The Choate News

The official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907

Choate Rosemary Hall
333 Christian Street
Wallingford, CT

Vol. CXIX No. I | Monday, September 29, 2025 | thechoatenews.choate.edu

Choate's New Phone Policy Forges Connection

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Copy Editor



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

When Covid-19 forced everyone into lockdown, the digital world, especially phones, became essential for keeping in touch. Four years later, Choate — as many schools across the country are — is rethinking the impact of constant screen time, whether doomscrolling or playing mobile games, on our community.

This fall, Choate launched a new phone policy designed to foster deeper connections within the community rather than outright ban devices. The goal is to create phone-free spaces that improve focus, spark real human-to-human conversations, and promote healthier technology habits. "Not just banning [phones] outright. [Phones are] something that we know is a part of all our lives and will continue to be," Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 said. This is "about health and wellness for not just students, but for our entire community," Gilyard continued.

Choate is not alone in implementing a new phone policy. Middlesex School is now asking students to keep their phones out of sight throughout the day, including dining spaces. Blair Academy prohibits phones on pathways and hallways, and St. George's School collects underclassmen's phones during evening study hall.

Compared to peer schools, Choate chose a more moderate approach. Students must put their phones away in classrooms, in Colony Hall during School Meeting, in the dining hall, and on the pathways. Third-formers use overnight caddies, but students still have access to their devices during free periods and after classes.

The new policy came after a year of committee meetings, surveys, and pilot programs. The committee, which included a mix of students, faculty, and administrators, partnered with the national organization Challenge Success to guide their process. The team used surveys, focus groups, and even conferences with peer schools to refine their policies before presenting final recommendations to Choate's senior team.

"Banning phones for the day was off the table … because [the School] does also understand that phones are a way to keep connected with other people," Third-form Dean Ms. Emily Osterhout said. The committee's goal, she explained, was to improve engagement, help students sleep better, and rebuild face-to-face connections on campus. Ms. Osterhout said she had noticed "people on their phones face down, and people walking right by each other and not acknowledging one another," and hoped the policy would change those habits.

Additionally, improving wellness was a major focus of the policy. Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliot said, "Sleep is probably one of the most important goals for me." The policy aims to help students wind down at night and arrive at class rested and alert. For third-formers adjusting to boarding life, learning to choose sleep over late-night scrolling is an important skill to build early.

The policy is designed to teach self-management rather than impose a ban. "Phones are going to be a part of the future," Ms. Osterhout said. It is important to learn "how to use your phone at appropriate times … but not be so reliant on it," continued Ms. Osterhout. Healthy phone habits form best when practiced early and reinforced by community norms.

Students were also involved in developing the phone policy. Liana Alkhayer '28 does not use social media and was invited to join the committee to provide a different perspective. "I was a little apprehensive at first," Alkhayer said, "I'm pleasantly surprised to see that everyone is detoxing slightly in their own ways." She said the change is most visible outside: "On the paths, it has definitely made us more social."

Alkhayer also supports classroom tools that keep attention on learning, such as Apple Classroom. "[Apple Classroom] gives me a sense of accountability," she said, "Everyone will realize that it will help them in the long run."

Looking ahead, the Administration will use surveys and faculty feedback to track progress, but Ms. Osterhout said the differences are already noticeable. "I could tell the attention in [Colony Hall] during school meeting was so much better," she said.

By the end of the year, Ms. Osterhout hopes that students will recognize the purpose of the policy and experience a stronger connection and better wellness. Ms. Elliot wants the dining hall, gathering spaces, dorms, and classrooms to foster interaction and sharper focus. Mr. Gilyard depicts success in simple and visible ways — students walking and talking together, greeting faculty on the paths, crossing streets safely, and coming to class more rested and engaged.

Peer schools are moving decisively, implementing "away for the day" policies to device-free spaces, and public school districts across the country are testing stricter models — such as that of full phone bans. Choate's approach is intentionally moderate: classroom expectations and no-screen dining spaces are meant to encourage lasting change, not completely shut down technology use.

Choate's phone policy balances connection and independence. It acknowledges how essential phones were during the pandemic and how important they are for students far from home, but it also reflects a desire to restore presence and attention on campus, to make space for more conversation, eye contact, and community.

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

Hill House Renovation Transforms Dining Experience

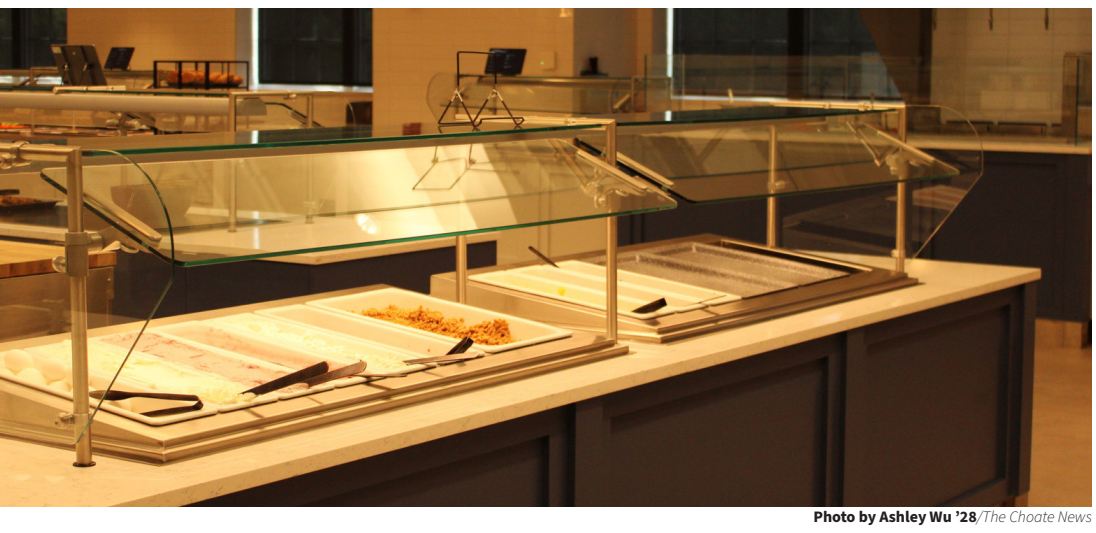


Photo by Ashley Wu '28/*The Choate News*

The new servery doubles as a yogurt bar for breakfast and a salad bar for lunch and dinner.

By **Drew Wolfson '27**
Staff Contributor

Rotisserie chicken, fresh dough pizza, and the soft-serve ice cream — these are just a few of the tasty options available at the newly renovated Hill House dining hall. Students, faculty, and staff can enjoy the new variety of options at every meal.

The dining hall renovation project began in early 2024 and concluded late in the spring term of 2025. Although supply chain issues delayed the arrival of some electrical equipment, the renovations generally proceeded as planned.

Given the School's focus on health and wellness, one of the major goals was to design a space that would provide easier access and a greater choice of nutritious foods. With shorter lines and a selection of options for students to meet their nutritional needs, the goal was achieved. Mr. Patrick Durbin, Chief Financial Officer at Choate, oversaw the financial aspects of the renovation project. In the first few weeks of school this year, Mr. Durbin had observed that the new servery could handle rush-hour crowds while still feeling open. He noted, "I've been impressed that … [you are] able to walk around the servery, even if people are grabbing their food. People can still circulate within the servery and see what there is." Mr. Durbin's personal favorite addition is the expanded dessert options. "I love the ice cream. That machine that we have is pretty awesome," Mr. Durbin said.

The wider space means students and faculty spend less time waiting in line, instead, students have more time to connect with peers and enjoy their meals. Both students and faculty agree that the newly redesigned space has increased interaction among students. Charlie Mitchell '28 said, "The space looks great, and it's less cluttered. The new layout has made it easier to connect with friends or meet new people this year." HPRSS teacher Ms. Emily Kaplan also noticed more conversations, both in line and while moving through the servery."I think that the servery does a nice job of allowing for students to get to the tables and really hang out with one another. It feels like it's a space that students are really excited to come to and sit," Ms. Kaplan said.

From chicken tikka masala to butternut squash risotto to meatball subs, students and faculty have praised the new quality and variety of the food options. The dining hall now feels like a space where students can relax and connect while eating; not students rushing to beat the lunch crowd. Ms. Kaplan said that "students and faculty are still sort of in awe. I feel like every day I walk in there, someone's like, 'Can you believe that we have…?' … It's so important to have a space that nourishes us and builds community at the same time."

Drew Wolfson *may be reached at dwolfson27@choate.edu.*

Convocation Opens Year With Celebration and Faculty

By **Anna Park '29**
Reporter

Convocation has been a tradition celebrating academic regalia since the 12th century. At Choate, Convocation symbolizes the official beginning of each school year. On September 2, students, faculty, and staff gathered in Colony Hall to kickstart the 136th academic year of the School.

Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott presented the Convocation Address alongside Student Council President Zaki Shamsi '26. Ms. Elliott's speech centered on a new focus of sustainability, urging students to incorporate it into their "daily lives at school, as we live and learn together in this community." Shamsi delivered an address on his self-created philosophy, "Shamsism," and encouraged other students to develop their own respective "-isms" through reflection and humor: "Go find your own '-ism.' Write it, live it, let it shape you. Shamsism works for me. Yours will be different — and that's the point," he said.

When asked about this year's Convocation, Faculty Marshal and HPRSS teacher Mr. James Davidson reflected, "I liked how the comments … really focused on 'all of you matter' — that it has nothing to do with talent or special ability, but transcends that as your unique humanity."

This year, two new faculty chairs were presented by Dean of Faculty Katie Levesque. The Lawrence M. Gelb in American History in Honor of Courtenay Henenway Chair went to HPRSS teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano, and the Ed and Susan Maddox Chair went to Science teacher Mr. Will Morris.

Ms. DeStefano expressed gratitude at receiving the Lawrence M. Gelb in American History in Honor of Courtenay Henenway Chair. It was especially impactful for her, as it was the position her mentor and friend, Ms. Amy Salot, had previously held. "Honestly, I'm just overwhelmed by it. It was very surprising. I had no idea it was coming," she remarked. "It makes me feel that years of hard work are recognized, and I am very appreciative of the honor … I have a core memory now of all my colleagues clapping for me." Ms. DeStefano added, "I always loved school … I'm so glad that I fell into this profession, because it's natural and it feels good."

The Ed and Susan Maddox Chair honors Edward and Susan Maddox, both longtime and prominent faculty members of the Choate Rosemary Hall community. The award recognizes not only service in teaching but also broader contributions to school life. Mr. Morris, who received the position, said, "It's humbling when your name is called from amongst a group of really talented and dedicated colleagues." He also reflected, "There are so many deserving folks on the faculty … and so many folks who have also contributed and supported the projects that I've done, the things that I've undertaken, that it really feels like a collective celebration."

After Convocation, students and faculty were ready to begin the new year. Mr. Davidson concluded, "I get excited each year about having students exposed to things they weren't exposed to before coming here … We always have some wonderful speakers who are coming, and I think they will enliven students. They'll bring perspectives from outside of us that we haven't necessarily had before."

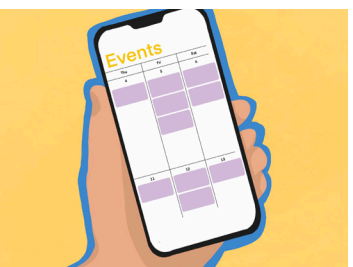
Anna Park *may be reached at apark29@choate.edu.*



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

The new faculty chairs and administrators pose after Convocation.

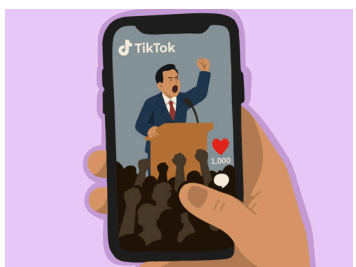
Discover Your Club
Find your Club with the Hub
School News • P2





Cervoni or Cella
Wallingford's Mayoral Race
Local News • P3

Ragebaiting Teens
Scroll Fast, Think Slow
Opinions N/W • P5





Touch Down Turf
New Football Field New Era
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 Leah Han '27, Ashley Wu '27, and Ben Lee'27.



AMERICAN STUDIES WELCOMES NEW TEACHERS

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

American Studies (Amstuds) at Choate offers a holistic approach to learning U.S. history by simultaneously examining the intersection of literature, culture, and politics. This year, the program is in transition, with several new faculty leading the interdisciplinary class. As beloved and long-time Amstuds teacher Ms. Amy Salot retired from Choate and former Amstuds teacher Mr. Thomas White stepped away from the program, new responsibilities shift to Ms. Leela Woody, Ms. Cahaley Markman, and Ms. Laura Pace, who each bring new perspectives to the course.

English teacher Ms. Woody emphasized the course's focus and the enthusiasm of its students. "I'm really excited to get to work with students who feel really interested in the interdisciplinary nature of the work," she said. Additionally, she explained collaboration between English and History faculty is crucial to maintaining a seamless curriculum: "I'm talking a lot with Dr. [Amber] Hodge [Amstuds English and History teacher] to make it feel like there's an intention and purpose for the American Studies students." Ms. Woody also highlighted that student engagement will guide the focus of the class.

Ms. Markman, an English teacher in her fourth year at Choate, teaches Amstuds alongside HPRSS teacher Mr. Wes Jenkins. Like Ms. Woody, she believes the course has a built-in enthusiastic energy from the students. "It's a course students get to choose ... there's an immediate buy-in and excitement," she said. In the first weeks of school, Ms. Markman used the video game *Never Alone* as a tool for her students to reimagine historical stories through a different perspective. Her unique approach of interpreting a video game as a 'text' reflects her focus on "learning the history ... but also thinking about how you tell those stories." Brayden Bratti '27, a student in Ms. Markman's class, praised her interactive approach of using video games as the inaugural text and shared his anticipation for what he called a "challenging course with a unique curriculum."

HPRSS teacher Ms. Pace leads two sections of Amstuds. A former mentee of Ms. Salot, she reflects on her new teaching role as a "full-circle" honor. When considering what excites her most about the program, she echoed Ms. Markman and Ms. Woody's sentiments of students setting the energy. "They're [her students] super excited about American history, and how American history plays a role in literature," she said. She added that her class will explore how musical theater is tied to historical events, which is far from the standard U.S. History curriculum. Ms. Pace also emphasized the uniqueness of Amstuds, which allows her to coordinate with Dr. Hodge on pairing literature with history. Nikki Moussavi '27, a student in Ms. Pace's class, highlighted the intimacy of her seven-student classroom, praising Ms. Pace's ability to foster a community-like atmosphere and "bring us together," said Moussavi.

While Ms. Salot's and Mr. White's pedagogy will be missed, Ms. Woody, Ms. Markman, and Ms. Pace's innovative teaching styles, integrative approaches, and passion promise a bright future for the Amstuds program at Choate.

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



Photo courtesy of Ms. Markman

Students pose with new American Studies teacher, Ms. Pace, after a class.

Student Leaders Gather for Choate Leadership Experience



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos

Memorial House prefects wait on the dorm steps as they welcome students back to school.

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**
Copy Editor

From team captains to the Judicial Committee representatives, the Choate Leadership Experience (CLE) was a learning experience for all. This year, more than 200 student leaders gathered early on campus for this workshop, preparing all sorts of leaders for their respective leadership positions on campus.

Associate Dean of Students Mr. Pat Dennehy, who organized CLE this year, described the event as an opportunity for student leaders "to reflect on their leadership styles as well as do some prep work specific to their roles." He explained that general sessions built a shared vision for Choate's values, while the role-specific workshops provided more hands-on preparation through a variety of case studies and personal reflection.

One key feature of CLE this year was its emphasis on qualities of mentorship alongside leadership. Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers highlighted the importance of the Pathways Program, which pairs older students of color with new students. She explained that "a mentoring relationship starts with building trust, getting to know someone with intention, providing informed guidance, and being willing to ask for help when needed." Dr. Myers also encouraged students to use the acronym D.P.A.I (Discover, Prioritize, Act, Include) in their daily lives to foster inclusive spaces in the Choate community.

For athletics captains, Assistant Athletic Director Mr. Andrew Dickson led the Captains Seminar, focusing on goal-setting, overcoming challenges, and leading with awareness on and off the field. "Some captains lead by example, others are more vocal," he explained, "but the best ones have the ability to understand their teammates and adjust their leadership approach depending on the situation." Mr. Dickson also emphasized the importance of resiliency and responsibility: "Own it. Take ownership of the role. Don't take it lightly. It's a great honor — enjoy that honor and learn from the experience."

CLE left a lasting impression on many students. Shayaan Omar '27, an international student mentor from the UAE, appreciated how the program provided structure and real-world preparation. "It was very well structured," he said, "Some of the scenarios we practiced actually happened in real life, and it was good knowing what was going to happen before it actually happened." Omar added that CLE helped him recognize his own growth: "As a freshman, I looked up to these guys, and now I'm the one being looked up to."

Will Garcia '27, a Boys' Varsity Volleyball team captain, appreciated the balance CLE struck between preparation and reflection. "I thought it was pretty good. It wasn't overwhelming, and I felt I learned a lot of skills that I'm going to use throughout my leadership," he said. Garcia also noted that CLE pushed him to recognize empathy as a core value: "I learned that I'm probably going to need more empathy as a leader." He added that learning from students in different leadership roles showed him "the different forms of leadership," from being vocal as a captain to the guiding support of student mentors.

As the week came to a close, students gained awareness of the responsibilities that come with leadership at Choate. For Mr. Dennehy, the most important takeaway was curiosity. "Approach your leadership with curiosity rather than judgment," he advised. "Building relationships with those around you empowers others to lead themselves — and that is contagious."

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

Club Hub: An All-in-One Platform for Student Clubs

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor

At Choate, there are 77 recognized clubs and 44 student organizations, with more being introduced every spring term. Each club offers unique opportunities and brings together students with similar interests.

To introduce these clubs to new and returning students, Choate hosts an annual Involvement Fair during the fall term, where club representatives have the opportunity to introduce their clubs. However, with so many responsibilities managing a club — planning, emails, scheduling — it was a challenge keep track of every event in previous years. To fix this issue Choate introduced a new tool this year: Club Hub.

Club Hub is a web/mobile platform designed for high school student organizations. It helps students, faculty advisors, and school administrators organize, discover, and manage clubs more easily. Essentially, it is a social platform that clubs and student organizations can use to advertise themselves and communicate directly with members easier.

Key features for students include club discovery, notifications, a centralized dashboard, and streamlined communication. For club leaders and faculty advisors, benefits include easier member and attendance management, event organization, and the ease of spreading upcoming event information. Most importantly, students can join clubs anytime, even if they missed the Involvement Fair, with the click of a button. Pete Areewong '27 said, "I love Club Hub because it gives me the opportunity to join whatever club I want, and it makes everything very feasible."

Nonetheless, there are some challenges to address with the Club Hub platform itself. Many students are overwhelmed by the number of notifications they receive from the Club Hub announcements on their phones and inboxes. Callie Crowell '28 said, "I felt very overwhelmed that I've been receiving [notifications] on a daily basis. I joined more than 50 clubs, so I get emails every single day."

Assistant Director of Student Activities Ms. Colleen Kazar said, "We're working directly with Club Hub so that students can opt into notifications." Director of Student Activities Ms. Alex Long and Ms. Kazar are collaborating with Club Hub's app developers to address student feedback. "We are in the process of working with Club Hub right now. They have been very receptive to our feedback and have helped tailor the Choate page to what works best for us," Ms. Kazar said.

Club Hub is not just a platform for students and club leaders — it also enables adults to see what students are engaging in and outside of the classroom. Ms. Kazar emphasized, "Join Club Hub if you haven't yet and the same goes for faculty and staff across campus."

Clubs are a central part of the Choate community. They connect students with the same interests and allow them to share their experiences and creativity, while also serving as a break from busy academic days. Ms. Kazar said, "It is a space for students to engage in, and club life has changed students' lives at Choate." The implementation of Club Hub allows students to easily explore clubs, bringing the Choate community closer together.

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



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

WALLINGFORD'S MAYORAL RACE: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

By **Jai Midha '27**
Copy Editor



Photo by Ashley Wu '28/*The Choate News*
Incumbent Mayor Mr. Vincent Cervoni's lawn signs for his re-election campaign are scattered across Wallingford.

Wallingford voters face a choice in this fall's mayoral election: incumbent Republican Mayor Mr. Vincent Cervoni, who points to steady modernization and business recruitment to ease the tax load, or Democratic challenger Ms. Alida Cella, who argues the town must professionalize oversight, invest in schools, and push deeper digital and clean-energy upgrades. Both promise growth, but they diverge on methodology and priority.

Mayor Cervoni began his political journey as a lawyer serving and representing several municipalities near the Wallingford area. Previously, he served as town attorney in Branford, Milford, Hamden, and East Haven, where he was the assistant town attorney before being elected mayor of Wallingford. In the fourteen years prior to becoming town mayor, he served on the Wallingford council, 10 of which he spent as the chairman — experience he frames as being the "de facto council spokesperson." This experience, Cervoni said, is what separates him from other candidates. His 2023 mayoral race to succeed Mr. William Dickinson remains one of the closest elections Wallingford has seen in decades.

During his first year, Cervoni focused on incremental modernization and execution. He explained that he has created a standalone IT department, upgraded "real digital connectivity" in Town Hall, and launched a more robust online billing platform with zoning and building permits moving to an online portal. He also restarted the long-stalled Community Pool project and purchased four Fairfield Boulevard to consolidate the Adult Education and the Board of Education's central office, which will end rent outlays and streamline services. On operations, he plans to consolidate multiple cell providers and use technology to preserve labor.

Regarding taxes, Cervoni frames the recent spike as driven more by property revaluation than increased spending. "Most people … experienced an average 40% increase in the value of their homes," Cervoni said, "the average homeowner experienced a 14-16% increase in taxes." His proposed remedy is to broaden the commercial base. "The best way to deal with [the increase in taxes] is bringing in new business … [to] shift the tax burden from the homeowner to commercial," which he packages as "Wallingford Worldwide." Cervoni mentions numerous global corporations in Wallingford: Nel Hydrogen, Orafol, Holo-Krome, Amphenol, and Ulbrich, all of which produce products from highway signs to cables in F-series jets that get shipped all across the world. To address sustainability, Cervoni has economical reservations: "It's a requirement in the state, we have an environmental planner, and there is a consideration of sustainability." He finished by saying, "We do look at sustainability. We do it, [but it] doesn't always work from an economic perspective, and so it's hard to pass those costs on to the taxpayer."

Democratic candidate Ms. Cella, by contrast, grounds her case in project oversight, schools, and modernization. Cella is a graduate of Cornell University and a former union organizer at Yale's Local 34. Originally from New Jersey, Cella said that love brought her to Wallingford: "Within a month of meeting [my future husband, David], I had moved in with him." She now works at Greenskies Clean Focus, a solar company out of North Haven, where she takes on the role of Manager of Project Funding — her job is to raise money for "solar projects for Lowe's, municipalities around the state, and other businesses like those around the country." The nature of her job requires her to be heavily involved with risk-adverse banks. Due to her experience in the role, Cella said, "I understand what is needed to go into the project, what oversight is required, and to make sure the project is executed in the best possible way, so that the bank can be very confident that the project is going to operate for the next 40 years." She said that Wallingford has "deferred maintenance and weak project control," pointing to examples residents know: "the track at Sheehan [High School] that is underwater," recent tennis courts where "the concrete failed the [concrete] test," and fencing missing required bracing. "There's nobody making sure that all the specs are being met … we shouldn't have to use the warranty," she said.

Her management critique pairs with a fix-the-basics agenda. "The sidewalks are never fixed," Cella said, "every delayed penny of maintenance becomes a dollar now worth of work that needs to be done." Modernization is key to Cella's campaign. "If we modernized our technology and invested in our schools, I think businesses would look at Wallingford and say: 'Wallingford is investing in itself, I'm going to invest in Wallingford' … it is about showing that we care enough and that we are going to maintain our resources so that if a business locates here, there is a long term prospect for it in terms of employees and resources."

Cella believes that her leadership, work ethic, and accountability are what separate her from other candidates. "I'm somebody who gets things done … I will work harder than anybody I know to make sure that the improvements I want to see actually get done," Cella said, "if you don't feel like getting it done, that's okay. We'll find somebody else who will get it done … I try to be the change I want to see."

In the end, both campaigns promise growth; they just differ on sequence and tools. Cervoni bets on steady upgrades and business recruitment to rebalance the tax burden. Cella, on the other hand, argues for tightening oversight, accelerating digitization, and investing in schools and local clean energy to make Wallingford more competitive. Voters will decide in November which roadmap to follow — how quickly the town tackles taxes, classrooms, and day-to-day services.

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

New Jazz-Themed Cafe



Photo by Angel Soto '29/*The Choate News*
The Benetts, A Train Cafe owners, pose for a photo behind the counter.

By **Dylann Kong '29**
Reporter

At North Colony Road, a cafe filled with jazz music has the aroma of freshly baked pizza, bagels, and steaming coffee weaving through the air. A Train Cafe has been open for business for just three weeks, and the new Jazz-themed cafe just around the corner of the Wallingford train station, has the potential to be a favorite spot for Choate students.

Cafe owners Mr. Bill Benett and Ms. Andrea Benett recently moved to Wallingford from New Hampshire to start their business. Inspired by his passion for jazz, Mr. Benett envisioned opening a jazz-themed cafe of his own, run just by him and his wife. "I'm from Connecticut originally, but then we moved to New Hampshire for about 25 years, and I played in jazz bands up there," Mr. Benett said, "and when I came here, I wanted something with a jazz field, something that not a lot of people have." The name "'A Train Cafe" was derived from renowned jazz musician Duke Ellington's song Take the A Train and the cafe being next to the train station.

The menu boasts a variety of offerings, appealing to both Wallingford residents and Choate students. New York-style bagels, pizzas, salads, soups, and coffee — A Train Cafe has a menu with variety. "You can tell that they make it fresh. It was super hot. The food was really good. Portions were honestly big and very reasonably priced," Sophie Chang '29 said.

The owners take great pride in their handmade, affordable food. From their clam chowder to their pizza sauces, all the items on the menu are crafted with care. "I want people to come here as a regular place. I want it to be their place, to come just to come in and get a bagel and coffee," Mr. Benett said, explaining that this philosophy is very important to them. Although it has been merely three weeks since A Train Cafe's opening, the Benetts have expressed their surprise and joy at how warmly Wallingford residents have welcomed them. He said he is glad that he has chosen the 'right' community to start his new business.

With its inviting atmosphere and affordable food, A Train Cafe is ready to embark on a new chapter in Wallingford. Not only for the locals, but also for the Choate community, this newly opened Jazz-themed cafe offers the perfect spot to seek comfort and unwind.

Dylann Kong *may be reached at dkong29@choate.edu.*

Fall Drinks: A Guide to Local Coffee Shops

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor

Fall comes with many changes: a new school year, the cold, and most importantly, the frenzy of specialty fall drinks. From pumpkin spice to apple cider, fall brings about a whole new taste to the beverage world.

It's almost impossible to talk about fall drinks without mentioning Starbucks. "I really have a passion for all of [the drinks at Starbucks], the pecan crunch oatmeal latte, and obviously the classic pumpkin spice latte," Austin Zhuo '26 said. While some love the combination of pumpkin, nutmeg, and cinnamon, others don't fully agree. Lucy Domingo '26 believes the pumpkin spice is overrated. "I just don't like the taste of pumpkin. I think there are so many better flavors out there," she said. Domingo's preference, she joked, has become her personal fall staple: "Now that I'm gluten and dairy free, I've been drinking my iced matcha lattes with oat milk and to me that tastes very fall."

Though Starbucks may be the default stop for many, Wallingford has its own collection of coffee shops. When asked which coffee shops have the best fall drinks, Kino Liu '26 said, "definitely Green Kettle. They have the most variety, and I think their coffee is the best." In the corner of Center Street and North Whittlesey Ave is Green Kettle — a small women-owned coffee shop that recently went viral for its cannoli latte. "This year, we have definitely been really popular with the cannoli latte. We went viral on TikTok for it," inventory manager and culinary lead Ms. Corrine Levy said. When asked to rank the top three most popular items on the menu, Ms. Levy said, "Cannoli is number one. Creme brulee is number two. And for number three … the pumpkin spice latte." Green Kettle is also known for creating their own house flavors, which are advertised on their seasonal drink menu. "We do our own house-made pumpkin spice. We do our own clove blackberry seasoning, and then we do an apple pie syrup," said Ms. Levy.

Around the edge of Choate's main campus sits Bees Knees, a cozy brunch restaurant that doubles as a beverage shop. "My favorite drink in Bees Knees is definitely their pumpkin spice lattes," said Sophie Park '27. "Their lattes are great because their syrups are strong in flavor, but I can still taste the coffee.

Although Bees Knees gets fairly crowded over the weekends as it is beloved by both Choate students and Wallingford residents, it still doesn't deter Park from getting her favorite beverage. "I know the line gets really long on the weekends, but you should grab a takeout coffee and still try the pumpkin spice latte this fall," she said.

Located further away from Choate's campus, lies Cafe Luca Belle. Their long menu of specialty drinks includes options such as the shortcake latte and the banana split latte. "Cafe Luca Belle has by far the best themed drinks," said Elliana Patel '26, whose favorite drink is the maple leaf latte. However, the fan favorite flavor this fall is none other than "the pumpkin pie spice and caramel lattes," said barista Ms. Sabrina Balisciano.

Whether it is Starbucks' fall special beverages or original local drinks, Wallingford coffee shops capture the flavor of fall. "That spice, that unique taste, the pumpkin flavors, the apple flavors, it just tastes different," Zhuo said.

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



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

The Choate News

119th Masthead — VOL. CXIX

Reinah Lee '26, *Editor-in-Chief* — **Ethan 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

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

*Head of Team

Advisers
Ms. Cahaley Markman
Ms. Courtney DeStefano

Outreach
Victoria DeVito '27*
Izzy McGehee '27*
Rella Wang '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
Kaylin Lam '27
Rielle Reyes '27
Norah Wang '27
Drew Wolfson '27

@choatenews @choatenews @choatenews

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

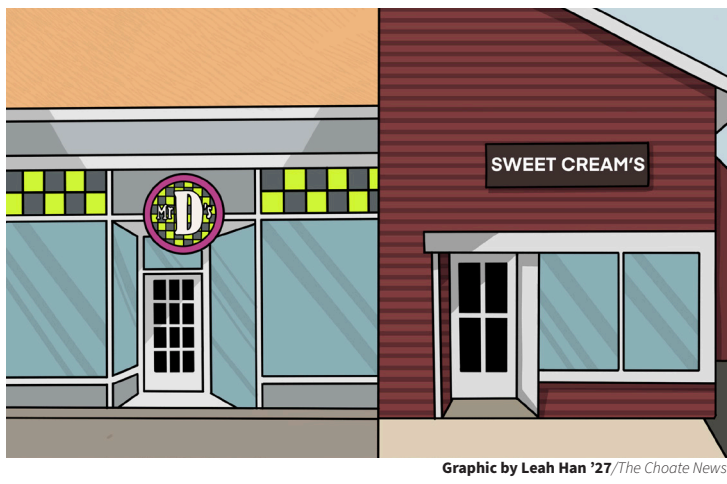
A Shorter Walk For a Sweeter Treat

By **Callie Crowell '28**
Opinions Writer

While the Wild Boar spirit is often united, there is a clear divide when it comes to one category: dessert. Every Choate student has a favorite dessert shop. Two shops in town show a campus divided in opinion: Mr. D's or Sweet Cream's. To Wallingford residents, the most obvious difference between the two is brand recognition. Established in 2010, Mr. D's is a Wallingford icon. "I have a lifelong loyalty to Mr. D's," Wallingford native Bridget Rivard '28 said. Located in the town center, Mr. D's is a staple of Wallingford's dining scene. Many Wallingford residents grew up eating at Mr. D's. On the other hand, Sweet Cream's was established later in 2015. Sweet Cream's undoubtedly has its own fan base; however, Mr. D's has a longer, more rooted history in Wallingford.

Another category where Mr. D's takes the cake over Sweet Cream's is in their offerings. Mr. D's classic yet unique flavors and expansive menu outmatch competitors, distinguishing the dessert shop from the crowd. From the typical vanilla bean ice cream to dog-friendly ice cream, their extensive catalog of ice cream flavors caters to all sorts of customer preferences. And if you aren't craving ice cream, Mr. D's serves a wide variety of sweets — cupcakes, mini red velvet cheesecake, and mango boba tea are just some of the many that they offer. Mr. D's has it all. On the other hand, the menu at Sweet Cream's is limited to just ice cream, ice cream cakes, and drinks. While the ice cream at Sweet Cream's is highly rated by many, Mr. D's is a one-stop shop that can satisfy all your sweet cravings.

Moreover, Mr. D's is especially favored for its convenient location, which is far better than that of Sweet Cream's. The walk to Mr. D's on North Main Street is about 10 minutes or less, while a trip to Sweet Cream's on Center Street could take up to 15 minutes. For many, distance is a major factor that



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

distinguishes Mr. D's. "I think the environment is better," Matthew Zhang '28 said. "Sweet Cream's is more of a distance. You have to go for a long walk to get there." When you are craving a sweet, cold treat on a hot day, distance is a primary consideration, and for that, Mr. D's is the clear winner.

Mr. D's is a paradise for any dessert connoisseur, offering the ultimate sweet experience. From building your own ice cream to choosing between the seemingly endless variety of specials, one can have it all. Although Sweet Cream's is also highly rated, its desserts just do not have that same charming quality that Mr. D's never fails to deliver through its status as a Wallingford icon, variety, and close proximity. Even if it's just a quick trip to Mr. D's, grabbing some friends, chatting on a walk, and treating yourself to an ice cream with glamorous toppings to your heart's content can be truly healing.

Callie Crowell *is a fourth-former from Fair Haven, NJ. She may be reached at ccrowell28@choate.edu.*

Everything is Tuberculosis: Wild Read or Boar-ing Book

By **Olivia Bingham '29**
Opinions Writer

When I opened the 2025 Choate summer reading page, I was pleasantly surprised to see a John Green title under the all-school read. After all, Mr. Green is my favorite author, and I have read nearly all of his books. However, after skimming a Reddit plot summary of *Everything is Tuberculosis*, I wasn't as thrilled to take time out of my summer to read a book that I thought would consist of dense facts about a disease that we don't often hear about in developed nations.

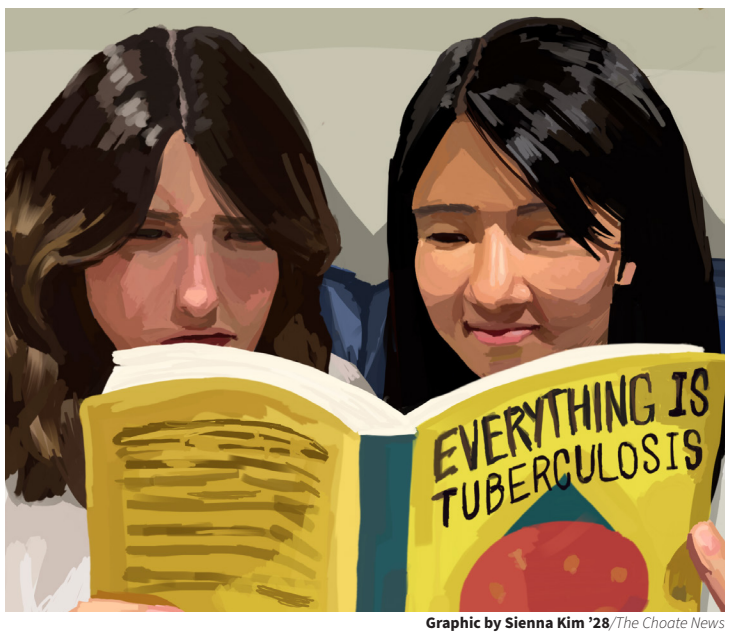
Little did I know, *Everything is Tuberculosis* would immensely alter my perspective on humanity and illness. The book explained the history and origin of disease, highlighting how tuberculosis is connected to every part of society — from strengthening racial hierarchies to altering beauty standards. I learned that tuberculosis still poses a significant threat to global health. At the same time, Mr. Green was able to weave in stories of real-life tuberculosis survivors he met abroad, including a boy named Henry Reider.

I enjoyed every page of the novel. I looked forward to spending late August nights thoughtfully annotating every page. Although some overly complex facts about bacteria did bore me at times, the humanity and heart of the storyline touched me deeply. I was invested in the lives of Henry and the other patients at the Lakka Government Hospital in Sierra Leone. Their resilience inspires me to take action and create change. People are often pessimistic towards what we perceive as "negative" situations, especially illness. However, this novel brings humanity back into the picture for me. Even in the darkest of times, love and light will always prevail, as seen in the resilience of tuberculosis patients and the care of their support networks, like how Isatu, Henry's Mother, stayed by Reider's side throughout his illness. Because even in a hospital where fatalities are common, Reider was able to make patients smile.

Despite the fact that Henry himself was fighting such a painful and unpredictable illness and simultaneously grieving the loss of his sister, he still approached every day with a smile on his face, inspiring those around him.

While Henry's story has a happy ending, there are many tuberculosis patients who have not shared the same fate. Changes must be made. Through the powerful and inspirational stories in the book, future readers of *Everything is Tuberculosis* can learn about the plight of the disease's patients and advocate for them. In Mr. Green's words, "In a world where everyone can eat, and access healthcare, and be treated humanely, tuberculosis has no chance. Ultimately, we are the cause. We must also be the cure."

Olivia Bingham *is a third-former from Madison, CT. She may be reached at obingham29@choate.edu.*



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

By **Liv Feschet '29**
Opinions Writer

Everything is Tuberculosis by Mr. John Green often repeats similar stories of death or romanticisation. Although it introduces different ideas, it could have been summarized into something shorter — maybe even a news article. I acknowledge that the book is beneficial in aiding people's current understanding of this deadly disease and promoting awareness of what is happening to those without access to the cure. However, the many pieces of research consulted with the interwoven stories made it feel more like a random collage of facts and short stories rather than a single cohesive piece.

Whilst Henry's story made *Everything is Tuberculosis* an intriguing story, the intertwining of facts into his life made the plot difficult to follow. The book was not a research article, nor was it a story about a protagonist; instead, it was a mash of both. As a result, I often wanted to finish the story, but also wanted to skip over the large number of names that came and went to prove little point. While Mr. Green mentioned names like Charles Dickens or Alexandre Dumas, their references added little to the story. These small pieces of information scattered throughout the book made it more tedious than interesting.

Mr. Green's *Everything is Tuberculosis* was a reflection of his own mind. As he stated himself, "In my mind, everything is tuberculosis." I believe this creative approach is what made the book drag out. The book gave us a glimpse into the thoughts of a highly acclaimed writer, but also gave us lightly filtered thoughts that sometimes led to Mr. Green jumping around various topics.

For example, at the end of one chapter, Mr. Green discusses symptoms of tuberculosis on the final two pages, but then suddenly switches back to Henry's story. While the two are not entirely disconnected, the shift in thought occurs incredibly quickly.

At the end of another chapter, Mr. Green focuses on some poems Henry wrote, but in the following chapter, he starts talking about German physician Robert Koch, leaving readers unsure of what the connection is between them. While readers eventually comes to understand the relation between the different ideas, the change may leave one feeling lost at first. In both cases, the way the sections are structured makes it difficult to follow and challenging to remember all the information presented.

Everything is Tuberculosis presents important information about tuberculosis. However, the lack of structure, intertwining ideas, and lack of filter made it a bit of a bore.

Liv Feschet *is a third-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at lfeschet29@choate.edu.*

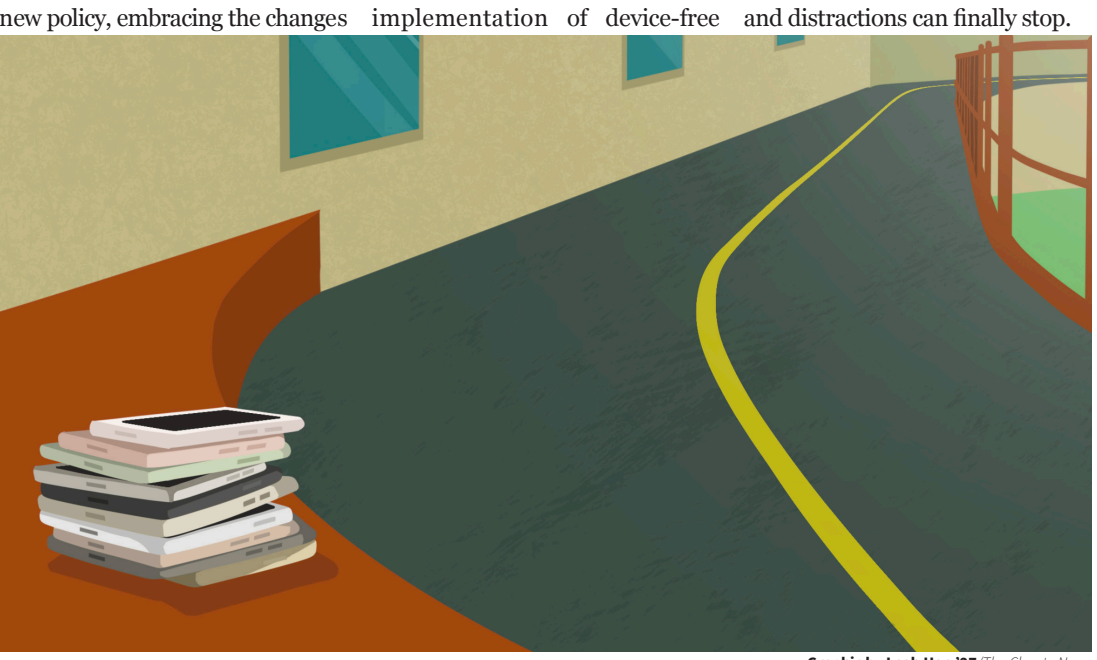
No Phones, More Focus: Choate's New Screen Policies in Action

By **Anna Park '29**
Opinions Writer

In some classes, it's a wooden cell phone holder; in others, an expandable plastic phone pocket; inside our dorms, a rectangular phone cubby. Reminders to switch away from our devices and digital lives have become commonplace as we start the new school year. I believe these policies will foster better collaboration and engagement. While many students may take issue with the new policy, embracing the changes will allow them to fully reap the benefits of device-free classes and activities.

Last year, Choate formed a Challenge Success task force, comprising students and faculty, to assess community phone usage. In a study conducted by the task force, 64% of the Choate community responded that they would like to reduce their screen time; hence, the task force developed several new phone policies. Cell phones are to be turned in at the start of every class. The implementation of device-free age is not permitted during athletic practices, faculty meetings, and club gatherings.

The act of students putting away their phones in a holder is equivalent to a school bell: it marks the start of class. Turning in our phones plays a role as a conscious reminder to stay focused and collaborate with peers. Without our phones on us in class, our addictions to social media apps and distractions can finally stop.


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

"The goal is not so much to not have the phone, but not to be doing wasteful scrolling ... when you could be doing something else that is more important," Math teacher Mr. Andrew Murgio said. "I think this year I've been doing it more with advising and with the robotics classes ... It does help keep people from being distracted by outside stuff." By keeping phones out of the classroom, students are placed in an atmosphere that is more productive for collaboration and learning with their peers.

From my own experience, it has become easier for me to introduce myself and work with new people without having phones around. A natural assumption upon seeing peers on their phones would be that they seem already preoccupied, making them more intimidating and difficult to approach, making it even harder for new students to meet their peers. With more face-to-face interactions, class atmospheres become more uplifting.

Physics teacher Ms. Kimberly Finn-Bolster agrees. She said, "I also think that [the phone policy] is really helpful for class bonding, and if you feel a stronger connection with your class, you'll be more willing to take risks and make mistakes. That I think is important to the educational process." The new policies free students up from being occupied on their phones and give students the opportunity to engage in more physical, meaningful interactions.

The benefits of the new device-free policies extend beyond the classroom. Policies have also been implemented during extracurricular activities. Athletic practices are device-free zones unless an advisor, teacher, or coach gives permission. Ms. Finn-Bolster, who also coaches Girls' Varsity Field Hockey, talked about the importance of staying phone-free during practice. She said, "I like to think that without phones in [terms of] managers and players, if they're on the bench, they're just more engaged with the entire process ... that way, it's a more cohesive team, as opposed to managers over here and players over there." Keeping phones off the courts and fields encourages team members to engage and interact with each other.

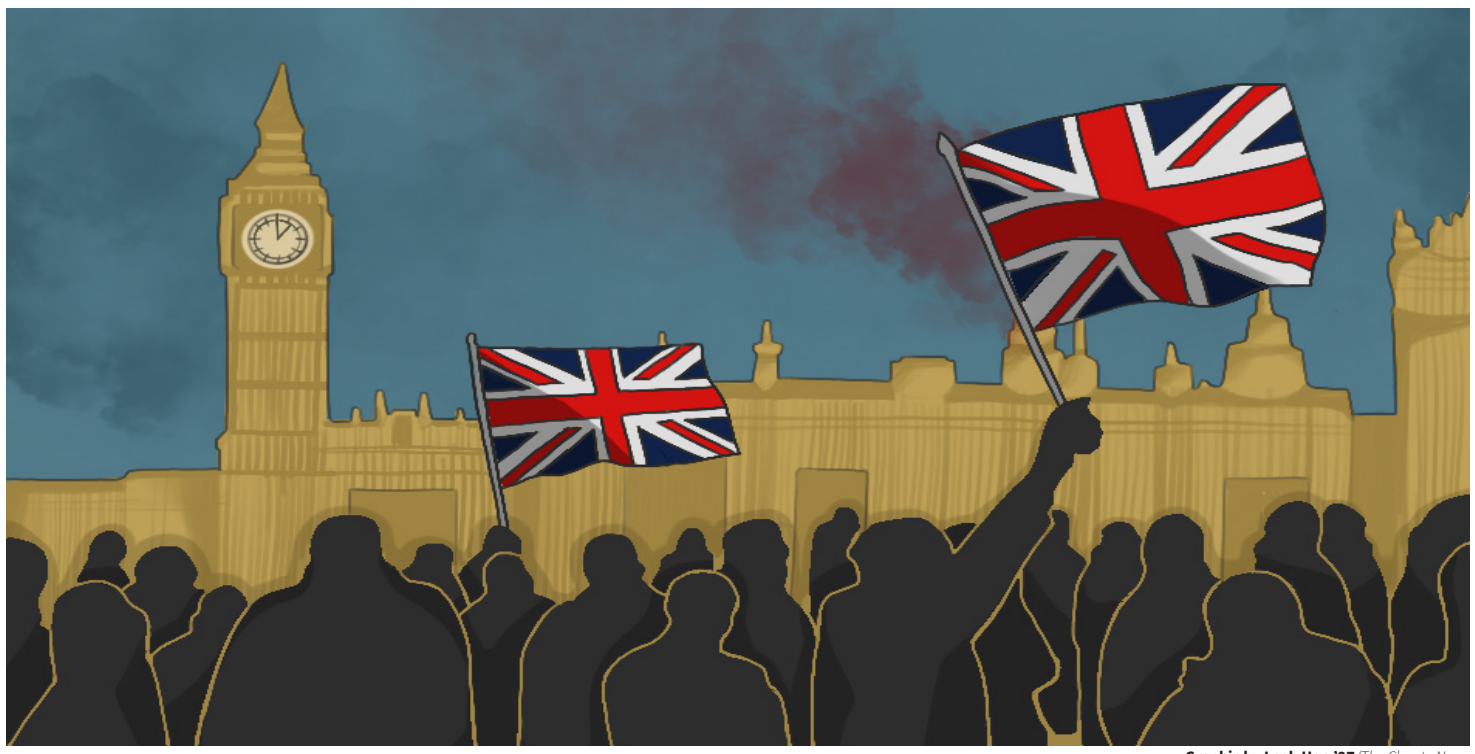
Admittedly, in some cases, pulling out our phones during athletic practices is unavoidable. For instance, cross-country runners often turn to their phones during practice for recording their runs, elevation, and time intervals. One may need to send a quick text to check in with friends or parents. These functions are undoubtedly helpful, and the policy takes this into account, as it allows students to continue using their phones when necessary under faculty supervision. However, keeping phones away when they are not needed during practices is essential. We must not turn to our phones and fall into a whirlpool of distractions when we could be enjoying worthwhile moments.

Phones occupy so much time in our lives without any of us consciously noticing. The phone policy provides opportunities for new friendships and meaningful discussions instead of mindless scrolling. By making a step towards a phone-free environment, Choate is making a stride towards a better-connected and engaged community.

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

WHEN TRUST BREAKS, PROTESTS GROW

By **Olivia Mancha '28**
Opinions Writer



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

For years, anti-immigration rallies in the United Kingdom looked the same: a few hundred angry young men waving flags, shouting slurs, and sometimes fighting with the police. They were easy to ignore — and even easier to call extremists. But the wave of immigration protests now sweeping across Europe is different. When governments duck hard truths, they don't calm the streets. They push the anxious middle toward extremes. Transparency isn't just ethical — it is the only durable defense against radicalization and social fracture.

On September 10, 2025, the Unite the Kingdom rally in London underscored this shift. Police estimated attendance at roughly 110,000 to 150,000 people — far larger than any recent counter protest and accompanied by dozens of injuries and arrests. Whatever one thinks of the message or its organizer, the scale broke the old stereotype of small, fringe gatherings. It showed how deeply the issue has spilled into the mainstream.

At the heart of this shift is trust — or more accurately, the absence of it. Consider the Rotherham child sex exploitation scandal: a 2014 inquiry found that more than 1,400 children were abused between 1997 and 2013 amid blatant institutional failures. Some staff hesitated to raise perpetrators' ethnicity for fear of being branded racist. When ministers now wave away concerns with "nothing to see here," many ask: if the government missed, or massaged, the truth before, why trust it now?

This erosion of trust creates fertile ground for extremism. Everyday residents who feel ignored now find themselves standing alongside groups once dismissed as fringe. Far right activists exploit this opening with a simple pitch: "The government lied to you again. We were right all along. Listen to us." Their rhetoric mixes partial truths, exaggerations, and outright lies. But when official credibility collapses, the blend becomes persuasive — even to people who never would have considered extreme views before.

The United Kingdom is not alone. In France, years of official reassurances that suburban tensions were under control collapsed when riots erupted in 2023 after a police shooting. In Germany, fierce debate over how to release and interpret migrant crime statistics fueled suspicion, even though later analyses showed no clear link between immigration and higher crime. In Sweden, housing shortages and shifting asylum policies clashed with earlier government assurances that infrastructure could cope. Each case teaches the same lesson: concealing or minimizing problems does not calm tensions — it magnifies them.

People can handle difficult realities, like rising immigration, crowded schools, and limited resources, if they believe they are being told the truth. What they cannot handle is being misled or dismissed as racist or extremist for voicing concerns. Every euphemism, cover up, or spin convinces them that something worse is being hidden.

The Unite the Kingdom rally should serve as a warning. This was not just hardened activists marching; it was a mass turnout signaling that a broader audience feels unheard. If leaders keep dodging accountability, massaging numbers, or policing language instead of problems, the next protest will be larger and angrier.

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

Deterrence is a Verb

By **Jai Midha '27**
Copy Editor

North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) problem isn't capacity — it's nerve. On September 10, 2025, after Russian drones violated Polish airspace and were shot down, Warsaw invoked Article 4, which convenes consultations among allies. NATO's response amounted to meetings and statements, not automatic costs for the violator. A week later, on September 19, Russian MiG-31s reportedly violated Estonian airspace for twelve minutes. That is not a navigational misunderstanding; it is a probe. Moscow is testing whether airspace incursions trigger predictable consequences or just process — the North Atlantic Council meets, communiqués are issued, and nothing changes on the ground.

NATO needs to treat borders like borders: automatic consequences, not additional consultations. If NATO won't make airspace inviolable, Moscow will keep prodding — drones today, jets tomorrow. Deterrence works when consequences are certain and immediate, not merely messaged. If Moscow knows precisely what follows the next breach, there won't be a next breach.

Decades earlier, appeasement — making concessions to avoid conflict — allowed incremental violations to go unchecked and paved the road to World War II. It didn't fail from ignorance of evil; it failed because leaders priced violations at words. NATO risks repeating that mistake. Each time an airspace breach is met with meetings and statements instead of measures and costs, it signals that violations are cheap. Vladimir Putin is running a cost-benefit analysis, not a morality play.

NATO must shift from process to principle. Declare airspace a bright line and specify that consequences will follow automatically, proportionally, and predictably. Whether the tool is air defense, cyber action, or sanctions matters less than the posture: deterrence rests on the certainty that any breach triggers an immediate cost. Make that the norm, not the exception. Stop treating every breach as a one-off crisis with fresh statements and emergency summits; respond automatically, so the next violation barely makes the news.

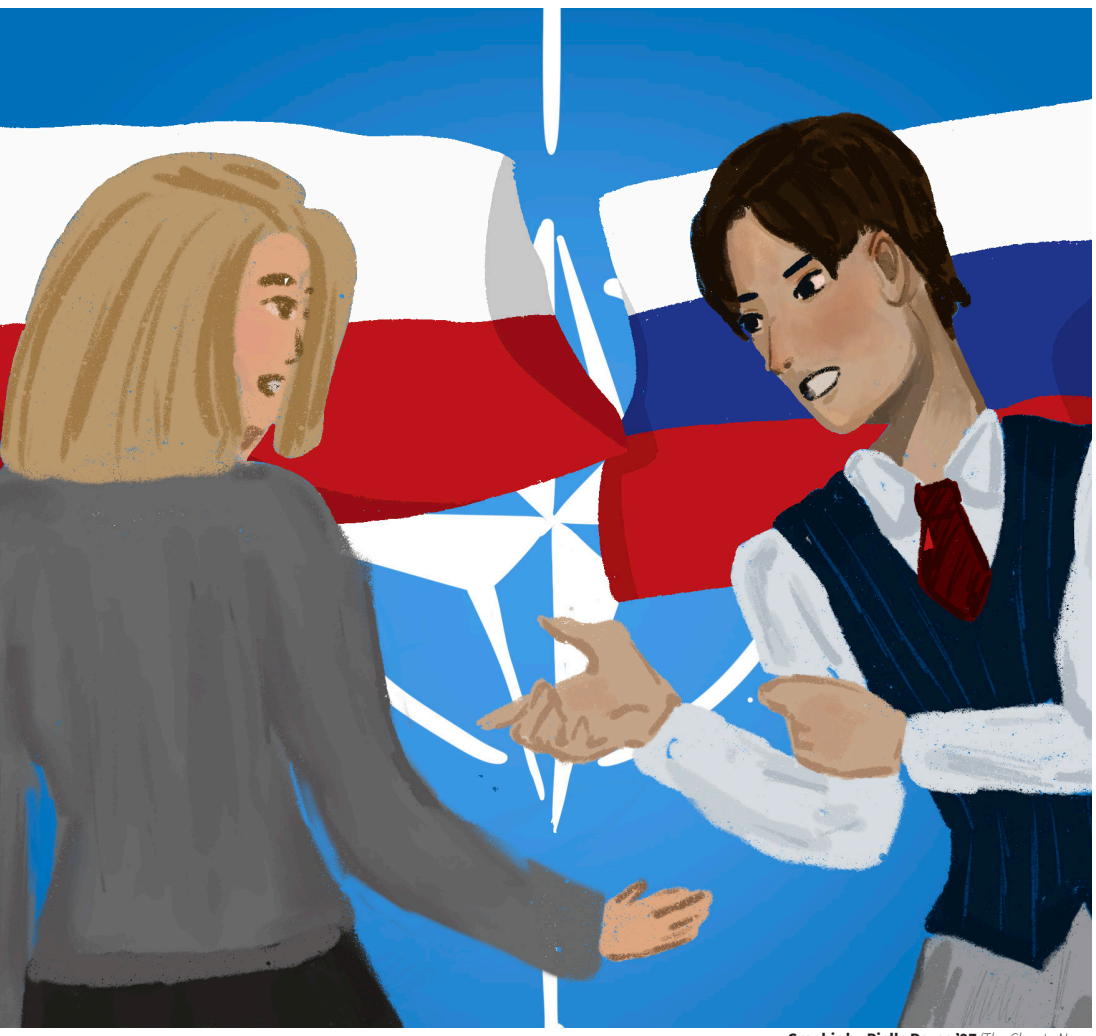
This approach should move the focus away from the skirmish itself. Each violation should quietly raise the price elsewhere: for NATO capitals, that can mean reinforcing Ukraine's defense, tightening allied coordination, and heightening readiness along the eastern flank. This keeps NATO out of direct combat while imposing measurable costs on Moscow.

Finally, pair firmness with restraint. Make clear that responses are defensive and designed to avoid miscalculation — but that they will not be delayed by debates. In Europe, as everywhere, borders are obligations backed by enforcement: they either get enforced or they get tested. If NATO wants fewer tests, it must answer each one with action, not words.

Set aside reflexive warnings about escalation. Moscow is escalating now by normalizing small violations and probing NATO thresholds. The surest path to war is Moscow's belief that NATO will not act. Credible, automatic responses lower risk; performative restraint raises it.

Security can't be delegated to statements — it has to be enforced. Either borders mean something, or they don't. If they do, the next drone, missile, or jet that crosses into NATO airspace should trigger a predictable chain: shoot it down, blind the operators, dismantle the launch node. Call the policy what it is: Airspace Sanctity — enforced with immediate, proportional force.

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



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

TikTok is Teaching Teens Outrage



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

By **Leela Curry '29**
Opinions Writer

TikTok isn't just shaping what teenagers watch — it's shaping what they believe, turning viral trends and funny memes into political "truths" before most people have time to check the facts. For millions of teenagers, TikTok has replaced traditional news outlets such as CNN, NBC, or even online newspapers as their main source of information. That shift might seem harmless — until you look at what TikTok's algorithm actually promotes: sensationalized clips, half-truths, and heavily edited videos designed to spark emotion, not understanding. The result? A generation forming political opinions based on fragments of fiction rather than facts.

The problem starts with how TikTok feeds content. Unlike cable news or long-form journalism, TikTok offers no context or analysis. It serves short clips engineered to attract your full attention. A politician's speech, a protest gone wrong, a controversial remark — all can be chopped up, stripped of nuance, paired with ominous music, and shared with millions. Teenagers scrolling through these clips don't see the full debate or the surrounding facts. They see the most shocking moments on repeat until those moments feel like the whole story.

And when the only story you see is one of villains and heroes, of urgent threats and moral emergencies, impulsive reactions become the norm. A teen watches a viral clip portraying someone as hateful or dangerous, and before hearing any context, they have already made up their mind: this person is evil, this cause is righteous, this action — sometimes even violent retaliation — is justified. This is especially concerning for teenagers because not only are they the primary users of the app, but their brains are still developing, making them more susceptible to emotional manipulation and less equipped to question what they see. The algorithm keeps feeding the same narrative, leaving no pause for fact-checking, no space for a second opinion, and no reminder that reality is always more complicated than a viral soundbite.

The numbers back this up. A September 2024 Pew Research Center study found that about 40% of U.S. adults ages 18–29 say they regularly get news on TikTok (up sharply from 2020). Across all adults, the share is 17%. Outside the U.S., the UK media regulator Ofcom (2024) reports that 30% of UK teens use TikTok for news and 12% name it as their main news source — evidence that the platform is not just entertainment but a front-line news feed for young people. Meanwhile, the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2024 documents TikTok's rapid rise as a news channel among young adults across many countries.

Unlike traditional journalism, TikTok has no built-in safeguards to slow down or correct misleading narratives once they start spreading.

The danger isn't just misinformation — it's what this does to young people's judgment. They learn to form opinions instantly, before the facts are in. They learn to see complex political issues in black-and-white terms. Worst of all, they learn to view aggression, hostility, and even violence as normal response, because the videos they watch frame those reactions as reasonable — even heroic.

When an entire generation grows up consuming politics this way, democracy itself suffers. Decisions are based on feelings, not facts; on viral moments, not careful thought. TikTok isn't just reflecting political chaos — it's training teenagers to see the world through the lens of outrage and impulsivity. And that is far too dangerous to ignore.

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

FEATURES

RAISING KIDS IN THE CHOATE COMMUNITY

By **Lukas Yeh '28**
Reporter



Graphic by Xyla Kiang '26/*The Choate News*

For many teachers and faculty, working at Choate doesn't just mean teaching classes: it's also a place where families are built and kids are raised. For parents with babies or young kids like Math teacher Mr. Nick Tagge, Teaching & Learning Associate and Head Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Coach Ms. Laura Troy, and Science teacher Dr. Selena Gell, daily life with their children blends in with dining hall routines, dorm duties, and Choate community life.

Mr. Tagge

Mr. Tagge appreciates the diverse and welcoming community at Choate, which contributes positively to raising children such as his 20-month-old daughter Charlie. He said, "It's just really fun for Charlie and I to be in the community and talk to people. There are other kids here that Charlie is getting to know." Among those people is a "big cohort of faculty kids around six [years of age]," with whom Charlie gets to have fun with. "She's getting to know friends, and she feels like this is her home. And it just feels like a special way to grow up," Mr. Tagge said. Besides the community, Mr. Tagge said that Choate as an institution was generous when he had to take paternal leave to take care of Charlie right after she was born. "That was a really special time, and Choate was really supportive about it," Mr. Tagge said.

Though not apparent at first glance, Mr. Tagge cites the dining hall as a place for faculty members with babies to catch their breath. He said, "We are there a lot, and that makes life a lot easier; cooking, not having to do dishes, all of those things." Moreover, Mr. Tagge mentioned that the closet near the dish return has been a helpful and convenient place to store their booster seat for Charlie.

Ms. Troy

Ms. Troy, similar to Mr. Tagge, appreciates raising her 4-month-old twins Harper and Josie in the Choate community. She said, "It takes a village to raise a child, and with two, I feel pretty lucky that we have the Choate community to help me do that." The Choate families have been giving her valuable advice, and students have been playing with and caring for the babies. Ms. Troy said, "It's really nice to have the students as babysitters, as role models, so when my kids grow up, they can learn from the students." Furthermore, raising children at a boarding school campus is convenient because "you don't have to schedule play dates or anything ... we can see all the families outside of the dining hall after dinner and get to play with them there," Ms. Troy said.

Nonetheless, certain challenges do exist when raising babies on campus, such as getting around campus with a stroller. Ms. Troy said, "We can't always walk across campus. We have to find paths that don't involve stairs." Another struggle for her has been being a dorm advisor and a parent at the same time. She said, "Mr. Troy was traveling recently, and I was alone with the two babies ... and that was really hard. I had to monitor them, but also be here in the dorm and monitor all of our students, too."

Luckily, the YMCA Learning Community at Choate serves as a daycare to take care of children during the day. "It's really helpful to be able to have that right here on campus, so I don't have to necessarily drive to go pick them up from daycare every day," Ms. Troy said.

Dr. Gell

Dr. Gell, who has a seven-year-old son, Jacob, and a four-year-old daughter, Esther, similarly appreciates the strong connections between her family and other faculty kids. She said, "It's really wonderful to have kids grow up and appreciate the joys of living in a community where they have other faculty kids as friends." Additionally, Dr. Gell says that the diverse community at Choate creates a special environment for her kids. "My daughter gets to know all sorts of people from all around the world, and she can appreciate why it's important to connect and give back to the community," Dr. Gell said.

In terms of community life with her children, she finds the students in her dorm, Combination, friendly and caring. "I think the students in the dorm really love it when my kids come out to say hello," Dr. Gell said. She also believes campus activities are an additional perk. For example, she recalled bringing her kids to Choate's Holi celebration, where they were sprinkled with colored Gulal powder and able to immerse themselves in a new culture. Outside of scheduled events and community gatherings, Dr. Gell values Choate's sizable campus for encouraging her children to get fresh air: "There are a lot of big spaces where my kids can go, and it is wonderful that my kids can go out and ride their bikes around campus," she said.

Raising children on campus comes with diverse challenges, from taking care of both students and their children to navigating personal responsibilities. Still, for Mr. Tagge, Ms. Troy, and Dr. Gell, the Choate community is a place where their kids are supported, cared for, and surrounded by role models. For faculty members who are expecting to raise children on campus, Dr. Gell said, "Lean into the parent community here. There's a lot of community members around, and don't be afraid to ask for help ... and try to take a little bit of time for yourself."

Lukas Yeh *may be reached at lyeh28@choate.edu.*

Tuberculosis' History At Choate

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28 and Jocelyn Rivard '28**
Copy Editor and Reporter

In Choate's 2025 Summer Reading book, Everything is Tuberculosis, John Green explains the reach of tuberculosis throughout history, from cities created as sanatoriums for patients to the "beauty of consumption" depicted in 18th and 19th century European art. While tuberculosis may seem distant in time and relevance, our very own school and the town of Wallingford worked toward raising awareness, supporting patients, and preventing the further spread of the disease.

Gaylord Farm Sanitarium

Right in Wallingford, Gaylord Farm Sanitarium opened its doors in 1904, at a time when tuberculosis was poorly understood. Treatments ranged from hot springs to private care specialists — often expensive with little consistency in outcomes. Gaylord offered something rare for its time: affordable, structured care in a rural environment that emphasized rest and clean air.

By February 1929, the institution had been operating for almost 25 years. Starting out as a small institution with two patients, it had expanded to consist of 135 patients, 12 nurses, and a large facility with multiple buildings. The February 16, 1929 issue of *The Choate News* described Gaylord as containing "a set of buildings and equipment unrivaled in the state," attesting to the institution's innovation and commitment to quality care.

Gaylord's mission was not only ambitious but charitable. It was not funded by the state but relied instead on donations and campaigns. Patients were asked to pay only a fraction of the cost of treatment, ensuring that everyone could afford and receive care. As the February 16, 1929 issue of *The Choate News* reported, "Even the poorest man has now the opportunity to take the tuberculosis cure at Gaylord Farm." Choate's own community supported Gaylord by selling stamps called "Christmas Seals" nationwide to raise money for tuberculosis research. By 1930, students had sold more than 53,000 seals, turning a one-time campus fundraiser into an annual tradition that directed funds to Gaylord and other institutions.

Gaylord also pursued a clear admissions strategy: only patients "whose condition offers some hope of recovery are accepted." With funds in short supply, Gaylord directed its care toward those who were most likely to recover and focused on being a place of effective treatment. The policy worked; after treatment, many patients were well enough to return home, elevating the institution's reputation in Wallingford.

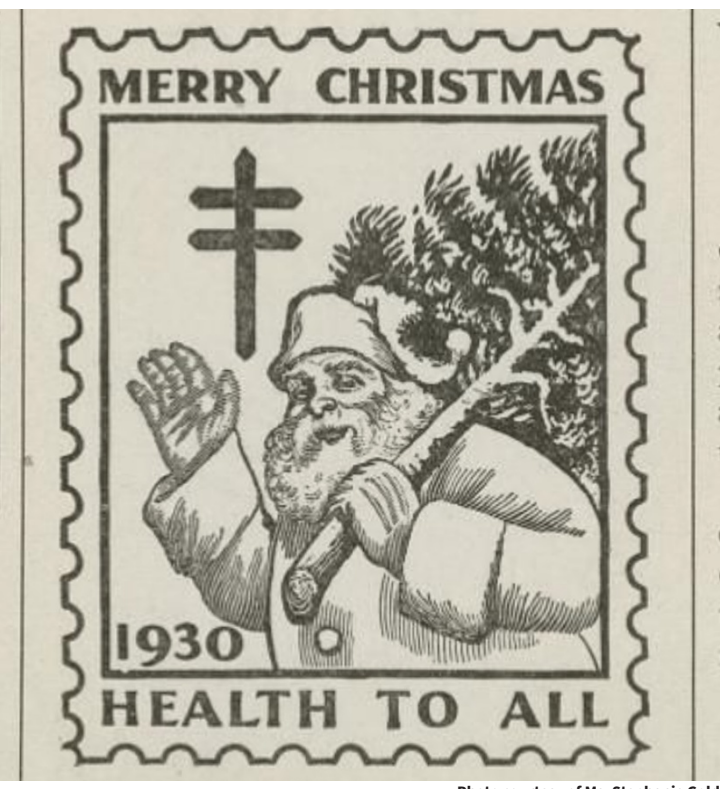


Photo courtesy of Ms. Stephanie Gold

A photo of the 1930 Tuberculosis Christmas Seal sold on campus.

Tuberculosis On Campus

Two decades later in the 1940s, tuberculosis was still a very real problem around the world. Continuing to adapt to the growing issue, Choate started to take matters into its own hands to stop the spread of tuberculosis on campus. A school response began in 1948, when a mysterious truck arrived at Choate. The May 8, 1948 issue of *The Choate News* wrote, "A crowd soon gathered, at first taking the truck for a mammoth Good Humor Wagon. The mystery was soon cleared up, however, by [Assistant Headmaster and Dean] Mr. [George] Steele, who pointed to the inscription on its side which identified it as the Connecticut State X-Ray Mobile Unit."

Many of the students at the time had never seen an X-ray machine before, and could only speculate as to what the machine would look like. Theories ranged from a large machine covered in knobs to a pulse of electricity that would be shot through their body. The boys who were above 15 years old were able to see for themselves that the first theory was much more accurate. Students were strongly encouraged to get a screening, which was also funded by the Christmas Seals. The Choate School had a mindset that was widely accepted by those who tried to prevent the spread of tuberculosis, with the May 8, 1948 issue of *The Choate News* writing, "Now more than ever, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.'"

Nearly eight decades later in 2025, Tuberculosis is still an ongoing struggle for communities across the world, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting 1.25 million deaths in 2023 alone. Historically, the creation of Gaylord Farm Sanitarium in Wallingford and Choate's efforts to prevent tuberculosis shows that the disease not only shaped distant histories but also life close to home.

Teya Tejavibulya *and* **Jocelyn Rivard** *may be reached at ttejavibulya28@choate.edu and jrivard28@choate.edu.*

Choate Student Entrepreneurs

By **Chloe Yeung '28**
Reporter

At Choate, students pursue all kinds of passions, from sports to social justice, art, and more. With the sheer number of resources available on campus, students are encouraged to explore their interests in all sorts of ways and are supported by teachers and faculty throughout the process. For some, pursuing an interest might mean trying out for a sports team or joining a new club. However, for Wayne Wang '26 and Ada Tieanworn '26, their interests fall in exploring the world of business and entrepreneurship.

For Wang, the prospect of starting a business first came up in Science teacher Mr. Will Morris's Chemistry of Food class, where students were tasked to create a sports nutrition product. As a passionate sprinter of the Choate Boys' Varsity Track & Field Team, Wang was quick to think of making a sports drink like that of an electrolyte powder. With the help of Matthew Park '26, their idea became reality. "It was our final project, but we came up with something that we're really proud of. So I was like, why not make this into a natural business ... and push the product to a wider audience, which we genuinely believe will benefit them in terms of health, hydration, and wellness," Wang said.

Wang researched formulas on the market, tinkering with recipes he found to create an original product for his business: Water+. Wang centered his project around electrolytes, determined to find a solution and help athletes get the bodily resources they need. "Within the electrolytes market, [many electrolytes] are either underdosed, [have the] incorrect ratios of the electrolytes, or are massively overpriced," Wang said. "[I] took advantage of this vacancy in the market to push out something that will benefit people ... I use all natural products and collagen peptides, [and] we are the first hydration company to do that." Wang developed a website for his brand, sent recipes to the FDA to be approved, and is currently looking for investors to fund his business; his end goal is to have his product in retail stores and online merchandisers.

Tieanworn has been interested in entrepreneurship from a young age, and her interest was especially piqued after she took Macroeconomics with Mr. Sam Doak. "In class, we talked about a circular economy," she said. "That got me thinking about the ways in which our community can become more sustainable if we did this circular economy." Tieanworn's work as a social entrepreneur stems from her commitment to closing unemployment and socioeconomic gaps in her home country, Thailand.

In collaboration with businesses and hotels around Thailand, Tieanworn founded Global Hospitality Aid, an organization that transforms unused materials from hotels into resources for refugees in war zones. "I'm turning those things into useful items, such as clothes and blankets that are sent to refugees in war zones because right now, there's a big influx of people in refugee camps around the world due to the political situation," Tieanworn said. Additionally, she founded Café Exfolia, a business that collects unused coffee grounds from hotels and turns them into soap. Both Global Hospitality Aid and Café Exfolia provide employment opportunities for individuals living in emergency shelters.

Connecting her projects to a central thread, Tieanworn said, "The purpose of all my social enterprises is to help create an economy that's more sustainable in the way that it's providing people who are unemployed and impoverished with jobs, while also benefiting the community in some way."

Like any entrepreneurial venture, the road was not easy, and both Wang and Tieanworn encountered many challenges. "My biggest challenge was the fact that there's no one set way [to] build a business," Tieanworn said. "There's no handbook to tell you how to do things right, or what to do when things go wrong." Meanwhile, Wang found coordination and collaboration the hardest obstacle. "Before this project, I believed that I could do anything [alone] just by trusting my work ethic," he said. "After I started this business, I realized that ... you'll be good at some things, but you need other people to help [with] other assets."

Tieanworn and Wang's stories go to show that no matter one's passion, entrepreneurship is an exciting pathway to channel and share that interest. Wang encourages everyone to start their business and take the first step with courage. "Find something you're passionate about and don't be afraid to fail," he said. Echoing Wang, Tieanworn said, "If you have a passion, you're already 50% of the way there."

Chloe Yeung *may be reached at cyeung28@choate.edu.*



Photo courtesy of Ada Tieanworn '26

Ada Tieanworn '26 hands out a bag of essential appliances during a Global Hospitality Aid event.

ARTS AND LEISURE

The Show Goes On: Faculty Members of the Arts Department Pivot Without the PMAC



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/*The Choate News*

The sound board and sewing machine set up at the Arts Annex for the fall play, *Witness for the Prosecution* by Agatha Christie.

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

Set to reopen in the fall of 2026, the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) — the heart of Choate's theater program — is currently undergoing major renovations to transform the space and its technology for future productions. Choate's theater scene, however, remains active with vibrant plays and musicals, and with various theater classes continuing in new locations across campus.

Mr. Mark Gostomski, the Technical Director of the PMAC and teacher of Stagecraft I and Stagecraft II, explained that the theater program is now housed in the Arts Annex, formerly the temporary dining hall.

Theater teacher Ms. Deighna DeRiu, who teaches Acting II, Directing, and Fundamentals of Theater Design, and also runs the costume and prop shop, said the move to the Arts Annex allowed her to make small but meaningful curriculum updates. "I got to rethink my syllabus a little bit ... looking at the space, looking at what is available to us, and going from there," she said.

One of the biggest challenges Ms. DeRiu has faced is limited access to technology, especially lighting. "I often ask students to use lighting in their assignments," she said. "We can't do that [without the PMAC] ... so we're focusing on other ways to use technical theater."

For performances, Mr. Gostomski noted that each production this year will take place in a different location. "That has been a challenge, but we're embracing it in a good way," he said, adding that the smaller venues allow for greater focus on detail and intimacy with the audience. "The audience is going to be much closer and much more intimate. It's much more enveloping than we've ever been able to do before," he said.

Theater teacher Ms. Katharine Doak, director of the fall play, *Witness for the Prosecution* by Agatha Christie, has also embraced a new performance location: Ruutz Rees. "We have an opportunity to stage a piece where the audience is really close to the actors," Ms. Doak explained. The play will be held on a "three-quarter stage," meaning audience members will surround the performers on three sides. "[The play] is set mostly in a courtroom, and so [the stage] mirrors the Old Bailey courtroom in London, which also has a similar setup ... it is very exciting," Ms. Doak said.

Theater teacher Mr. Bari Robinson, who teaches Acting I, Improvisation, and Acting III while directing The Old Man and the Old Moon written by the PigPen Theater Company, believes performing in new spaces is an advantage for students. "Being nimble and more imaginative with the possibilities of any space is really great pedagogically for [students] to understand," he said, "You can do a play anywhere, if you think about it well enough."

Regarding the PMAC's renovation, Mr. Gostomski shared his excitement about the updated technology. "Technology is changing at a dramatic pace, and we have not kept up," he said. For instance, the PMAC's previous light board was due to stop working after this year, "because the software it was running on is no longer working."

Members of the theater department are optimistic about being able to innovate their productions. Mr. Robinson expressed his hopes that the renovations will allow students to perform in previously underused spaces such as the black box theater. "I would love to be able to do one of our shows in the black box ... [even though] it [previously] was not a viable performance space." Mr. Gostomski explained that a newly renovated PMAC will "allow [Choate theater] to hit the potential of things that we haven't been able to do before ... we'll be able to experiment and try out art." For Ms. Doak, the addition of aisles running between the stage and the audience is one of the most exciting changes. "I'm very excited about having aisles that actors can perform in, because that's another way of breaking down the fourth wall and bringing the audience and the actors closer together," she said.

As to how this will allow Choate students to further grow as artists, Ms. Doak said that "as theater teachers at Choate, we would love every kid to have a chance to be on that stage ... hopefully, the new space will feel like one that every student can see themselves on."

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

Breaking It Down: A Timeline of Dances

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

The Student Activities Department works hard to ensure there's never a dull moment on campus, whether it's hosting a movie night, a Chipotle expedition, or even a festive celebration for National String Cheese Day. Among the most anticipated events each year are the annual Student Activities Center (SAC) dances and formal balls, which bring the community together for music, laughter, and a much-needed break from academics.

For new students, the idea of a school dance can feel intimidating. But upperclassmen say the best way to enjoy them is simply to go. "Being with your friends ... it's a good opportunity to bring the community together," Luke Hegarty '26 said.

The Student Council unveiled the newest dance — BoarBash — during a School Meeting announcement two weeks prior to the dance. BoarBash marks the first SAC dance, a new semi-formal "homecoming-style" dance scheduled for September 27, 2025. From there, SAC hosts several themed events, including an annual Halloween dance on October 31. Attendance can vary, but dances remain a way to connect with friends. "Just dancing with my friends, singing songs — those are most notable [memories]," Hegarty said.

The biggest formal of the year is Holiday Ball (Hol Ball), taking place on December 13, 2025. "The whole school goes, and it's fun to see everyone ... everyone dresses up in wintry colors, and there's always some sort of theme," Allie McNerney '27 said.

Older students look forward to First Hurrah on Valentine's Day, a semi-formal dance for fifth- and sixth-formers, and seniors will finish their time at Choate with Last Hurrah — Choate's version of a high school Prom — on May 28, 2026. If you're a third- or fourth-former, Spring Ball — known as "Three-Four" — on May 3, 2026, is a highlight of the spring term. Unlike all-school events, it's just for underclassmen, which creates a more relaxed and form-bonding atmosphere.

Another one of the most anticipated SAC events is the President's Day Dance. When Choate announces a surprise day off as President's Day, the excitement builds instantly — and it all culminates that evening with a SAC dance. "When you get the call that it's President's Day, everyone's so excited, and all that energy is just transferred into the SAC dance," Paul Stearns '26 said.

Hegarty said his favorite part of SAC dances is being "relieved from the stress of just the constant workload." Formal events like Hol Ball are opportunities to dress up, while SAC dances can be as casual as sweatpants.

Student Activities Director Ms. Alexandra Long takes great care into planning the best dances possible, and believes they are integral to life at Choate. "I tell new students not to be nervous but to just come and have fun. I like planning SAC dances because students who feel more self conscious about dancing can still come to the SAC and play ping pong while music is playing, so they can feel included in the dance without being in the middle of the dance floor," Ms. Long said. No matter the venue, dress code, or DJ, Choate dances offer students the chance to connect and celebrate.

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

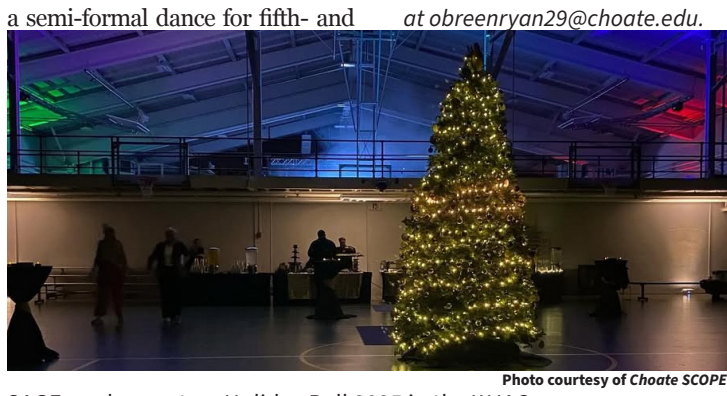


Photo courtesy of *Choate SCOPE*

SAGE workers set up Holiday Ball 2025 in the WJAC.

Arts Con Musicians Take the Stage Worldwide

By **Dominique Zen '28**
Reporter

While many students returned home this summer, three Arts Concentration Program musicians used their time to connect with fellow musicians from around the world, attending prestigious music festivals and returning to Choate with new skills and perspectives.

Bassoonist Grace Yoon '26 joined the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America (NYO-USA), a prestigious program hosted by Carnegie Hall. The program gathers young musicians, ages 16 to 19, from around the nation for intensive rehearsals. The orchestra performed and rehearsed at Carnegie Hall before touring the cities of Osaka, Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Seoul under conductor Gianandrea Noseda with guest violinist Ray Chen.

Yoon said the program opened her eyes to different approaches to music-making. Playing under an Italian conductor and observing the styles of American and Asian musicians, she found the combination to be a valuable cultural experience. "Being able to experience all those cultures and perform in so many different places is such an amazing opportunity," Yoon said.

Raphael Zhu '27 attended two festivals this summer with his tuba: NYO-2, the sister program of NYO, and the Lucerne Festival Academy in Switzerland. Zhu especially appreciated attending the Lucerine Festival because the musicians there mostly had graduated with masters degrees and doctorates in music performance. "It was really easy to put things together and perform because the festival was open to us performing whenever we wanted and we were able to learn new material really quickly," Zhu said. Reflecting on his experience auditioning and attending festivals, Zhu also noted, "Your fundamental technique, the way you play the instrument, is more important than how you played the audition itself."

For violinist Kristie Lu '26, this summer's Verbier Festival in Switzerland was her first international music festival. The musicians traveled from 22 countries, and while some struggled with English, the orchestra quickly found ways to collaborate. Lu highlighted that working with this diverse group of musicians showed her how "music can be a language for musicians to communicate through." She added that the experience "changed [her] entire perspective in music" and inspired her to keep joining programs and performing in orchestras.

The lessons these musicians learned this summer will continue to shape their performances at Choate and beyond, giving young musicians invaluable opportunities to travel and perform.

Dominique Zen *may be reached at dzen28@choate.edu.*

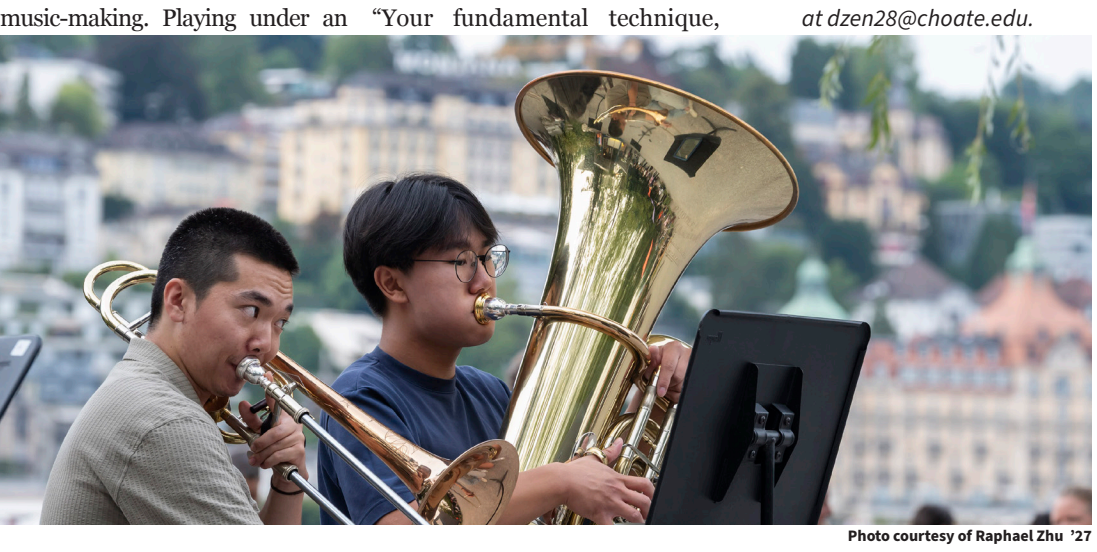


Photo courtesy of Raphael Zhu '27

Raphael Zhu '27 collaborates with a trumpet player at the Lucerne Festival Academy.

STEP BY STEP: FINDING OPPORTUNITIES TO DANCE



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

By **Sophie Chang '29**
Reporter

Many Choate students step onto campus with little or no dance experience — but that doesn't stop them from finding a rhythm. Through open workshops, beginner-friendly clubs, and a welcoming culture, Choate offers students a chance to explore movement in ways that go far beyond the classroom.

Beyond the mainstage productions, there is a range of low-barrier ways to get involved — from faculty and student-led choreography to casual club rehearsals — all offering opportunities to try dance without pressure. "I really enjoy dance and I do it as a hobby to relieve stress ... the time commitment is as much or as little as you want it to be. It's a super fun way to meet new people, [and] a great way to meet upperclassmen who I wouldn't normally talk to," Dance Company member Emma Schwerin '26 said.

One recreational dance club is Step Squad, which introduces rhythm and step to the Choate community. Any student can audition without prior dance experience. "Personally, when I came to Choate, I think I got a lot more stage fright, and I was really scared to actually dance," Step leader Dominique Welcome '26 said. "It helped me become more confident, and there's so many opportunities, [...] because as serious as Step can seem, it's also a great space where you should be able to have fun, enjoy yourself, and be creative."

Kanami Izaki '29, a contemporary and ballet dancer from Japan, shared her excitement about exploring new dance styles: "Now, I can enjoy other kinds of dance. I've never done hip hop and jazz before ... it's a very new experience, but it's really fun to challenge myself." Izaki's experience highlights how Choate encourages students to step beyond classical norms and experiment with new forms.

Marin Wang '27, co-founder of a new dance club called Motion, explained the club's goal: "We wanted to have open classes and workshops for inexperienced dancers to come ... see what our club is about, what our choreo is like, what it would look like."

Rather than serving as an advertisement, these stories show that dance at Choate is not just for seasoned performers — it is a part of campus life that welcomes curiosity and growth. For many students, dance becomes less about perfecting technique and more about finding confidence, connection, and a creative outlet.

Sophie Chang *may be reached at schang29@choate.edu.*

THE CHOATE NEWS

VOL. CXIX • NO. 1

SPORTS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2025

FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

24 - 5 - 0

Varsity Games

Girls' Soccer (4-0)
vs. Exeter, 5-0

Boys' Football (1-1)
vs. Lawrenceville, 21-12

Girls' Field Hockey (1-2)
vs. Ethel Walker, 4-1

Boys' Soccer (5-1)
vs. Brunswick, 6-0

Girls' Volleyball (4-0)
vs. Miss Porters, 3-0

Boys' Water Polo (3-0)
vs. Deerfield, 17-11

Girls' Field Hockey (1-2)
vs. Loomis, 1-2

Boys' Soccer (5-1)
vs. BB&N, 2-4

J.V. Games

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

Boys' Soccer (2-0)
vs. Salisbury, 5-0

Girls' Field Hockey (2-0)
vs. Loomis, 6-2

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

Grit, Grind, Gains: Preseason Sets the Pace for Fall Sports

By **Elishka Roux '29**
Reporter

While most students savor their last days of summer break, Choate fall athletes are already lacing up their shoes, pounding the pavement, and hitting the weight room before sunrise. From August 27–September 2, preseason at Choate helped athletes prepare for the upcoming fall season. Athletes from fall sports teams, including soccer, football, cross country, girls' volleyball, girls' field hockey, and boys' water polo, participated in this week-long training.

Girls' Varsity Field Hockey Captain Annie Cady '26 described a few elements of team practices during preseason. "We do different drills for footwork ... then we'll move into team drills, shooting drills, and ... scrimmaging," she said.

Similarly, other teams adopted various practice routines to perfect their skills and prepare for matches, dedicating their time and effort to their sport before school started. "We met in the morning and afternoon, and [ran] twice a day," Girls' Cross Country runner Jocelyn Rivard '28 said. "We also did core [exercises], like push-ups, after every single practice," Girls' Cross Country runner Yuki Suzuki '27 added.

Boys' Varsity Water Polo Captain Andy Stahlman '26 found preseason both memorable and challenging. "I think preseason is a top-five thing you can do as an athlete ... It's going to be hard ... but I think everyone else feels the same way, and so you've got to get through it together. You've got to lean on your teammates," he said.



Photo courtesy of @choateathletics on Instagram

The Girls' Varsity Soccer team prepares their game day strategy.

Preseason also gives athletes the chance to create strong bonds among teammates. Boys' Varsity Football player Tucker Larson '27 said, "Everybody's here for the same reason. It's also motivation to get up each morning. When we do a workout ... the other guys have to do it too." For both Stahlman and Larson, the time spent in preseason helped build a closer relationship with their respective teammates and made it easier to endure tough challenges.

Going through the difficulties of the intense training, focusing on the sport, and adjusting to a new routine together allows teammates to forge close bonds. Boys' Varsity Football player Tanner Raymond '26 recounted his training experience with a circuit exercise. "You start at the end zone, go up across the field, and each time ... it's a different workout," he said. "We were all suffering together ... it [made us] a better team and family."

Preseason pushes athletes to improve their performance and resilience, and it builds trust across teams. Through shared challenges, teammates form strong bonds that carry into the season. In the end, players grow not just as athletes, but as teammates and friends. "Preseason is a time for you to put yourself out there, and it's the time for you to grow. Don't be afraid and always try your best," Girls' Junior Varsity Field Hockey team member Mila Mak '29 said.

Elishka Roux *may be reached at eroux29@choate.edu.*

BEYOND PERFORMANCE WITH MR. GROEN

By **Lily Safabakhsh '29**
Reporter

This fall, Choate welcomed back a familiar face: Mr. Max Groen '15, who is returning to campus as the School's new Mental Performance Coach and Mental Health Counselor.

Mr. Groen studied sports psychology and counseling at Boston University. His motivation to return stemmed from his previous experiences at Choate as a member of the boys' soccer and lacrosse teams. "I ... realized how [important] it would have been to have a mental performance coach in my high school years. I wanted to come back to a place that means so much to me and bring that piece to Choate," Mr. Groen said. "I saw an opportunity to help athletes take care of themselves holistically, not just with how they perform on the field, but also in their everyday lives."

Mr. Groen's role is to provide mental performance coaching to teams on campus. He is assigned to work with athletic and performing arts teams throughout the school year, leading sessions around handling anxiety and fear, resetting after mistakes, developing confidence, and more, all to help support students' mental health.

In his first few weeks, Mr. Groen has been focused on bringing normalcy and awareness to the need for performance-based mental health counseling. His goal is to make sure that we know that he is an accessible resource to reach out to. "At the end of the day ... I am here to help [students] feel supported and ultimately foster better self-understanding and awareness," he said

One of Mr. Groen's main priorities is changing the culture around performance-based results in sports. "There is more pressure now than ever before on immediate results. I think the culture of sport and competing, largely due to social media, is so focused on posting highlights, commitments, and recruiting offers don't allow students ... to just go through the normal process of being a performer," he said. Mr. Groen believes that this takes away from why people started playing sports in the first place, and works to chip at that narrative: "There's highs, there's lows, everyone reaches their goals at different times. I think social media really paints a false narrative that only shows highlights," he said.

Looking ahead, Mr. Groen hopes to offer authentic support and open conversations about stress, performance pressure, and the balance between taking care of your physical and mental health. His approach is rooted in authenticity, honesty, and trust.

With his experience and understanding of student-athlete life, Mr. Groen has begun a new yet familiar chapter at Choate, building a more supportive and balanced environment at the School.

Lily Safabakhsh *may be reached at lsafabakhsh29@choate.edu.*

Cranking Up School Spirit: Welcome, New Boar Pen!

By **Elliot Sun '28**
Reporter

With new faces and intrepid plans, Choate's Boar Pen is heading into the new school year determined to elevate school spirit. The new Boar Pen consists of six seniors, comprising Hayes Wheeler '26, Kate Tortorella '26, Ellie Silva '26, Kayden Soares '26, Max Weber '26, and Paul Stearns '26. Dedicated to boosting attendance at sports events and school performances, Choate's Boar Pen members aspire to embrace inclusivity and bigger ideas. "I think that this year ... we're going to work way better as a team," Soares said. "We're going to get the crowds riled up. We're going to support everything, and I think we've got way bigger ideas."

Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Captain Tortorella emphasized, "We are not afraid ... [to] put ourselves in these embarrassing situations, and we don't get embarrassed." Weber and Tortorella both mentioned that the team's goals came from "seeing different Boar Pen members, being on campus, having experience in what events have been really fun, [and thinking of what to improve]."



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

The new members of Boar Pen pose for a photo on the Colony Hall steps.

For Boar Pen leaders, school spirit is more than just cheering at games; it is about culture and connection. "School spirit for any school is most important because it drives culture. It drives the vision and the ideals of the school. And without school spirit, I wouldn't really consider it a school," Stearns said.

Weber was passionate about encouraging the Choate community to support its teams. "The main goal is to get people to buy in [to team spirit], and to get them to ... represent this place in the best way possible," he said. "From a student perspective ... I think giving this place everything you have and going out and showing why you love this place is awesome ... whether that be events, whether that be games [or] musicals."

This year's slate of events reflects Boar Pen's creative vision. Tortorella aims to bring the excitement of Choate back to the community and unite the student body through sports. Soares said, "One event that I'm very excited for is the Powder Puff volleyball game that we planned." Weber also noted his excitement for upcoming sports events like Ultimate Frisbee and Spikeball challenges.

"School spirit is really what brings everybody together at the end of the day ... crank it with everything y'all do," Soares said. With that energy, the Boar Pen team hopes to make this year the loudest, most inclusive, and most spirited year yet, inspiring every student to support athletes fully at Choate.

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

Leveling the Field: Choate Football's Renovated Turf

By **Norah Wang '27**
Staff Contributor

What do the Green Bay Packers, the Philadelphia Eagles, and the Choate Boars have in common? These teams all play on a unique kind of American football field: a hybrid field. The heart of Choate's campus got a major upgrade over the summer: a fully renovated football field that includes a new turf, an LED scoreboard, and updated stands. These changes were installed after the former design of the Maher Field was taken down during the construction of Carr Hall. The transformation has caught the attention of athletes, coaches, and fans alike, and its impact is already being felt on and off the field.

For years, Choate football players practiced and competed on the Maher Field, Wilken Field, and Gunpowder Creek Field. Now, after months of construction, the School has unveiled a new turf field that is both visually striking and functional. The hybrid field is made out of natural grass that is reinforced by a synthetic sew-in to keep the grass in place. Additionally, the new field addresses a major issue that the old field had: the almost 10-foot difference in height from one end zone to another. The new field now offers improved drainage, consistent playing conditions, and a central location that naturally draws more student spectators.



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

The renovated football field sits at the heart of campus.

According to coaches, the most significant change isn't just the quality of the field — it's the shift in energy. Head Boys' Varsity Football Coach LJ Spinnato said, "The game day environment seems to be just totally enhanced by the new field and scoreboard." With the new full-screen LED scoreboard and the field being located in a high-traffic part of campus, more students and faculty have been stopping by to watch Friday practices or stay for game day, boosting morale and school spirit.

In terms of gameplay, the coaches have noticed differences with this turf. "It's very durable, which is important, and also it's very fast," Coach Spinnato said. While the previous fields varied in quality and weather resilience, the new surface is consistently reliable and functional. Players have noted the difference in traction and bounce, which is incredibly important in football.

These improvements on the field have not only enhanced gameplay but also boosted the players' enthusiasm. Thus, players were quick to embrace the change. Choate Football Captain Will Tellers '26 said, "[I] liked the old fields a lot, but this one is much more even and the stands create a good crowd environment."

Juniors and seniors, who have now experienced both versions of Choate's fields, described the new setup as a game-changer. Luke Benanto '27 said, "I feel much faster on the new field, and I really like it." With Saturday's first home game on the new field drawing a large crowd, players felt the positive energy shift.

Students and faculty have taken notice, too. Varsity Boys' Football Team Manager Adrienne Prater '28 said, "Being on the new field was a really cool experience, and getting to see everyone hyped up was amazing."

While the full impact of the renovated field will unfold over the coming seasons, the early response has been positive. From enhanced team performance to rising school spirit, the new football field has already become more than just a place to play — it's a new home for Choate athletics.

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