheer for our teams," Fonkem recalled.

For seniors, the day carried both nostalgia and perspective. "As a senior in my final time going to an away Deerfield Day event, it was revealing to me in a way I didn't expect," Austin Zhuo '26 said. Zhuo noticed not only the rivalry but the connections that are built around the day, describing how alumni "stuck together and provided food and drinks to the whole community," and how the students "formed a bond that comes from moments like these."

Deerfield Day, as Zhuo reflected, has transformed from something "bigger than [him]" into an experience "that everyone is integral to," reminding the Choate community that its greatest tradition is not the rivalry, but rather the shared school spirit that Deerfield Day fosters.

Reid Bock *may be reached at rbock27@choate.edu.*

FROM MICROBIOMES TO SPACE: THE SRP LECTURE SERIES

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Copy Editor

As the lights dimmed in the Getz and Elman Auditoriums, crowds of students, faculty, and families filled the seats and tuned in live to watch the annual Student Lecture Series (SLS). For the seniors in Choate's Science Research Program (SRP), this marks the culmination of a four-term journey and an opportunity to present their research to the community after months of working in professional laboratories.



Deyi Meng '26 and Rachel Fan '27 at SRP presentations.
Photo by Finn Winkstrom '26 /The Choate News

Director of the quantitative sciences section of SRP Dr. Christopher Hogue said, "The goal of the program is to show high school students what it's like to be a professional scientist." SRP is structured more like a lab group than a class, where students learn how to design experiments, interpret data, and write reports that meet professional standards and expectations.

"The culmination of [SRP] is going and working in a university lab for eight to 10 or 12 weeks in the summer, working with adults, working professional scientists, and graduate students on a project ... to see what science is like that's happening in real time," Dr. Hogue explained.

Since its establishment over 20 years ago, SRP has expanded from a single biology-based section to include the physical and quantitative sciences. "It started as just one section of eight students and then expanded to two sections because there was definite interest for it," Dr. Hogue explained.

For the director of the biology cohort of SRP, Dr. Selena Gell, the program's emphasis on scientific communication distinguishes it as both a unique and valuable learning experience for those interested in science. "Over the course of the program, [students] gain all kinds of skills which are important for science, including experimental design, reading scientific literature, and how to keep a lab notebook," she said.

For Joe Yan '26, a member of SRP's biology cohort, SRP meant eight weeks at Massachusetts General Hospital's Wein Lab, studying how mechanical signals influence bone growth. During his research, it took three days and "hours of pipetting just to finish one experiment ... it was a lot slower than what I expected," Yan said.

Nicha Tongdee '26 conducted research at Thailand's Mahidol University on the gut microbiome with Professor Khoomrung. "When I went into SRP, I really wanted to do something related to neuroscience. I ended up not doing anything about that, and learning a lot about the gut microbiome and getting really interested in it," she said.

Seniors currently enrolled in the SRP program focus on presenting their research to diverse audiences through three required ways: a poster showcased in the science building, a journal article that is written as if it were intended for publication, and SLS — each being designed for a different audience. "The posters are more like if you were going to present at a scientific conference. The journal articles are as if you were going to publish in a scientific journal, but the SLS presentations are designed to be listened to by high school students, so they try to explain the science as simply as possible," Dr. Gell said, explaining the nature and approachability of SLS presentations.

Chloe Lee '26, who developed a molecule to capture lead in perovskite solar cells at the National University of Singapore, said she was nervous leading up to SLS. "Honestly, [I was] terrified," she said. "My biggest fear was people not being able to understand what I did over the summer."

According to Dr. Hogue, students in SRP grow throughout the program between their junior and senior years: "It's really evident right at the beginning of the fall, when my juniors are giving their very first oral presentations. In terms of the students themselves, you see a lot of maturity, a lot more confidence," he added.

Lee and emphasized how much support she received from their mentors and peers. "I feel like working in the lab and with my mentor and with my [principal investigator], they were all super supportive," she said. "I also just feel like our cohort has such great vibes, and they've been supportive throughout this whole process."

For Rella Wang '26, watching her peers present was a meaningful experience. "[This year], it's kind of a different experience for me, because it's people from my grade ... I was so proud of all my friends. And their presentation was so cool, especially their animations," she said. Wang and SRP biology cohort member Eliana Li '26 have been in the same advisory for four years. "During our advisory time, we all made her posters and ... actually wrote a song for [Li]," Wang added.

At Choate, the Student Lecture Series continues to bring together students, teachers, and peers in a shared appreciation for research. Each presentation reflects not only months of work in a lab, but the confidence and clarity students have gained from learning to communicate real science. SLS is both a culmination of students' research and a starting point for their journeys as scientists.

Sabrina Liu *may be reached at sliu28@choate.edu.*

PINK RIBBONS AND RUNS

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

Pink ribbons, crisp fall air, and the sound of running shoes on gravel filled the cross-country course on October 26. Choate's WONDER Club gathered students, faculty, and families for the Run for Women's Health: Run Against Breast Cancer, an event blending awareness with action. "There was a really fun energy," Zoe Orenstein '28, a member of WONDER, said. "It was fun to see so many community members show up ... we had students, faculty, faculty kids, and dogs join us."

WONDER Club is a student-led organization dedicated to promoting education and awareness about women's healthcare rights. According to President Annie Cady '26, when WONDER was first established, the club members primarily focused on collaborating with Planned Parenthood to advocate for reproductive rights. However, since then, WONDER has tried to "open [the club] up more to ... women's health generally."

At the event, the members of WONDER educated students about breast cancer. WONDER cabinet member Sadie Cameron '28 explained that they gave a "talk on ... how raising awareness and educating people on breast cancer has actually lowered the breast cancer rates." After the talk, Orenstein said that "as a group, [they] energetically jogged, walked, and ran around the [cross country] course." The goal of the event was to raise awareness about a critical issue while still having fun.

The Run Against Breast Cancer event was the first of many healthcare awareness events that Cady plans to organize this year. On October 27, the WONDER Club hosted a meaningful community conversation about gender equality, accompanied by tea and snacks. "I think we'll continue with these types of talks, thinking about how ... our wellness spaces can better e ducate," Cady said.

Cady believes that education is one of the most effective ways to make a change in the world of health. "I think it's beneficial," she explained, both as a form of "solidarity, and also to raise more awareness."

Oola Breen-Ryan *may be reached at obreenryan29@choate.edu.*


WONDER Club poses for a group picture.
Photo courtesy of Annie Cady '26

Shredding Doors
Dominating Deerfield Day… Again
School News • P1





Subs with Purpose
Serving community one sandwich at a time
Local News • P3

Limitless Teachers
Teachers with multidisciplinary courses
Features • P6





Stacking Soccer Success
Coach Fuentes' 100th career win.
Sports • P8

What's Inside

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

Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Ben Lee, Adithi Variar, and Choate Photos.



SCHOOL NEWS

DAY IN THE LIFE FOR PARENTS ON FAMILY WEEKEND

By **Kaz Kosuka '27**
Copy Editor



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Student with parents in front of Lanphier Center.

From crowded hallways to lively classrooms, Choate's campus came alive as students welcomed their families to campus for Family Weekend. Parents sat in on classes, attended conferences with teachers, and got the opportunity to see what daily life at Choate looks like.

For many students, the weekend brought both excitement and nervousness. "It was nice. I hadn't seen my family in about a month," Jayden Huh '27 said. "It felt enjoyable as my family got to join my classes and live the life that I love at Choate." Like others, Huh found himself "paying more attention and participating more" in class, feeling the pressure of his parents in the classroom.

Throughout campus, students echoed similar sentiments. Hanna Balmuth '27, who is currently a part of the Environmental Immersion Program (EIP), explained that the highlight of her weekend was "eating lunch at the KEC with my parents and having them join my classes." Though she also admitted to feeling "a lot more pressure" with family listening in class. She explained that the experience allowed her parents "to get a glimpse into [her] life at the KEC, which would not have been possible without Family Weekend."

Her father, Andrew Balmuth P'27, described Family Weekend as "a very nice gathering and informative to see what [Balmuth] is doing." He explained that visiting classes gave him more appreciation towards her academic growth: "I feel that [Balmuth] is more appreciative of bugs and trees and plants than ever before. I'm very proud that she's part of the KEC program because it's very relevant to the world that we live in today."

Other students also found pride in showcasing their work to their parents. Haitong Guo '27, whose parents traveled from China, said, "It felt amazing having them here — they didn't really know what it was like living at Choate. Sharing our ethics poster projects with them was really accomplishing."

While classroom visits take the stage as the spotlight of the weekend, its success relies on months of planning. Ms. Cheryl Madden, Choate's Parent and Community Relations Manager, begins coordinating the weekend nearly a year in advance. "Once the weekend finishes, I compile final registration numbers, collect feedback from faculty, staff, and parents, and discuss what worked well and what needs to be adjusted," she said. "This really is an event that touches every member of our community."

Ms. Madden explains that the goal of Family Weekend is to offer "a day in the life of a Choate student." She also added that sitting in on classes always stands out as families' favorite part of the weekend, "other than seeing their kids," of course.

Behind the schedule-making is Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine, who designs the Family Weekend Special Schedule. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, Family Weekend has seen many changes. "Before, conferences happened in person over two days in the gym," Devine explained. "Now, we have virtual conferences, which let international families participate too." She also explained that the 45-minute classes and 15-minute passing periods "strike a good balance" between authentic learning and accessibility for visiting families.

Faculty members also play a very important role in making the experience meaningful. Mr. Joseph Scanio, Program Director of the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC), shared that he tries to keep his teaching as authentic as possible. "I don't make major shifts in what we do," he said. "I want parents to experience what a typical class looks like." He explains that while "there's always a little bit of nervousness" from students, the classroom environment remains consistent as it would look like during a standard class block. "Some activities involved families working together, which really strengthened the sense of community," he said.

Mr. Scanio also saw how visiting families quickly bond together with one another. "They go from class to class together, and you can actually see a little family community develop over the weekend," he said.

Both students and parents expressed appreciation for this opportunity and offered suggestions for improvement. Balmuth '27 suggested "more social activities with the parents and students, not just parent gatherings," while Balmuth P'27 brought up possibly "more time between classes to reflect." Even so, Guo joked that he would prefer "not having Saturday classes."

For Ms. Devine, this feedback is what makes the weekend truly important. "It's always a pleasure to share with families the incredible work and growth that students are exhibiting every day," she said. "Family Weekend affirms how deeply this community cares about one another, across classrooms, dorms, and families." This sight of parents and students learning together is what keeps Family Weekend such a long-lasting tradition. As Ms. Madden put it, "I love watching the entire campus wearing their biggest smiles."

Kaz Kosuka *may be reached at kkosuka27@choate.edu.*

Choate Invitational Debate Tournament: Behind the Scences

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

This fall, the Choate Debate Team hosted its annual Choate Invitational Debate tournament, welcoming 20 peer schools and 200 debaters from the Debate Association of New England Independent Schools (DANEIS) to campus for a day of intense competition. The day was a culmination of hours of hard work, both from rigorous preparation and faculty coordinating efforts.

The tournament features three rounds of extemporaneous parliamentary debate, requiring competitors to form arguments on topics with only 10 minutes of preparation time. This high-speed structure tests students' versatility as they argue without outside research or resources on diverse topics while simultaneously balancing critical thinking, persuasive rebuttals, and Points of Information (POIs). As the clock ticks and pressure mounts, learning to perform under intense conditions is key.

This year, tournament debate captain Harper Marsden-Uren '26 served as the Committee Chair, in charge of logistics and judging coordination at the tournament. She expressed her excitement about "carrying the torch," recognizing the honor and responsibility that her role as captain presents in upholding the strong tradition of Choate Debate. "Ever since I was a freshman, I dreamed of becoming part of the captaincy. My captains were the greatest sounding board I could've asked for," Marsden-Uren said. "It's such an honor to be that role model for younger students now. This has been one of our best seasons in memory, and it's an honor to be at the helm of such an esteemed team."

As a captain and a committee chair, Marsden-Uren felt that this year's tournament was particularly special. "Being captain meant that I understood how our debaters were feeling going into the rounds … As a chair, I could make sure their experience reflected what I'd want as a participant." Choate Debate Coordinator Ms. Kyra Jenney highlighted the impact of Marsden-Uren's role as committee chair and team captain. "[Marsden-Uren] showed that students could take ownership of a major event and still maintain Choate's trademark excellence," she said.

The Choate Invitational features a student-led structure, with students serving as ballot runners and novice debate judges. "Our tournament is really student-run. Although I help oversee the organizing process, the majority of the work of actually running the tournament is done by our students," Ms. Jenney explained. The experience that students gain by managing logistics, judging, and communicating with their teammates enables them to develop real-world organizational skills and learn essential leadership tactics.

Even so, Ms. Jenney remained a crucial asset to the team as she was responsible for managing logistics. The Faculty Chair for the Debate Program, Dr. Amber Hodge, applauded Ms. Jenney's work and highlighted some of her often-overlooked but essential roles. Ms. Jenney noted that it was crucial to pay attention to the details during the tournament. "Rounds are happening in almost every classroom on campus. It's a big undertaking to make sure everything runs on time and that the results are tabulated quickly so debaters and coaches aren't waiting around for hours," she said.

In addition, Marsden-Uren expressed appreciation for the vitality and passion of the younger debaters. "As their captain, and just someone who loves debate, it's amazing to see the enthusiasm," she said.

Reflecting on the 2025 Choate Debate Invitational, Marsden-Uren deemed it to be a "very fruitful event," while Ms. Jenney said that "everything really went off without a hitch." Whether it was for experienced debaters or students trying it out for the first time, the Invitational tournament showcased student leadership and passion in public speaking.

Eliza O'Neill *may be reached at eoneill27@choate.edu.*

Purple Pinkies for a Vaccinated World

By **Kaz Kosuka '27**
Copy Editor

Violet trails were left on desks, clothes, and noses as Choate students walked out of the dining hall with purple-stained pinkies, a small mark that carried an important message. The ink symbolized vaccination and hope as Choate's Interact Club joined global humanitarian service organization Rotary International's worldwide Purple Pinkie campaign to eradicate polio.

Held during lunch blocks on October 30, the event invited Choate students to donate just one dollar — the cost of a single vaccine — and dip their pinkies in purple ink, a tradition that is reflected in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, where children's fingers are marked after receiving their polio shots.

For Interact President Izzy Cook '27, accessibility was the most important aspect of the project. "We wanted to show that making a difference doesn't have to be complicated," she said. "Even one dollar can save a life."

The event is also connected to ideas from the School's summer reading book, *Everything Is Tuberculosis* by John Green. Interact's Junior Officer Sophie Chung '27 explained, "Tuberculosis and polio are similar in the sense that they weren't as widespread in Global North countries like the U.S., so we wanted to bring more awareness to that and raise more funds for Rotary's overall mission." Faculty advisor Ms. Angela Weston described it as "an opportunity for the Choate community to support our international community."

Although the purple stains eventually faded, the event's message remains meaningful and lasting. Reflecting on the purple pinkies themselves, Jinx Hartong '27 said, "[The purple pinkie] creates empathy because every time you look at your purple pinkie, it is a reminder [of the cause]."

Kaz Kousaka *may be reached at kkousaka27@choate.edu.*

Dancing and Eating Into International Education Week

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Copy Editor

What does it mean to be educated in a global community? For Choate students and faculty, International Education Week offered an answer. From October 26-November 1, the Global Engagement Office and student-led clubs hosted a range of cultural activities that highlighted the School's cultural diversity. These included Latin dance workshops, African game nights, art projects, and discussions on global issues.

Now in its third year, International Education Week offers students and faculty the opportunity to engage with cultures represented across the community in both academic and social settings.

Clubs like the Hispanic Latine Forum (HLF), Africana Club, and Chinese Club contributed to this year's programming. Most days featured at least two different activities, with some beginning even before the official start of International Education Week. The schedule began on October 23 with a dual-degree information session hosted by Columbia University, followed by a Diwali celebration and an HLF dance workshop that introduced students to salsa, bachata, and merengue dances. As the week progressed, the Africana Club organized a bracelet-making and game night with Ghanaian food and Afrobeats music, while the Spanish Club hosted a fan-painting activity. The Chinese Club then led a cultural game night featuring mahjong and other traditional games. At the same time, WONDER Club, which advocates for the empowerment and understanding of women and their healthcare rights, sparked discussions on gender equality.

In addition to the club-led events, teachers and faculty also played a key role in making International Education Week possible. Faculty members in the Language Department organized field trips that provided students with the opportunity to experience culture firsthand. For example, Arabic teacher Mr. Yassine Benzinane led a visit to a Moroccan barbecue restaurant. In contrast, Chinese teacher Ms. Carol Chen-Lin took students to local Asian grocery stores and a nearby bubble tea shop. Meanwhile, SAGE offered a rotating menu of international dishes and beverages in the dining hall, and the Andrew Mellon Library librarians contributed with an international snack table, transforming familiar spaces into opportunities for cultural connection across campus.

Behind the full schedule of performances and workshops, planning for the week began long before the events took place. Spanish teacher Ms. Le'ah Griggs, who coordinated the activities with the Global Engagement Office, noted that preparations started as early as the previous spring term. "It's a long process because there are so many clubs involved," she said. "We began reaching out to groups in the spring to gauge interest, then followed up in mid-September to confirm events, reserve spaces, and organize materials and catering." She also emphasized that although the week required a lot of management, seeing students take ownership of their club events made the effort worthwhile.

For HLF President Lucas Carlson '26, his main goal for the dance workshop was to create an interactive and fun experience for everyone. "For those who had never done anything like that before, I just hope they had a good time," he said. Reflecting on the week, Africana Club member Chiamaka Eke '26 valued the chance that International Education Week has given her to both celebrate and learn from different cultures. "As somebody who is Nigerian American, it's really important to me that the School has these events where I can interact with my culture," Eke said. "It's also about learning from each other and seeing what other people's cultures are like."

Teya Tejavibulya *may be reached at ttejavibulya28@choate.edu.*

Vinny's Deli Fights Food Insecurity

By **Sophie Chung '27**
Reporter

Located in the heart of Wallingford, Vinny's Deli has long been known for its hearty sandwiches and welcoming atmosphere. Beyond its classic subs, however, Vinny's has also built a reputation for acts far more meaningful: Vinny's initiative to help feed the hungry has turned compassion into action, helping to mitigate food insecurity one meal at a time.

Founded in 1982 by Mr. Vinny Iannuzzi, the deli began as a small business driven by his love of food and entrepreneurship. Over the years, he has initiated numerous programs to support unhoused individuals, low-income families, and local students. "I get up any day and make myself happy because I can give and I can help people. It's just such a good feeling to help," Mr. Iannuzzi said. These programs are supported by donations from residents of Wallingford and gift certificates that customers can sponsor, which then cover the cost of another person's meal. His work is even more critical as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, which help low-income families afford groceries, have been reduced, placing even more strain on community resources.

Mr. Iannuzzi is incredibly grateful to the Wallingford community: "The community's great to us, absolutely great," he said. Every day, Vinny's serves unhoused residents of Wallingford. "On Saturdays, we'll feed them for two days. They'll take enough so that they can eat Saturday and Sunday," Mr. Iannuzzi said. He also recounted a specific encounter that continues to resonate with him: "A little girl came and hugged me around my knees. I looked at the mother because I didn't know what was going on. She said she's happy she can eat tonight." Mr. Iannuzzi gets to see firsthand the sheer number of people in need and the reach his programs have; however, despite the significant work Vinny's is doing and the accomplishments it has made so far, national rates of food insecurity only show upward trends. The same trends are reflected in Wallingford.

That said, one of the most significant problems Mr. Iannuzzi is facing right now is keeping up with the insistent demand for meal subsidies among rising food costs and shortages. Price volatility and inflation have affected the costs of the food served, but Mr. Iannuzzi continues to operate his programs. He noted that he "has a hard time saying no to anyone."

Mr. Iannuzi said that addressing food insecurity requires collective action. Through the charity of the local community, Mr. Iannuzi's aspirations will be made possible. "It doesn't take many people to help all these people," he noted, displaying the importance of community participation and public support. He added, "For whatever or whenever you see a person, you shouldn't judge that person. You don't know what went wrong in their lives, so have a heart and try to help people out where you can."

Sophie Chung *may be reached at schung27@choate.edu.*



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

Choate students pose outside Vinny's Deli in Wallingford.

Regency House GIFTs Connection



Photo courtesy of Tessa Wilhelm '27

Senior residents at Regency House during GIFT's second event.

By **Suyeong Hahn '27**
Reporter

For many Choate boarders, being far from home means missing the warmth of family. To bring that sense of connection to campus, Tessa Wilhelm '27 founded Generations Inspiring Friendship and Togetherness (GIFT), a community service initiative that connects students with residents of Regency House in Wallingford.

During monthly visits to the Regency House, students take part in activities such as board games, reading, and storytelling that bridge the gap between generations. The senior residents enjoy spending time with the students, creating moments that remind them of their own grandchildren. GIFT allows for an exchange of knowledge, but also curiosity, between both high school students and senior citizens — hopefully acquiring wisdom and life lessons from the seniors' years of lived experience.

Despite the most significant challenge of recruiting enough volunteers, Wilhelm said she has kept the group active and inspired by leading different hands-on projects.

The first meeting, which featured block-printed cloth napkins with carved apples, ended with participants proudly displaying their creations in their rooms. Later, in response to the residents' passion for gardening and planting, the group created small succulent planters together. What makes GIFT's activities precious is that their impact does not end when the door of Regency House closes. The creations and the hours of connection behind them allow residents to return to their rooms with a smile on their faces and a tangible memory of connection to-forever cherish.

Wilhelm's goal is not simply to serve but to foster genuine relationships that celebrate creativity, empathy, and shared experience. So far, both students and residents have expressed genuine enthusiasm for the program. Ms. Sue Rintharamy, Head of Social Events at Regency House, said, "Residents appreciate these visits because they offer a sense of connection with bonds outside of the Regency House."

Students, too, find joy in these encounters. Lucy McCutcheon '28 recalled sitting beside one of the residents during a visit: "It's nice for the seniors to see new faces. They're so curious about us. Our sports, our school life, everything. And for us, it's just as special to learn about them. There's this mutual curiosity that makes every visit feel like catching up with peers."

Looking ahead, Tessa aims to expand GIFT to include more participants and continue developing creative projects that revive cherished memories through connection between young and older generations.

Suyeong Hahn *may be reached at shahn27@choate.edu.*

Wallingford McDonald's Honors Employee of 50 Years

By **Eshana Hora '27**
Copy Editor

Every morning since 1975, Nancy Miller has clocked in at the McDonald's on North Colony Street — the same place she first walked into as a young mother looking for a part-time job to support her family. In that time, she has become a pillar of the Wallingford community, greeting customers with the same familiar smile at both the counter and drive-through. This month, as McDonald's celebrates its 50th anniversary with 50-cent deals on menu items, it is also honoring Miller's 50-year career at the restaurant.

When Miller first joined McDonald's in 1975, the Wallingford location was still under construction. At the time, she was searching for a part-time job to bring in extra income after the birth of her child. Miller shared, "It was just a job to help while we were establishing ourselves," not realizing that she would still be working there 50 years later.



Graphic by TK Lee '29/*The Choate News*

Over the years, Miller's responsibilities have shifted to cater to the restaurant's changing needs. Beginning her career with night shifts, she eventually took on day shifts before transitioning to accounting work at the McDonald's office, a role she still holds today. "The opportunity came where the person they had didn't want to do it anymore," she said. "They asked me to step up." Even now, Miller starts her day with a morning shift in the restaurant before heading to the office.

The restaurant itself has undergone significant changes during her tenure. From hamburger presses to cash registers, she witnessed the evolution of the kitchen. "They used to press [hamburgers] with this hamburger press, like a smash burger," she recalled, a technique that double-sided grills have replaced in recent years. Miller also noted that the technology used at McDonald's has evolved, including the introduction of self-service kiosks and digital cash registers.

As Miller spent more time at McDonald's, she became more familiar with the regular customers and often followed their lives through brief drive-through exchanges. One story that stood out involved a longtime customer whose life milestones unfolded over years of visits — from getting a boyfriend to marrying and eventually having children. "The baby has got to be 13 years old ... I still see her," Miller said, reflecting on the connections she's built with generations of local families.

Miller believes working in fast food offers valuable early job experience. "It's a great way to get your foot in the door," she said. "A lot of kids come back and they'll thank us for teaching them how to handle the workforce." She emphasized that the lessons learned at McDonald's go beyond serving food; they help people develop responsibility and confidence.

Reflecting on her 50 years, Miller expressed gratitude for her job and colleagues, and their continous presence throughout the course of her long career. "I am really blessed to have a job that I like as well as people that I like working with ... I don't think I'd change anything."

What started as a small, temporary job has turned into 50 years of dedication and a long-standing connection with the Wallingford community for Miller. She has become a familiar face greeting generations of customers, a testament to hard work in early career aspirations, and, half a century later, an integral part of the town. As McDonald's celebrates its 50th anniversary, Miller still shows up every morning, with no signs of slowing down.

Eshana Hora *may be reached at ehora27@choate.edu.*

The Choate News

119th Masthead VOL. CXIX

Reinah E. Lee '26 *Editor-in-Chief*
Ethan Y. Zhang '26 *Managing Editor*

School News
Eliana Li '26
Bella Welch '26

Local News
Rachel Fan '27
Maia Shah '27

Opinions
Steven Kee '27
Zaki Shamsi '26
Eshana Hora '27

Features
Deyi Meng '26

Arts & Leisure
Elizabeth Burgstahler '26

Sports
Kaitlyn Yu '27

Photography
Finn Wikstrom '26
Scarlett Park '27

Graphics
Leah Han '27

Layout
Ian Wu '26

Copy Editors

Sabrina Liu '28
Ha Jin Sung '28
Kaz Kousaka '27
Reid Bock '27
Jai Midha '27
Teya Tejavibulya '28
Harry Kim '28

*Head of Team

Advisers
Ms. Cahaley Markman
Ms. Courtney DeStefano

Outreach
Victoria DeVito '27*
Izzy McGehee '27*
Sofia Fronzi '26
Clara Kang '26
Wayne Wang '26
Ignacio Granda '27
Jayden Park '27
Maia Shah '27
Arjun Ramnath '28

Website
Beatrice Kim '26*
Ian Wu '26*
Amber Yung '26*
Eason Ni '27
Sena Wakamatsu '27

Staff Contributors

Josh Pan '27
Ayaz Zuberi '27
Callie Crowell '28
Eliza O'Neill '27
Hiyab Mebrahtu '27
Sophie Chung '27
Norah Wang '27
Drew Wolfson '27
Shaleen Sheth '27

@choatenews @choatenews @choatenews

Email us: thechoatenews@choate.edu || Call us: (203) 697-2070 || Find us: thechoatenews.choate.edu

Print by Valley Publishing, Derby CT

More Days Off Aren't Always Better



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

By **Anna Park '29**
Opinions Writer

National holidays often bring a breath of fresh air, offering days off from school and work. At Choate, national holidays are celebrated a little differently. While there is no explicit statement specifying which holidays Choate students get days off for and which ones they don't, Choate will take a break on some national holidays. For example, we enjoy a 12-day break for Thanksgiving. On the other hand, Memorial Day, observed on May 25, is marked on the School's calendar, but its date is listed as "school in session." Most recently, for Indigenous Peoples' Day, there was no school off, but Choate offered an alternative way of celebration: commemorative food in the dining hall. The current way Choate observes national holidays is acceptable and understandable, as it ensures classroom productivity and maximizes the time students have at home with their families.

Many argue that national holidays offer much-needed rest and stress relief. Yet, increasing the number of days off may have the opposite effect. National holidays actually put more strain and work overall on teachers and students. Additional fragmented days off will make it easy for students to forget content in between these short breaks. This creates a chain reaction: students forget material, find it harder to resume lessons, and ultimately spend more time reviewing what they had already learned. Consistent student academic performance may suffer from such disruptions. Teachers will also have to readjust their classes to devote more time to review sessions rather than covering new content. As a result, there will be less time to cover new content. Class pace and progress will be hindered with the introduction of additional breaks, and it is a lose-lose situation for everyone.

Adding more short holidays could also force adjustments to longer breaks, such as Winter Break, to meet required class hours. This trade-off is harmful. Extended breaks offer sustained rest and allow students to travel, pursue independent projects, or visit family, opportunities that short, scattered days cannot provide. As an international student, I appreciate these extended breaks, which make travel more manageable in terms of both time and cost. Moreover, if short national holidays were observed with a few days off, they would likely be too short for most boarding students to return home anyway, as it likely isn't worthwhile to go home for a three-day break. As a result, if longer breaks are cut short to compensate for additional holidays, students will spend less time at home with their families overall.

Some may say additional days off are necessary to improve mental health. However, Choate already provides sufficient opportunities for rest to students in lieu of getting full days off for national holidays. There are no homework days for religious holidays that many other schools may not even observe, such as Yom Kippur. Outside of class, students can relax through Student Activities Center events such as cake decorating or pumpkin picking. There are ample opportunities for students to unwind outside of class throughout the year, reducing the need for full days off on national holidays.

National holidays are significant events with meaning. However, not all of them call for days off. Additional days off may have negative effects across academic and personal lives. Ultimately, there is no need to change the current setup of national holiday observances at Choate.

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

Goodbye to Emails, Hello to Student Notes

By **Sophie Chung '27**
Staff Contributor

Whether it's from Gold Key or Student Committee on Programming and Engagement (SCOPE), you're probably used to the influx of weekly announcement emails from groups across campus, especially on Sunday evenings. In previous years, emails containing announcements from various departments or clubs were sent by the Deans' Office. These emails would be somewhere in between all those other emails, usually consisting of long, tedious paragraphs, with important information squeezed in between all the text. This year, the Deans' Office introduced Student Notes, a weekly collection of updates and announcements organized by department on a website that serves as the perfect solution to the lengthy emails. Now, instead of a weekly offloading on Sunday, students can access the organized information they need efficiently, and parties with announcements can ensure their messages will be given an equal space to be seen.

Typically, I am opposed to change, and I assumed the Student Notes wouldn't improve anything, since the previous system worked just fine for me, and wasn't that confusing. Now that I have used it weekly for a while, three main benefits have emerged.

The first benefit that Student Notes has unlocked is efficiency. There is a popular belief that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," but at a school like Choate, where students are strapped for time, every minute saved is worth it. Scrolling through endless emails to find the key message, then going back through the paragraphs to find specific pieces of information, is painstaking. Student Notes eliminates that.

Student Notes has also improved the organization of information. The old system was overwhelming and disorganized, making it difficult to extract specific information from long blocks of text. Furthermore, students can easily miss an email and, consequently, overlook key information. Now, students can access information by department rather than wading through the emails in their inboxes, making it easier to identify the information they need. Fewer emails from the Deans' Office also means less inbox clutter. This ensures that important emails that may require a students' urgent response stand out in their inboxes, making students' inboxes a place to communicate with others rather than an incessant list of emails. The new bulleted announcements make it easier to find key information and quickly skim through.

Lastly, Student Notes promotes platform equality. Student Notes ensures that information from all parties is equally palatable — one announcement is no more difficult to find than another, unlike in the previous fragmented, tedious emails. Each club, department, team, and organization has an equal and clean space to share updates in a centralized location. This slight difference makes a significant impact on inclusivity.

Student Notes provides students with a direct, accessible, and equitable platform to view and share information. The improvements in time and organization make it a beneficial addition to the Choate communication system.

While you might miss hearing from your dean's assistant, Student Notes definitely beats reading through long paragraphs. So, when you receive the next notification for the newest release of Student Notes on Wednesday afternoons, be grateful to the Deans' Office for developing this new format, which makes all our lives easier!

Sophie Chung *is a fifth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at schung27@choate.edu.*



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

Equal Fields and Stages: Why Choate Must Balance Athletics and the Arts

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Copy Editor

Last spring, I jumped off the bus after an hour-long ride from my tennis match, sprinted to Colony Hall, and took my seat in the orchestra. I was half an hour late. This is a common experience for many Choate students, especially those with commitments that overlap in both sports and arts. After the school day ends, Choate afternoons are packed with sports practices and away games, while evenings are dedicated to ensembles such as choir and orchestra. Students often find that their sports practices and games conflict with rehearsal schedules and the opportunity to pursue artistic passions. Ultimately, students' athletic commitments should not take priority over their involvement in the arts.

Many Choate students, including myself, desire to fully pursue both sports and arts. The School attempts to create a daily schedule that allows for this dual commitment. However, in reality, prolonged sports commitments often bleed into designated art time in the evening, preventing students from fully participating in both.

Most sports take up over an hour of practice every day, with full game days on Wednesdays and Saturdays — ensembles like the Symphony Orchestra and Choate Chorale meet just three times a week. With an already limited number of rehearsals before the performance, it is essential that students attend each rehearsal to maximize productivity. Some sections, such as the woodwind sections of the Symphony Orchestra, have only one person playing each part. When a student is absent due to conflicting athletic activities, the music is not complete, preventing the orchestra from rehearsing effectively. Allowing sports schedules to overshadow arts schedules undermines the effectiveness of rehearsals.

Additionally, unlike sports, participation in the Symphony Orchestra and Choate Chorale counts as one arts credit per term, with grades being factored into students' grade point averages (GPA). In other words, the ensembles weigh no less than other academic classes. In academic classes during the school day, repeated absences hinder learning, and, accordingly, consequences are enforced to prevent them, ensuring consistent attendance and learning. Yet, the School has failed to address the needs of students who are repeatedly forced to miss large portions of their rehearsals due to circumstances beyond their control, such as traffic on the way back from a game or a late practice. Students are not only prevented from fully engaging in the arts, but missing rehearsals also do a disservice to ensemble teachers by reducing the time they have to create a good performance.

Choate's music performance ensembles play a significant role in representing the School. Music performances are highlights of schoolwide events such as Family Weekend and Revisit Week. Our ensembles often make the first impression of the School to families, relatives, and new students, and are therefore a vital part of Choate's identity. If sports commitments are valued over the time specifically carved out for the arts, there is often not enough time to rehearse and prepare the ensembles for their best during such events, and Choate may miss out on creating the best first impressions possible.



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

Orchestra Director Mr. Gene Wie emphasized the importance of striking a balance between extracurricular activities and the role that program heads, teachers, and coaches play in managing the after-school schedules of students. "Any adult that is in charge of any kind of scheduling ... [is] responsible for making sure that, even as committed we are to our discipline, we always respect this principle of balance for everybody," he said. Mr. Wie highlighted the need for coaches to inform him if a particular sports team with ensemble members will be returning to campus late to prevent unexpected impacts on rehearsals. "Conflicts come about when people feel that whatever they're doing should be able to exceed those bounds," he said.

Compared to previous years there has already been significant improvements in mitigating scheduling conflicts for students. However, there is still room for improvement in the future to better plan and ensure that the arts receives its fair share of rehearsal time.

Choate has students who are "undefinable." For many, that means committing to both arts and athletics. Choate students can only be truly "undefinable" when they don 't have to choose between the stage and the field, and can instead fully immerse themselves in both aspects of Choate life.

Ha Jin Sung *is a fourth-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at hsung28@choate.edu.*

When Silence Becomes Complicity

By **Olivia Mancha '28**
Opinions Writer

Africa — the birthplace of humanity — is bleeding, and the world barely notices. News outlets fill screens with updates from Gaza or Kyiv, yet they fall silent when Nigerian villages burn or Sudanese cities are reduced to ash. As each news reporter tries to piece together the next big story, African stories continue to be ignored and neglected.

Many human rights groups describe what is happening in Nigeria as genocide. Extremist groups are attacking Christian communities, families are fleeing the country, and villages are disappearing overnight. According to Intersociety, a Nigerian human rights organization, more than 7,000 Christians were killed this year alone, and over 50,000 since 2009. Open Doors reports more than 3,000 Christians killed and nearly 3,000 kidnapped this year. These are not random acts of violence; they are deliberate and planned.

While the large numbers represent the scale of genocide, data does not capture what is truly lost: a father who did not come home, a mother who ran with her children into the night, a teenager who never returned to school.

Sudan faces a similar tragedy. Since a civil war broke out in 2023, tens of thousands have been killed and millions displaced. People are dying of starvation and disease. Families are bombed in refugee camps. The Guardian and The Associated Press have reported glimpses of it, but those stories fade fast. The International Rescue Committee states that Sudan faces one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

This silence regarding African stories is not born of ignorance, but of indifference. Western media has a hierarchy of empathy: determining whose pain is worth attention and whose is not. When a Ukrainian mother flees, she is called brave. However, when a Nigerian mother does the same, she becomes part of "regional instability." This is a continuation of colonial attitudes that still prioritize the Western world over others — a hierarchy we must dismantle.

Some reporters cite limited bandwidth when covering African stories, but this is not about bandwidth. It is about interest. Africa does not trend; it doesn't get hashtags or breaking news alerts. The ignorance of African stories is not loud racism, but a quieter kind built on indifference and avoidance of discomfort.

That indifference enables continued violence. Extremist groups in Nigeria know the cameras are not watching. Generals and militias in Sudan know the outrage cycle has moved on. Even journalists telling the truth are hunted, jailed, or killed. The Committee to Protect Journalists, an American nonprofit organization that works with journalists worldwide, confirms Sudanese reporters are being silenced for doing their jobs. When no one reports what is happening, there is no pressure to change anything.

Ignoring Africa is immoral and shortsighted. The continent has one of the youngest populations on the planet, and its future is the future of the earth. Yet when people die, the "global community" looks away. Western governments often speak of democracy and human rights, but how genuine are these values if they apply only to certain regions?

Africa does not need pity or saviors. It needs honesty. It needs to be seen. The world does not have to fix everything, but it must at least care enough to look, to report, to witness, and to tell the truth. Silence is never natural. It is a choice.

Olivia Mancha *is a fourth-former from Gainesville, VA. She may be reached at omancha28@choate.edu.*



Graphic by Callie Crowell '28/*The Choate News*

Tokyo's Mistake, Beijing's Repeat



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

By **Kaashvi Mittal '29**
Opinions Writer

Warning signs are emerging in what was once one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Prices are falling, developers are collapsing, and the population is shrinking faster than expected. Does this sound familiar? Almost like rereading a book you already know the ending to? That's because Japan lived through this 30 years ago, and China appears to be walking straight into the sequel of an economic tragedy without learning anything from part one.

Japan's rise after World War II was extraordinary. For two decades, its economy grew at a rate of about 10% a year. Exports were cheap, business networks like keiretsus connected companies, and banks shoveled out loans as if money would never run out. But in 1985, the Plaza Accord, an agreement among the G5 countries, led to a rise in the yen's value. Japan attempted to address the problem by reducing interest rates from 5% to 2.5%, flooding the economy with cheap credit. As a result, easy money turned investors into gamblers. Land prices increased by 245% and stocks up 240%. The Japanese lived as if prosperity would last forever. However, it didn't. When the price bubble burst in 1992, around 80% of the stock market's value vanished, and Japan entered its infamous "Lost Decade." Even worse, the country's fertility rate collapsed, making it impossible for the next generation to rebuild what was lost.

China watched all this happen, and yet somehow learned nothing. The country's greatest mistake was building wealth from debt. For years, China treated borrowing as a magic trick that could create money and economic growth out of thin air. Banks offered easy loans, families took on mortgages that they could barely afford, and the entire system acted as though debt carried no consequences. It worked briefly until debt demanded more debt back. Between 2009 and 2023, China's household debt exploded from 18% of GDP to 63%. Real estate has become one-third of the economy, which is a ridiculous level of dependence on selling apartments. The China Evergrande Group, a property developer, is the perfect example of the crisis. Evergrande had borrowed more than $300 billion, sold apartments that didn't even exist yet, and continued to take new loans just to pay off old ones. This mirrors Japan's equally delusional mindset from decades earlier. What exacerbates China's situation is the government's negligence, which, instead of addressing the issue, prioritized rapid growth at any cost.

Another one of China's catastrophic mistakes is demography. The one-child policy, instituted in 1980, was supposed to control population growth, and it did just that. For years, families preferred sons, which led to a severe gender imbalance where men now outnumber women in every age group below 40. As women became more educated and focused on careers rather than having a family, birth rates fell even further. In 2022, births hit their lowest level since 1790. An aging, shrinking population means fewer workers, fewer buyers, and fewer new ideas for the country, slowing its development.

China wanted to rise faster, borrow bigger, and prove it could outbuild the world. But no nation can outrun economics or demographics. Like Japan, China mistook credit for strength and population control for progress. Now, the bill is due. The towers are cracking, the workers are vanishing, and the miracle is collapsing.

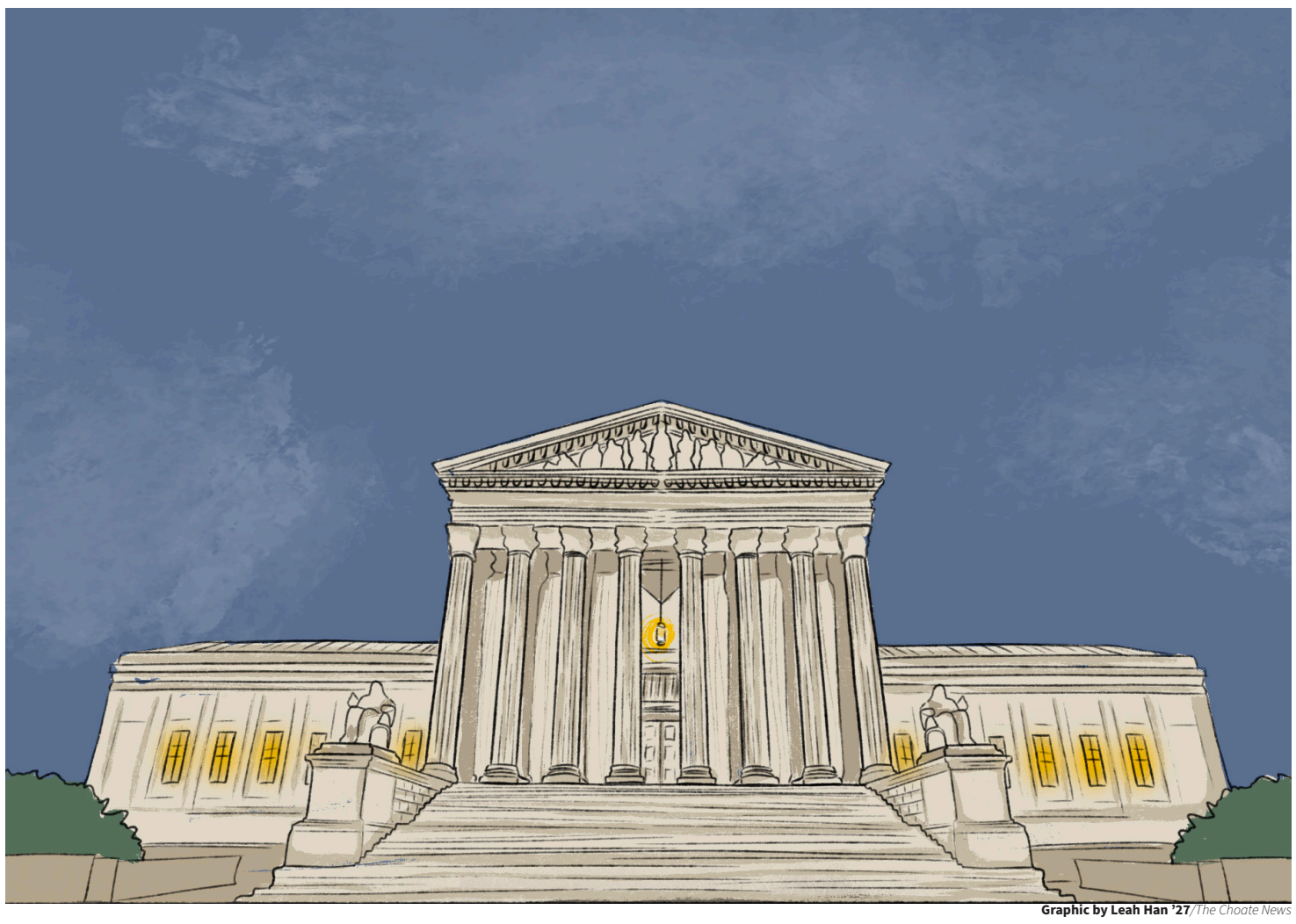
Kashvi Mittal *is a third-former from Oak Brook, IL. She may be reached at kmittal29@choate.edu.*

THE SUPREME FAILURE

By **Jai Midha '27**
Copy Editor

Five out of nine Supreme Court Justices are all it takes to overturn or assert a law as constitutional. Five Justices, appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, can determine the fate of laws affecting millions, even though there are no formal requirements for education, experience, or background to serve on the Supreme Court. For all we know, you or I could end up as a justice. But why should the United States, which was founded in the revolution against the unchecked monarch of Britain, have an unelected court that has final say? In other words, is it not contradictory for the United States — upholder of democracy and freedom — to have a set of nine Justices decide the law? This is exactly why the Supreme Court has become ineffective in today's system.

When Alexander Hamilton first argued for the judiciary system in the Federalist Papers, the need for justices to be appointed for life was to achieve independence from political pressure and safeguard the Constitution against public opinion. However, in 2025, the court became Hamilton's nightmare. Justices repeatedly claimed independence from partisanship, claiming that they are not "politicians with robes." Yet, the court's decisions have not convinced the American people of this sentiment.



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

Recent polls have shown widespread distrust in the Supreme Court and a perception that it is incompetent. A Yahoo News poll found that over 74% of Americans believe that the court is "too politicized." These claims don't come without evidence. The courts have been seen to push a far-right agenda, with pushes for the breakdown of federal power, seen in the Dobbs case that overturned Roe or in Virginia v. EPA, cutting federal power for environmental regulations. Voting in the Supreme Court has become a vote along party lines rather than rationale.

In the past year, President Donald Trump P'00 has used executive orders to fulfill his "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) agenda. From unilaterally imposing tariffs to deploying the National Guard to "protect" cities, there have been numerous questions about the constitutionality of President Trump's actions.

So, what has the guardian of the Constitution said? Many of the cases against Trump's actions are still under review, but the Court's limited rulings so far have reflected a consistent conservative lean. Millions of Americans depend on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for their daily food needs. Yet during the government shutdown, President Trump revoked its funding, despite SNAP being an essential service. In theory, only non-essential programs are meant to halt during a shutdown, but the Supreme Court nevertheless allowed the president's decision to stand temporarily, leaving the final ruling to the lower appeals courts, exposing how the Court has failed to protect vital public welfare.

The court has also allowed President Trump's restriction on transgender, nonbinary, and intersex individuals from selecting gender-affirming options on passports, which encroaches on the freedoms of those who identify as such. Furthermore, the court has yet to comment on President Trump's firing of Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook, a supposedly non-partisan appointment.

Over and over again, the court has affirmed or given leeway to what President Trump wishes to pursue in regards to his overall agenda. When the court was established in 1789, Congress wished to protect the voices and liberties of minorities. However, the court has never been quieter and more ineffective in a more crucial time. Millions across the U.S. and the world suffer from the unchecked power that President Trump exercises over them, from bombing Venezuelan 'drug boats' to restricting birthright citizenship.

Over 250 years ago, the states of America united to fight against an unchecked monarch that suppressed minorities. Now, we face an unelected court that can strike down any law: is that fundamentally undemocratic? How can we be at peace knowing that the political system that governs us all can be upended by five Justices?

Jai Midha *is a fifth-former from Singapore. He may be reached at jmidha27@choate.edu.*

Choate Trees, Autumn Leaves

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor

The Choate campus is perfect for fall, from dozens of trees that turn orange, to red New England brick that matches the leaves, to hundreds of students wearing cozy sweaters. But, even as we try to picture what fall feels like, fall at Choate is hard to represent with words. So, as we enter into winter, these photos capture the autumn season at Choate — a vivid collection of the School's beauty and a way to cherish our first term of the 2025-2026 school year.



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

For many Choate students, one of the most memorable experiences of the term is participating in fall athletics. At the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC), students prepare for their sports practice, take part in relaxing yoga sessions, or simply work out and stay in shape.



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

The first scenery in sight as you walk down the Hill House steps after lunch is this collection of colorful trees. Hidden between them is one of Choate's two guest houses, the Sally Hart Lodge. Before the fall passes, take a chance after a meal in the dining hall to appreciate this view before moving on to your next commitment.



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

Next to the crosswalk in front of the Paul Mellon Humanities Building, the browning autumn leaves offer shade for students to rest and recuperate amidst Choate's hectic schedule. Often, you will find students gathered on the bench under this tree, engaged in class discussions and quiet conversations.



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

Whether it's for the usual morning School Meeting, a short afternoon stroll to Colony Hall, or evening Orchestra rehearsal, the staircase of the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) is the perfect place to admire the vivid colors of autumn.

Harry Kim *may be reached at hkim28@choate.edu.*



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

While the sunsets remain beautiful in every season, the vibrant hues of autumn trees make the view even more striking than ever. The pathway up to the Humanities building, where we can see the Andrew Mellon Library and Steele Hall intersect, offers the perfect frame for viewing the sunset.



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

Under the fading glow of the November sky, Seymour St. John Chapel rises high above the autumn trees. The clouds, painted in hues of light blue and gold, capture the serene beauty of the campus during the fall afternoons.

These photos of brightly colored trees, fragile leaves, and radiant sunsets remind us of the quiet beauty that fills Choate's campus each fall. Beyond the beauty of the scenery, these places also capture students' memories and experiences of the first term of the school year. Though winter approaches, the memories of autumn remain — bright, warm, and ready to return next year.

Student Service Projects

By **Gaby Yeung '29 and Emma Demopoulos '29**
Reporters

Many view community service as simply a diploma requirement. However, for some Choate students, it is a way to connect their personal interests with meaningful impact and discover lessons that cannot be taught inside the classroom. From teaching the perfect golf swing to playing recycling games, Liya Nichols '26, Sophia Saldamarco '27, and Johnny Guo '26 turned their interests into tangible service projects.

Liya Nichols '26

While in high school, Nichols joined Freedom School Partners, a summer program that teaches reading and literacy to underprivileged kids located in Charlotte, North Carolina. "The first year, I did it because my mom told me to do it. But, I went back because I really enjoyed working with the kids and it was people that I probably wouldn't have interacted with in other ways," she said.

To kick off the day, the kids would do a cheering and dancing activity called Harambe to energize themselves. Afterwards, Nichols led reading sessions based on an Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC), helping students engage with stories through projects. In the afternoon, Nichols and the campers would go on various field trips and activities.

What started as a tutoring experience soon became an exchange of cultures and creativity. The kids taught Nichols how to rap and dance, allowing her to connect with them on a deeper level. "I learned how to connect with people who I have different backgrounds with because I've never met a single kid who had been there before, and we had no overlapping interests on the surface. I learned how to connect with them, listen, and hear their stories," Nichols said.

Sophia Saldamarco '27

For Saldamarco, community service came through golf, where she partnered with the Special Olympics Golf Team to coach kids through various events. During the day, Saldamarco worked with her golf partner Kenny, playing three holes on the course before finishing with a challenge of the day event on the putting green.

For the final Fall Festival tournament, Saldamarco was paired with a young boy named Cole, who was unable to directly interact with people and needed electronic devices to communicate. Witnessing the patience and acceptance of Cole's family and community helped Saldamarco recognize the power of empathy and how fortunate she is to express herself freely. Saldamarco said, "The experience really opened my eyes to see how privileged I am in my everyday life that I may not notice. I wake up in the morning and I talk to my friends, and just being able to use my voice is such an important thing."

Johnny Guo '26

Guo also found meaning in his project Teach Environment, which collaborates with the Boys and Girls Club in Wallingford to teach young kids about environmental responsibility. In partnership with Fourth-form Dean and Director of Sustainability Ms. Katrina Linthorst-Homan, Guo created fun, interactive games on topics like recycling and climate change.

Through his community service project, Guo learned many valuable lessons, such as how to work effectively with children. "I've never worked with little kids before, so teaching kids things in a very succinct and engaging way was something that was definitely new," Guo said. Additionally, Guo's perception of education also changed through his project. "I learned that education is not only about knowing things but about using what you know to create positive change," he said.

For Ms. Melissa Koomson, Choate's Director of Community Service, these kinds of lessons are exactly what she envisions for students taking part in service projects. "My goals are that students are having experiences where they can apply what they're learning in classrooms to local communities to see ways they can make an impact," she said.

This may seem easier said than done, but Ms. Koomson believes that everyone has something to gain from partaking in community service. "I always urge students to consider what they are learning and what they are unlearning in the process of their community service," she said.

At Choate, students continue to go above and beyond to give back to the community while simultaneously pursuing their own interests. Through community service, they've gained patience, leadership, and an understanding of different perspectives — skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

Gaby Yeung and Emma Demopoulos *may be reached at gyeung29@choate.edu and edemopoulos29@choate.edu.*

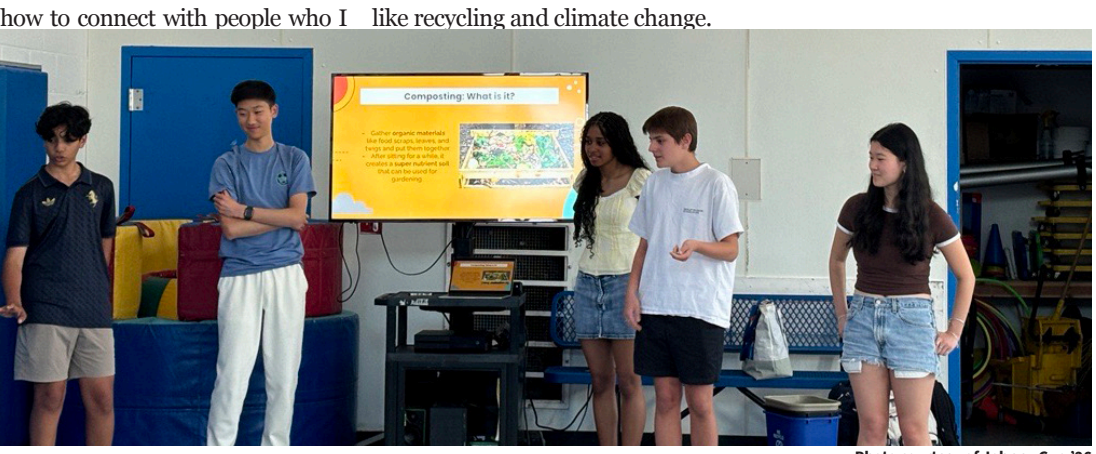


Photo courtesy of Johnny Guo '26

Johnny Guo '26 and fellow Choate students explain composting through the Teach Environment Project.

Cross-Department Educators



Graphic by Adithi Variar '27/*The Choate News*

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Copy Editor

English and Art, History and Math, Theater and Literature, what do these departments have in common with each other? At Choate, the answer lies with teachers who intersect in both subjects. Whether it is analyzing fiction to spark discussions, connecting the rhythm of language to theater, or tracing the logic behind math equations and historical arguments, these teachers emphasize the value of interdisciplinary learning.

Mr. Ned Gallagher

For nearly four decades, HPRSS and English teacher Mr. Ned Gallagher has refused to remain confined to a single academic department at Choate. Initially hired as a history teacher in 1987, Mr. Gallagher later began teaching English in 1992, spending several years balancing both roles before taking on the additional role of Athletic Director in 1996. Even during his two decades in the Athletics Department, he continued to teach two classes each term, keeping him in the classroom.

Now, after stepping down as Athletic Director, Mr. Gallagher is teaching three classes this fall: U.S. Government and Politics, International Relations, and an English elective called Literatures of Tomorrow. With a background in the humanities, he often incorporates art, music, and culture into his classes, describing this approach as his own unique teaching method. "Even within one department, you have different approaches depending on the subject matter and what field it is," Mr. Gallagher said.

Ms. Kate Doak

English and Acting teacher Ms. Kate Doak bridges Choate's most expressive disciplines: literature and theater. Before joining Choate, she worked at New York Theater Workshop in New York and taught English at The Lawrenceville School in New Jersey. "I always expected to be a drama teacher," she said. "But at Choate, I've leaned more toward English, though I still direct plays and the annual Fringe Festival."

Ms. Doak sees her two worlds to be surprisingly alike. To her, drama is simply literature that has been brought alive with sound and movement. "Even in my English classes, where the stakes are a little lower, the expectations are still very high. Across both disciplines, and [in both classes, students] really strive for excellence," she said. "There is a little bit of playfulness that I get to bring to my English classes. In the theater program, it's literally plays, and you're supposed to play when you're doing a play."

Mr. James McCarthy

As one of Choate's newest faculty members, HPRSS, Math, and Computer Science teacher Mr. James McCarthy has spent his first couple weeks discovering what it means to teach in multiple disciplines. Splitting his time between teaching at Lanphier Center and the humanities building, the unusual pairing quickly broadened his perspective. As a self-described "history person who's always liked math," Mr. McCarthy said the overlap in teaching came naturally.

He perceives humanities courses as discussion-based, where students analyze texts and lead discussions, while math demands precision, repetition, and reasoning. Although the subjects might appear different on the surface, he finds that shared habits of thought run through curiosity and problem-solving. "Seeing students in a math class and in a history class are totally unique ways of being a student," he said. "I feel that if you are a strong teacher and [able] to connect with kids, you can teach regardless of what the content is at hand."

Choate faculty who teach a broad range of subjects help bring unique perspectives to their classrooms. By bridging the gaps between disciplines, students are reminded that learning is interconnected, beyond stereotypical labels of "humanities" or "STEM."

Teya Tejavibulya *may be reached at ttejavibulya28@choate.edu.*

The Show Must Go On: Performing Without the Little Theater

By **Rachel Fan '27**
Local News Section Editor

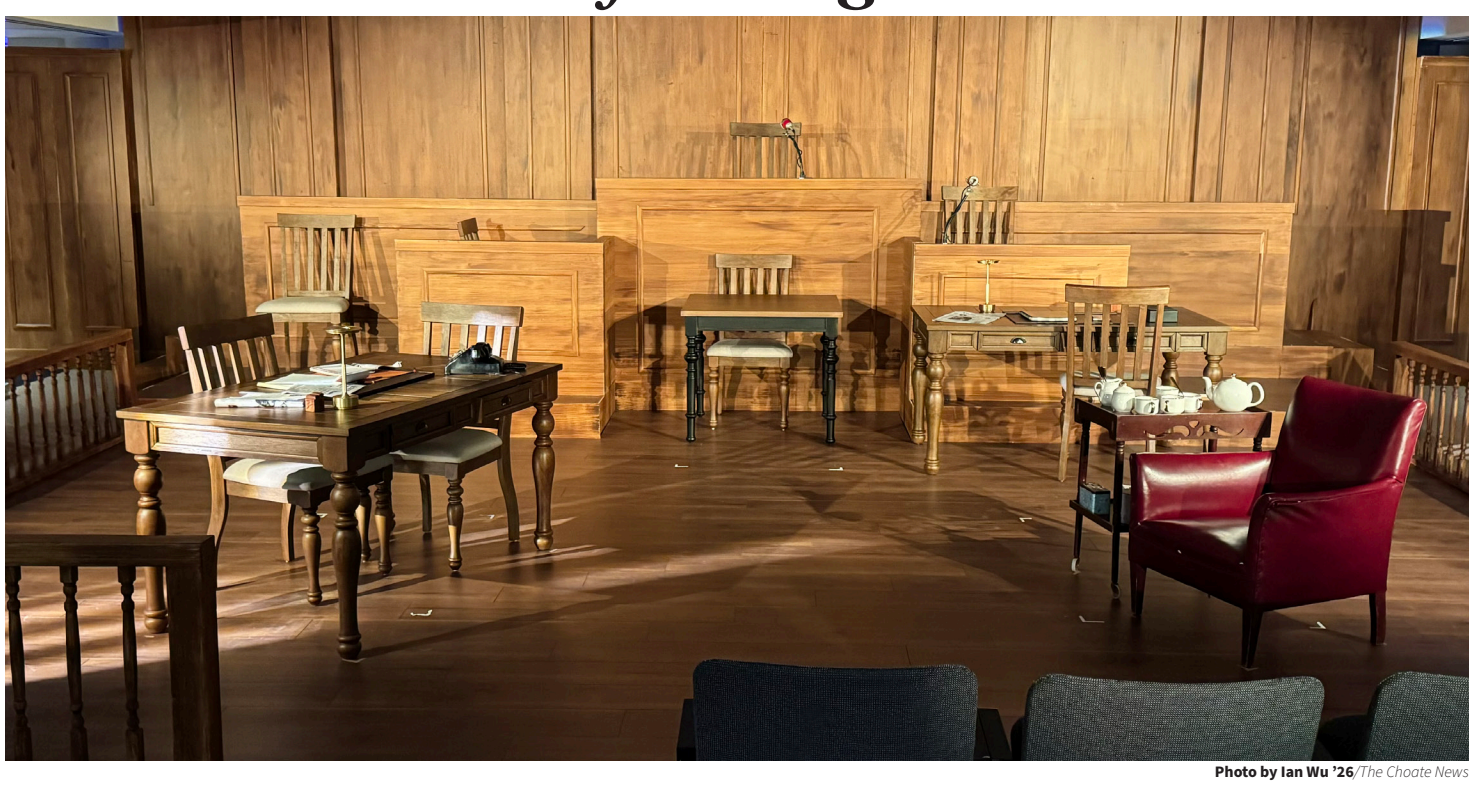


Photo by Ian Wu '26/*The Choate News*

The *Witness for the Prosecution* set prepared for tech week in Ruutz-Rees.

Three productions, three venues, no "traditional" stages. With the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) Little Theater closing its doors for renovation, students and faculty involved in theatrical production have been forced to adapt to a year-long challenge: transforming unexpected spaces into stages of exceptional performance.

While most students might remember the building sandwiched between the renovated Class of '76 Field and Tenney House as the temporary dining hall, it is now repurposed as the Arts Annex. It is currently housing rehearsals for two upcoming plays and the spring musical, including this fall's *Witness for the Prosecution*, which runs from November 13-15. While rehearsals are normally held in the black box theater, the Arts Annex has proven just as operational as the regular practice studio. "The Annex has been wonderful," Arts teacher and Fall Play Director Ms. Kate Doak said.

However, rehearsing in the Annex is only half the challenge; performances of *Witness for the Prosecution* will take place in Ruutz-Rees, which will be transformed into a modern interpretation of London's Old Bailey courthouse. Due to Ruutz-Rees' unique layout, the play will feature a three-quarter-round configuration of a thrust stage, a type of staging with spectators seated on three sides of the actors. This is a big change from a traditional proscenium stage. "The actors have to learn to act on three sides, so they can't just look out to the audience," Ms. Doak said.

For Assistant Stage Manager Sophie Park '27, this unexpected layout presents new logistical challenges. "We don't have a backstage area, so the actors are going to have to perform aware of everything that's surrounding them," she said. "They have to be really concentrated throughout the entire show because there is no backstage for them to go and decompress."

However, rather than viewing these constraints as setbacks, the crew has embraced them as opportunities for creativity. Ms. Doak intentionally chose *Witness for the Prosecution* because its courtroom setting naturally accommodates the three-quarter layout. "In a real court, there's an audience also," she said. "Students will be sitting in what technically would be the jury box." The costume shop has also relocated to the Arts Annex, where costume designer Ms. Dana DeRiu oversees both play and musical productions. For the fall musical, *The Old Man and The Old Moon*, students have taken matters into their own hands. "We're making a lot of our props out of cardboard or other kinds of materials," Fall Musical Director Mr. Bari Robinson said. "[Sophie Eliades '27] even used her 3D printer to create a prop!"

Turning this creative vision into reality required the technical crew to solve an entirely new set of problems. Associate Technical Director Mr. Michael Abatiello faced his own set of obstacles with sound design. "We're not in our home space, so we're having to build a whole sound system inside each new space," he said. "How would you do that for this space when you can't hang speakers where you normally would? How would you play with the distance of that audience? How loud does your sound need to be?" Meanwhile, Technical Director Mr. Mark Gostomski and the student technical theater crew had to rethink their approach to set construction. "Everything this year has to be freestanding," he said, explaining that without the rigging system of Little Theater, sets must be structurally independent.

The novel challenges of theatrical productions this year extend beyond the performance itself. Behind the scenes, the design team had to get creative with limited access to Little Theater's prop and costume storage. "We took the locks off all the old music lockers on the fifth floor for storage ... [and] cleared out an entire bay at the Eglise shops, the buildings that the facilities team works out of, for technical theater storage," Arts Center Operations Manager Mrs. Carolyn Jones said. Stage Manager of *Witness for the Prosecution* Suleika Sandi '26 has found that prop accessibility has created challenges during rehearsals. "In the alternate space, it's really hard to access props, so we have to wait until we get onto the actual stage to use the real props the actors will be using," she said.

The Little Theater is scheduled to reopen next fall, with students and faculty returning to the space. Among the most exciting upgrades are a fully automated rigging system that will move sets at the push of a button, an extended stage four feet closer to the audience, and new aisles running through the seating for immersive performances. "It's always exciting to get a fresh space and see what it's capable of," Mr. Robinson said, "I think we'll be able to do a lot of stuff in there that maybe we wouldn't be able to do in previous years." In the meantime, students and faculty continue to tackle the challenges of their temporary spaces — meeting each one with unique and creative solutions.

Rachel Fan *may be reached at rfan27@choate.edu.*

Jonny Allen '07 Returns to Choate with Sandbox Percussion

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Copy Editor

From recording music for the Academy Award-nominated movie *The Wild Robot* to debuting on the National Public Radio's Tiny Desk Series, the Grammy-nominated Sandbox Percussion drumming group has done it all. Consisting of four members — Ian Rosenbaum, Jonny Allen '07, Terry Sweeney, and Victor Caccese — the group has received the Avery Fisher Career Grant, collaborated with world-renowned musicians, released several albums, and the group is on the faculty of multiple universities throughout the country.

From December 11-12, Sandbox will visit Choate to work with ensembles and music students, culminating in a recital featuring a performance alongside Arts Concentration (Arts Con) students in Colony Hall.

Choate offered a transformative experience for Choate alumnus and award-winning percussionist Allen to engage with music and inspiration to create Sandbox Percussion. "Choate really fed [my] musical inspiration," he said. "I played a little cello, and I was in the orchestra and Chamber Choir ... [as well as] the jazz band in my senior year."

With the help of the School, Allen was introduced to Mr. Gary Partridge, the band director at The Hartt School in West Hartford, Connecticut. "Without that guidance from Choate, I wouldn't have met that teacher, and without that teacher, I definitely wouldn't be where I am right now, because those [percussion] lessons really shaped who I am," he said.

Allen is more than just a musician, and he credits Choate for helping him by finding value in Choate's community. "When I went to Choate as a new sophomore, [I was] meeting all these new people, trying all these new things," he said. "Choate helped me be a well-rounded person ... [not just] as a musician, but really as a person."

Allen also explained that he first met his Sandbox Percussion groupmates in 2011 at the Yale School of Music, where they were all pursuing their master's degrees. "Chamber music was the driving force behind so much of our education," Allen said, emphasizing how he learned music performance in a group setting. "We would work towards one performance at the end of the year where the six percussionists would play an evening of music, duos, trios, quartets, quintets, sextets," he said.

Playing chamber music inspired Allen and his groupmates to form their own percussion ensemble and continue performing together. "I think all of us in Sandbox just got obsessed with this way of working, and the idea that we could make [chamber music] a career," he said. As a contemporary percussion ensemble, Allen and his groupmates have been among the first to interpret new percussion music, with which they perform 30-40 concerts a year. "Getting to play [music] with friends, all together, creating this melody and this harmony as one unit ... it was way more powerful than I expected it to be," Allen said.

As the group often performs music that has never been released or recorded before, they approach each piece with various musical interpretations and angles. "Because the music we play is new, we don't know all of the answers at all ... we have a very strict policy of no decisions yet," Allen said. "We're some of the first people to get to interpret [new music] and we want to take that seriously, because we know the way we play it, the way we record it, is going to influence the next group."

When coming to Choate, Sandbox plans to showcase their concert repertoire; however, they will also perform Andy Akiko's "Karakurenai" with Arts Con students. "We love percussion, but we love music more. I think we learn even more about percussion when we work with folks who do other things." Allen said. "At Choate, I learned a lot about how all these different artistic mediums can influence each other, and I've tried to retain that in my professional career as well."

As a final word of advice to Choate students before the group's arrival in December, Allen said: "The first thing [is to] know that you really have something to contribute ... and the second thing is just the mirror image of that, everyone does have something to contribute. Every person you meet has something you know, something you should learn, something that you don't know yet."

Ha Jin Sung *may be reached at hsung28@choate.edu.*



Photo courtesy of Kjell van Sice

Members of Sandbox Percussion pose in matching black suits.

Five Fall Films to Fall In Love With



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

By **Jai Midha '27**
Copy Editor

If autumn were a movie director, its unique craft would be studied for its ability to make us feel a certain "fall" way. The season carries its own kind of cinematography — romantic afternoons and soft shadows — elements that make you feel surrounded by autumn. These fall films evoke the perfect fall feeling, making anyone watching feel warm and cozy inside and out.

Good Will Hunting

Few films capture the season's reflective spirit like *Good Will Hunting*. Like autumn, it's about transition. For Will Hunting, his transition is rooted in his newfound love, a reflection of the emotional growth and self-discovery that define both character and the season. And yes, it asks the eternal question: "How you like them apples?"

When Harry Met Sally

Set against the annual shift from summer greens to park bench scarves, *When Harry Met Sally* is a staple among fall comfort movies. Its long walks through Central Park, knitwear, and witty conversations manifest the love that fall invites: warmth as the air gets colder, a shared cup of coffee, and comfortable silence.

Fantastic Mr. Fox

No director captures the intangible feelings of autumn quite like Wes Anderson, who made a stop-motion filled with textured wool, colors of burnt orange, and, in this case, an unforgettable comedy. Underneath the comedy is a crime plot, with Mr. Fox plotting a chicken heist. A mixture of fall, comedy, and crime, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is a must-watch.

Knives Out

The first *Knives Out* embodies autumn's coziness with twists of deception. Its knit sweaters, sprawling mansion, and sharp dialogue characterize a movie that embodies the meaning of a 'fall murder mystery.' *Knives Out* is as close to a modern-day Agatha Christie mystery as we can get. Now is the best time for any thriller lover to curl up with a blanket by a lit fireplace and enjoy *Knives Out*.

Dead Poets Society

It is ever so often that one thinks about Welton Academy after watching this movie: tweed, houndstooth, and poetry at night — what else could one ask for? *Dead Poets Society* is a perfect fall film: it captures both melancholy and charm, reminding us that there is more to most things than what lies on the surface.

Fall movies are more than just a seasonal phenomenon — they reflect the concepts of change and transformation. They invite you to wrap up in a blanket and find meaning in every shifting color. In the quiet between summer's end and winter's beginning, fall offers a comfort rarely found elsewhere, and fall break provides the perfect time to explore the season through the screen.

Jai Midha *may be reached at jmidha27@choate.edu.*



The Choate News

SPORTS

Vol. CXIX • No. 4

Monday, November 17, 2025

FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

117 - 54 - 11

Varsity Games

Girls' Soccer (11-1-4)
vs. Deerfield, 2-1

Boys' Football (7-2)
vs. Deerfield, 51-20

Girls' Volleyball (12-4)
vs. Taft, 3-0

Boys' Water Polo (12-1)
vs. Exeter, 12-8

Girls' Field Hockey (6-10)
vs. Deerfield, 1-6

Boys' Soccer (15-4-2)
vs. Avon Old Farms, 1-4

Girls' Volleyball (12-4)
vs. Deerfield, 1-3

Boys' Cross Country (3-4)
vs. NMH, 30-27

J.V. Games

Girls' Volleyball (12-0)
vs. Deerfield, 3-1

Boys' Football (5-0)
vs. Cheshire, 26-0

Girls' Soccer (3-9)
vs. Deerfield, 0-1

Boys' Water Polo (4-1)
vs. Loomis, 8-9

The 6 a.m. Crew: Early Morning Teacher-Athletes

By **Norah Wang '27**
Staff Contributor



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

Long before the first class bell rings, before the dining hall comes to life, and before students begin to roll out of bed, several Choate teachers are already breaking a sweat. From swimming laps in the pool to running along campus paths, these faculty members start their mornings with movement — a habit that shapes their energy, focus, and outlook for the day.

Ms. Amy Howland is one of the fifth-form deans and a History teacher in the HPRSS Department. Swimming two to three times a week, running about four times, lifting twice, and practicing yoga daily, Ms. Howland's mornings are filled with movement. She has been exercising in the mornings since high school and has participated in various sports, such as rollerblading and crew, which have helped her maintain this habit. Now, she often trains for trail half-marathons, sometimes running with colleagues like Dr. Katie Jewett. She also joins a dedicated crew of early swimmers that includes Mr. Thomas White, Mrs. Katherine White, and others. For her, morning exercise brings focus and joy. It helps her manage stress, think through lesson plans, and start the day energized. "It just puts me in a really good mood, and exercise is the way that I manage stress," Ms. Howland said.

Science teacher Mr. Patrick Guelakis, who is regularly seen running around the campus, often trains for Ironman triathlons. His mornings typically include long runs, cycling sessions, or swim practices, depending on his training schedule. He said that the discipline required for Ironman preparation translates directly into his teaching, building endurance, focus, and mental toughness. "Running is the best part of my day, and it's nice to have the best part of your day be the first part of the day, because it just sets the day up in a positive light," he said.

Math teacher Ms. Rachel Hudelson also runs around campus in the early hours. She runs most mornings and has participated in several road races, including half-marathons. While she usually runs alone, she sometimes trains with Dr. Jewett or Mr. Will Morris and joins Mr. Guelakis for races. Morning runs, she said, help her mentally prepare for the day ahead. "Sometimes I run through my lesson in my head when I'm running, or I try to think of ... points of confusion [to clarify during class]," she explained. For her, the quiet morning air and sunrise make running both peaceful and energizing.

Across these different routines, a shared theme emerges: movement as a source of balance in the mayhem of Choate life. Teachers report that starting the day with physical activity improves their mood, focus, and energy levels throughout classes. Many also describe it as a form of stress relief, offering time for themselves before the hustle and bustle of Choate life begins at 8:15 in the morning.

For students and colleagues hoping to start a morning exercise routine, these teachers emphasize taking small, sustainable steps. Find a routine you enjoy, set realistic goals, and stay consistent even when motivation dips. It all starts with just one foot on the ground as the sun rises.

Norah Wang *may be reached at njwang27@choate.edu.*

CELEBRATING COACH FUENTES'S 100TH WIN

By **N'Adom Darko-Asare '29**
Reporter

When the final whistle blew on October 22, the Boys' Varsity Soccer Team secured a 2-0 victory over Kingswood-Oxford School. But this win marked something more significant — Boys' Varsity Soccer Head Coach Mr. Charlie Fuentes's 100th career win.

Although Coach Fuentes achieved this milestone in one particular game, it was a product of years of intense practices, losses, and wins. Coach Fuentes became the head coach for the Boys' Varsity Soccer team in 2015. Before this, he was a standout soccer player at Trinity College in Hartford and later served as an assistant coach at Worcester Academy. These experiences guided him to further understand the game of soccer while shaping him as a leader.

Coach Fuentes's successful leadership is a result of his philosophy: a belief that the smallest habits shape the strongest teams. As he explained: "The important lesson is that ... little things add up, and creating good habits makes us better people. As better people, we do better as a team." He often reminds the team that leaving the bus unclean or forgetting to greet the bus driver are more than minor slip-ups. "[My players] have a responsibility to leave things better than they found them, and they have a responsibility of acknowledging people, saying hello, and being kind," he said. Coach Fuentes builds toward the tactical aspects of soccer only after these values are established.

According to his players, what sets Coach Fuentes apart is the level of care and commitment he brings each day. Co-Captain of the Boys' Varsity Soccer Team Juan Delgado '26 reflected, "I [appreciate] the time and care that he puts into the game. I don't think I've ever had a coach that cares so much about it." Whether it's giving individualized feedback or offering encouragement on a tough day, Mr. Fuentes leads with intention. Co-Captain David Villavicencio '26 echoed this sentiment and described his coach as "passionate and intense." He added, "Even [if] the [smallest] things are wrong on the pitch, he makes sure to correct [them]."

The program's strength is also supported by Assistant Coach Zachary Kafoglis, who has been by Coach Fuentes's side for the past decade. While he may not always stand in the spotlight, his support and guidance play a crucial role in the team's growth. "[Coach Kafoglis] is very much a part of the success of the program," Coach Fuentes said, commending his dedication to the team. "He should [take] credit for a lot of [our team's] wins as well."



Photo courtesy of Mr. Charlie Fuentes

Coach Fuentes confers with player Juliano Masella '26 during a game.

When reflecting on his 100th win, Coach Fuentes shared, "One of the biggest things that I think I want to continue to do is make sure that the guys who come here leave as better people, and when they look back on their experience, they see it as something that was positive for them." With Coach Fuentes leading the way, the team's future looks brighter than ever.

N'Adom Darko-Asare *may be reached at ndarkoasare29@choate.edu.*

Tennis Gets an Upgrade

By **Karolina Zaccareo '27**
Reporter

The Choate Girls' Varsity Tennis Team and Boys' Varsity Tennis Team, along with their coaches, are looking forward to exploring the future impact of a new electronic, computerized stringing machine. The new machine is equipped with a metallic claw and a computer built side by side. Donated by a Choate alumnus, it aims to enhance the Choate tennis and squash programs.

Previously, when a racket string broke — not an uncommon happening in squash and tennis — players had to rely on off-campus stringing services, which were unreliable and time-consuming. Now, students can restring their rackets right on campus far more efficiently. "The closest racket club to us [that can restring rackets] is in New Haven or West Hartford," Head Girls' Varsity Tennis Coach Mr. Craig Johnson explained. These clubs are far away, and their services can be costly. With the new stringing machine, Choate's student-athletes can save both time and money.

The new technology also provides players with the opportunity to learn a new skill. "I'm encouraging the kids to learn how to string rackets, which I think is a good skill," Head Boys' Varsity Tennis Coach Mr. Ned Gallagher said. This hands-on learning will not only foster independence but also allow players to better understand how racket setup affects performance.

Mr. Johnson added that the machine will "let players figure out what [string] tension they like and what tension is best for them." With this knowledge, athletes can customize their rackets for comfort and performance. "Some strings are softer, so it feels easier on your arm when you hit the ball. Some strings are heavier, so you feel a tension in your arm ... [knowing the difference] could limit injuries," he explained.

Members of the Boys' Varsity Tennis Team echoed these benefits. Johnny Guo '26 said, "I think it'll be a big asset for the whole team. We'll be able to restring rackets more often and tailor string setups for different match conditions," he said.

Girls' Varsity Tennis Team member Eloise Streeter '26 is looking forward to using the new machine this spring. "It'll be very convenient," she said. Andrew Watcharananan '26, a member of the Boys Varsity Tennis Team, added, "[I'll] have my rackets tailored to my game play and personal style. I can also play with much less worry that I will need to preserve my strings."

The stringing machine is a new resource provided to Choate's tennis facilities, offering an efficient and accessible way for students to maintain their equipment. With their rackets cared for on campus, players can focus more fully on improving technique and refining match strategies.

Karolina Zaccareo *may be reached at kzaccareo27@choate.edu.*

The Final Stretch of Fall Sports

By **Malaika Fonkem '29**
Reporter

As the fall term-end approaches, student athletes' excitement begins to spread across campus as they prepare for the Founders League Championships and Post-Season New England Preparatory School Athletic Council League (NEPSAC) Tournaments and Championships. For over 40 years, Choate has participated in both events alongside some of the most competitive prep schools in the nation. These leagues hold a rich history, and preparing for the Founders League Championships and NEPSAC Tournaments looks different for each team.

Some athletes change their daily habits to accommodate extra preparation for their games. However, Boys' Varsity Football Player James Ryckman '28 likes to stick to his pre-existing habits in the name of consistency. "I try to ... treat every game like it's a championship ... you just have to try your hardest for every single match," he said.

Girls' Varsity Soccer Player Sophie Cho '28 also shared how mental preparation benefited the team. "We've been doing sessions with Coach [Max Groen '15], and he's taught us a lot about how to focus more on the now, rather than worrying about what could happen in the future," she said. Meanwhile, Girls' Varsity Volleyball Player Maelle Davenport '27 emphasized the importance of team chemistry. "My team really strives to have great energy, because I feel like we play better when we have good [team spirit]," she said.

The Founders League Championships and NEPSAC tournaments also provide older, more experienced athletes with an opportunity to set an example for those younger than them. Curtis Mbaya '28 said, "I think team positivity is something really [important] for us, and I think the overall [attitude] of the seniors plays a critical role in how we carry ourselves and how they [encourage us]."

Ryckman highlighted how coaches were essential in preparing teams for championship play. "[Coaches] spend an insane amount of time breaking down film ... and putting together practices for us ... I think they play the biggest part in preparing us for our matchups," he said.

"We get a lot of pep talks from [our coaches]," Cho added. "They tell us how to play and how we can rely on each other throughout the game and off the field. I think the coaches understand that ... we have to be on top of our games all the time ... so we perform better without pressure."

As Choate's athletes head into their final games, they emphasize dedication, focus, and teamwork within their sport. To many athletes, these championships are the culmination of a term's worth of work, both on and off the field. Overall, the Founders League Championships and NEPSAC Tournaments are representations of the commitment and resilience Choate's student-athletes have displayed the entire term to get there. As the season concludes, Choate teams continue their regular training schedules in preparation for upcoming championship events.

Malaika Fonkem *may be reached at mfonkem29@choate.edu.*



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