The Choate News

The official student newspaper of Choate Rosemary Hall since 1907

Choate Rosemary Hall
333 Christian Street
Wallingford, CT

Vol. CXIX · No. 2 | Monday, October 13, 2025 | thechoatenews.choate.edu

CRASH COURSE AT CHOATE: JOHN GREEN VISITS

By **Drew Wolfson '27**
Staff Contributor

"Hello, learned and astonishingly attractive pupils. My name is John Green, and I want to welcome you to Crash Course." The legendary voice that marks the beginning of Crash Course videos just so happens to be the author of the 2025-2026 academic year summer reading, *Everything is Tuberculosis*. Known for transforming world history lectures into viral videos and authoring bestselling novels, Green works on a more personal project in the summer reading book, blending empathy, intellect, and passion.

Green was introduced to the student body by Victoria DeVito '27, who praised Green's work as a teacher to the youth. Following the introduction, Green read a personally significant excerpt from *Everything is Tuberculosis* about Henry Reider, a young man diagnosed with tuberculosis in a Sierra Leone hospital. Oscar Hyatt '26 enjoyed this moment from Green. "I appreciated it when he read the first page of his book, and I thought it was interesting hearing his voice connected to the book because it made the story so much more real," he said.

After the reading, Green sat down for a conversation with the School community. Moderated by Lucy Domingo '26 and Ebihomni Oshe '26, Green spent time reflecting on both his growth as a writer and personal struggles throughout his life, sharing that he, ironically, failed his 11th-grade English class — a moment that elicited relatable laughter from the audience. "It's a good reminder that failure doesn't mean the end," he said. "Sometimes it's just part of the process."

Green then went into more detail about how he wrote *Everything is Tuberculosis*. The book, which has topped *The New York Times* nonfiction bestseller list for months, explores how tuberculosis has affected our world in the past and how it continues to leave its mark in underprivileged communities today. A pivotal anecdote in the story is Green's recollection of meeting Henry, the passage Green had read earlier, and follows his story, highlighting the consequences of tuberculosis in regions where treatment is either too costly or scarce.

Towards the end of the discussion, Green pointed out how Choate itself actually physically resembles and relates to tuberculosis sanatoriums, due to the expansive campus, the number of buildings, and abundant outdoor spaces. Pointing to the Adirondack chairs, an invention intended to aid in the treatment of tuberculosis, scattered around campus, Green explained that their presence demonstrated how even Choate is influenced by tuberculosis.

Everything is Tuberculosis, along with every summer reading, was chosen by a committee. According to English Department Head Mr. Mark Gosztyla, the selection process involves reading numerous books and discussing which would be the best fit for the greater Choate community. The committee starts with a long list of potential titles and gradually narrows that list down through multiple rounds of reading and deliberation. Once only the best few books are left, the committee reaches out to the authors to determine who might be available to visit our campus and speak to our students. As Mr. Gosztyla points out, the biggest challenge is often narrowing it down to just one book: "Several factors go into it. The most challenging thing is finding a book that is going to appeal to somebody who just finished eighth grade, as well as somebody who is going to college next year," he said.

The committee liked "the ways that Green combined the story of Henry, a boy from Sierra Leone, with his own family's personal story," Gosztyla said. Green talked about his brother Hank's battle with cancer, relating the illness to the tuberculosis that Henry faced. He used Hank to highlight the often unseen emotional side of fighting illness, demonstrating how illness affects more than just the patient, it affects the family as well.

After the committee chooses a book and the school year rolls around, English classes across the School take different approaches to discussing the summer reading. Responses to the book ranged from essays to poetry and short personal responses. Mr. Gosztyla's Global Literature class used *Everything is Tuberculosis* as a way to explore the poetic genre of the Ode. When discussing the book with his students, Mr. Gosztyla noted, "If there is a lesson for students, it is to pay attention to what you are curious about." Green does this throughout his entire book. For example, the book discusses the development of Adirondack chairs, which were designed for tuberculosis patients' treatment through the exposure of Vitamin D from the sun, which was thought to cure the disease. These curiosities in the book, Mr. Gosztyla believes, should set an example for studnets. He believes that a lot of stories intersect with each other and people just have to take the time to find that connection.



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/*The Choate News*
Lucy Domingo '26 and Ebihomni Oshi '26 conversing with John Green at School Meeting.

Students' found the connections that Green made between social injustice and its impact onto the pharmaceutical aspect of illness treatment to be particularly interesting: "I thought the story of Henry Reider was very inspirational and serves as motivation for people interested in service and medicine and care, especially in foreign countries like Sierra Leone," Oscar Hyatt '26 said. For many, the intersection between scientific and historical background with that of the personal narrative of Henry was what made the story truly compelling to read. As Hyatt said, "I thought that the scientific research was made into something that was engaging to read."

Green's presentation inspired a call to action for some. When reflecting on Green's presentation, Hyatt also added, "My biggest takeaway from the presentation was an inspiration to do medical service abroad."

Green's visit served as an opportunity to not only further delve into the infectious disease laid out in the summer reading, but to understand the voice and reason behind the writing, led with a passion to end social injustice and lead the next generation of students towards equality. Green, for many, is more than a summer reading author; he serves as an inspiration to young change-makers.

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

From Across the Globe: Choate Welcomes New Faculty

By **Mirai Okushima '29**
Reporter

The start of the school year doesn't only bring a fresh start to new classes and dorms, it also brings new faces to the Choate community. This fall, 17 members joined the faculty across all departments. Whether they are leading classes, guiding students through their Choate journey, or coaching on the field, they all bring their own unique selves to campus.

Mr. Betancourt

After spending time teaching students in Mexico City, Mr. Betancourt has returned to Choate and has quickly immersed himself back into the community, from teaching in the classroom to mentoring students in extracurricular settings.

At Choate, he is also a house advisor in Memorial House. Outside of the classroom, Mr. Betancourt coaches both fall and spring crew, supporting athletes as they take on the challenges of rowing. Reflecting on his influence in the classroom, Isabelle Jiao '26 said, "I appreciate that he tries to create a community of collaboration in and out of the classroom, showing us that learning math is teamwork and an amalgamation of each other's ideas." Whether he's solving advanced math problems, coaching a boat, or mentoring students in the dorm, Mr. Betancourt is already leaving a positive mark on our Choate community.

Ms. DiAdamo

Before coming to Choate, Ms. DiAdamo taught English at Buckingham Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. For her first year at Choate, she will teach third- and fourth-form English and is most excited to be a part of residential life. She will be on duty in Library and has "found it to be a wonderful community." Along with teaching and advising, Ms. DiAdamo is assisting Varsity Field Hockey as an assistant coach this fall and is also excited to help with the Girls' JV Ice Hockey team this winter. In her free time, Ms. DiAdamo spends time outdoors and shared, "A fun fact about me is that I have hiked the 100 northernmost miles of the Appalachian Trail."

Ms. Moore

Ms. Katie Moore, originally from Long Island and previously teaching at North Haven High School, has joined Choate's Math Department, where she teaches Algebra 1 and 2. Particularly impressed by the welcoming spirit of the community, she values her role as an advisor while enjoying engaging with students both in and outside the classroom. With her energy and enthusiasm, Ms. Moore looks forward to making Choate her home and contributing to its supportive and vibrant culture. Ms. Moore said, "This year, I'm really looking forward to making Choate a home and being a part of a really great community where we value great things." If you don't see her coaching on the mats this winter, you are sure to see her interacting with her students, assembling mug nights in Library, or at the whiteboards in Lanphier Center.

Ms. Milazzo

Ms. Zoe Milazzo '16 has returned to Choate to teach chemistry and physics after previously teaching chemistry, biology, and neuroscience at a day school in Newton, Massachusetts. She attended Choate for three years as a day student from Rockfall, Connecticut and was a dedicated soccer player. Living in the third-form dorm Nichols and coaching the Girls' Varsity Soccer team has allowed her to reacclimate to life at Choate. "I work so much better with the kids when I know them as people, so living with them is really helpful," Ms. Milazzo said. "But things have changed a lot since I was a student here, and I still have a lot to learn." Recognizing the challenges that comes with being a new member of the Choate community, Ms. Milazzo is excited for all the new experiences and connections to come on the field and in the lab.

Ms. Gao

Ms. Gao has also become part of the Choate community this term. Before coming to Choate, she worked part-time in the East Asian Languages and Literatures Department at Yale University, teaching Chinese. She also taught Chinese at a Sunday school in Southern Connecticut. Since it is her first time teaching at a boarding school, Ms. Gao said, "It's exciting to see firsthand how a boarding school operates and how close the community is." During her free time, she enjoys listening to music, playing badminton, table tennis, and pickleball.

Ms. Gritzer

Filling in as an adjunct Biology teacher, Dr. Rachel Gritzer is returning to her role here at Choate after leaving in 2015. Ms. Gritzer initially came to work at Choate for the diverse community it offered. "The diverse community, 100%, was a big draw for me. Everyone was really nice and wanted to learn," she said. Coming back as a biology teacher again, she appreciates her old friends and how kind the community is: "I still know a ton of people, so that's been great. But everyone is just really, really nice. It's such a great community to be a part of," she said. Students love her patience and teaching. "She is very warm and energetic. She is patient with students and makes me feel comfortable making mistakes and asking questions," Jamie Lee '27 said.

Ms. Russell

Coming all the way from Ireland, new Admissions faculty member Ms. Russell is "excited to work with a close community where colleagues and students work together in different environments." Previously an assistant field hockey coach at Syracuse University, she is now also the Varsity Field Hockey Head Coach at Choate and is excited to spend time with her team this season. In the midst of the field hockey season, she spends most of her time with her team: "I am the Head Coach for Varsity Field Hockey, so I spend a lot of my time with the team as we are in the thick of season," she said.

From Ireland to Mexico City, Choate has welcomed many new teachers who are excited to share their passions with students. Stay tuned for the next issue to meet the rest of the School's new faculty!

Mirai Okushima *may be reached at mokushima29@choate.edu.*



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram
New faculty having their picture taken on Hill House arch.

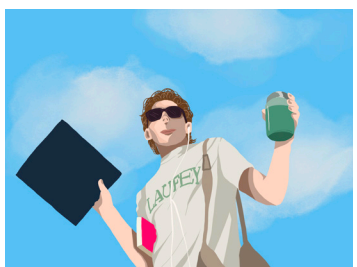
Green
Twenty-three new faculty join community
School News • P2





Durham
Explore town like a townie
Local News • P3

Matcha-Male Scares
Stan '24 challenges stereotypes about the freshmen dorm
Opinions Campus• P4





Soccer
Student explores the biodiversity on campus
Features • P6

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 Finn Wikstrom, Ann Ma, Leah Han, and Sophie Lii

Sunday, October 19
2:00pm in Colony Hall
WSO

SCHOOL NEWS

HOMECOMING? NO, BOAR BASH

By **Saige Patel '29**
Reporter

If Choate's dances were losing their spark, Boar Bash just flipped the switch back on. From freshmen to seniors, Boar Bash gave students a reason to show up and dress up. Held on September 27 from 9 to 10:45 p.m., the dance marked a refreshing addition to traditional Student Activities Center (SAC) events. As the first SAC dance of the year, Boar Bash faced high expectations, but with a larger dance floor, a new photo booth, and a formal dress code, it delivered a festive night that students hope will become a tradition.

The idea for Boar Bash began taking shape last year, when the Student Council proposed a formal fall dance in the SAC. From there, the Student Council worked with faculty members, including Student Activities Director Ms. Alex Long and Assistant Student Activities Director Ms. Colleen Kazar, to plan decorations, food options, and bring their ideas to life. Fourth-form President Bruce van Wingerden '28 shared that they were "inspired by a typical homecoming dance." The Student Council focused on revamping the decorations, catering, and overall ambiance of the SAC for Boar Bash compared to a typical dance.

Ms. Long also noted, "We had a really good group of students helping us ... It was really fun working with them and just helping them bring their vision to life." The faculty and Student Council collaboration laid the groundwork for Boar Bash and helped set a new standard for SAC dances. Ms. Long referenced the origin of the name: "Originally, I had it slated as the Blue and Gold Dance, just for our colors, but then working together, I'll give out a shout-out to [Fifth-form President] Jason Schmidt '27 for really coming up with the name Boar Bash," she said.



Photo courtesy of Marin Wang '27
Students posing for a picture in the Student Activites Center during Boar Bash.

Boar Bash differed from previous SAC dances in several key ways. The biggest change was the formality of the event. Ms. Long said, "It was really fun to see people show up in a dress or a special tie." The SAC was a sea of blue and yellow, and while people were hesitant about what to expect, students left feeling pleasantly surprised. Jake Reed '29 said, "I think hyping up the crowd a little bit was pretty nice ... My first Choate Boar Bash was pretty awesome."

Another change was the location of the DJ booth and the dance floor. For Boar Bash, the DJ was set up in front of the Tuck Shop rather than by the fireplace, allowing students more space to dance and socialize. The Student Council decided to offer hot food, remove the ping pong tables, and create a "lounge area" around the fireplace seating. A unique offering of Boar Bash was the photobooth in the Bay Room, which also turned out to be a fan favorite. "I liked the photo booth because it allowed for many people to fit into a singular frame and allowed a variety of shots and poses, as well as immediate return of a print and digital version of the photos," Liana Alkhayer '28 said.

The Student Council's extra effort in adding decorative signs, lanterns, and candles clearly enhanced the student experience. As Annie Cady '26 mentioned, "There was more energy and we had a specific theme of Choate-inspired colors," which added to the atmosphere on the dance floor, lounge area, and photo booth. Boar Bash also brought school spirit and offered students the chance to build "better relationships with some of my friends," according to Sam Baldwin '29. Van Wingerden added that after the first Boar Bash, "Student Council has a better understanding of what the students want, and I think next year will be even better than it was this year." These ideas align with attendees' hopes, and students are excited to see how the dance develops in the coming years.

Across the board, Boar Bash received positive reviews for its energy, school spirit, and connections it fostered on campus. It brought a refreshing shift from past SAC dances, with a blend of formality and fun that still maintained a welcoming atmosphere. With thoughtful planning, positive student reviews, and a clear vision for future improvements, Boar Bash is already off to a great start. As Reed put it, "pretty awesome" may be the best way to sum it up.

Saige Patel *may be reached at spatel29@choate.edu.*

Grill, Chill, and Connect: SoC BBQ

By **Eason Ni '27**
Reporter

Music, conversation, and a smoky aroma filled the Sally Hart Lodge Lawn on September 28, as students, faculty, and staff gathered for the annual Students of Color BBQ (SoC BBQ). Held near the beginning of the school year, the SoC BBQ offers everyone a chance to unwind from classes, share a meal, and celebrate the diversity of the School's community.

Long before students gather for food and laughter, weeks of planning go into making the SoC BBQ a success. "Planning for the SoC BBQ in the fall means coordinating with our facilities team and SAGE [Dining Services] catering to ensure we have food and setup for the event," Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers said. "We pray and try to manifest good weather, but that doesn't always go in our favor. It did this year, though."

The SoC BBQ has become a cherished tradition on campus that students eagerly anticipate every year. "There's always such a good turnout, but there's also always a lot of new faces. And the food is always good, which always adds to how happy people are," Liana Alkhayer '28 said.

Dr. Myers also emphasized the importance of having the event every year: "It's simply an intentionally carved out space and time to strengthen connections you already have with friends and adults on campus and an opportunity to meet new people that may become forever friends or trusted adults in the Choate experience," she said. Many students voiced the same idea. Alkhayer described the atmosphere as lighthearted and highlighted the sense of unity that the SoC BBQ fostered. "I feel like everyone there was super welcoming, whether you were in the line to get food or you were sitting at a table that was adjacent to another person ... Everyone was trying to connect with each other and be a part of the same conversations," she said.

For Benjamin Cha '27, the event helped him engage with others and establish new connections. "A lot of times, people don't try too hard to expand their connections or relationships with many other diverse groups," he said.

Faculty also got to make new connections, as Dr. Myers said, "It's also a great way for new faculty and staff members to get to connect with one another when their departments may not interact with one another as often as we'd like." Spanish teacher Ms. Azucena Alvarez Alonso attended the event with her family. "The food was very good. The music was very upbeat, and the company was very nice," she said. She also pointed out the cultural significance of this event. "It's important to also enjoy the company of people that you might have a common background with, because you sometimes come from the same country, you speak the same language, and have a common culture that is not the mainstream culture," she said.

For many students, this event was a celebration of identity and community. Hridaan Mehta '27, who stopped by the SoC BBQ briefly, reflected on why gatherings like these matter. "We have to celebrate our differences, our uniqueness as students of color," he said. "This is a great event to do that, and I hope to attend more events like this."

There is no doubt that the SoC BBQ will carry on next year — bringing together people from all corners of the world, strengthening connections old and new.

Eason Ni *may be reached at eni27@choate.edu.*

Inside the Gold Dome: Gov I Explores State Politics

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

Each fall, students of Government and Politics I (PS550HO) travel to Hartford to visit the Connecticut State Capitol. Students have the opportunity to tour the Capitol, converse with state lawmakers, and hear from state representatives. Such experiences allow students to better understand and foster an appreciation for the state government's inner workings.

In its 10th year, the trip has become a tradition for PS550HO students. HPRSS teacher Mr. Ned Gallagher, who helps to coordinate the annual pilgrimage to Connecticut's capital, shared the vision behind the trip. He pointed out the importance of "having our kids talk with people who are doing this for a living." He further stated that as the class curriculum focuses on the Constitution and federalism during the fall term, the trip serves as an "introduction to state government, which is an important part of our system ... because it is a nod to the fact that a lot of stuff actually happens here in Connecticut." HPRSS teacher Mr. Jonas Akins seconded Mr. Gallagher's viewpoint on how the trip reinforces classroom principles. "It's relatively easy to talk about government in the abstract of the Humanities building, ... but the trip's goal is to see the spaces and meet the people actually doing the work of government. Government is run by people in places, not just on parchment documents or in textbooks," Mr. Akins said.

This year, students enjoyed meeting Senior Caucus Counsel of the House David Desjardins and hearing about his path and career in politics. Mr. Desjardins's perspective is a source of inspiration for students who have had lifelong dreams to pursue a career in politics but also for those who simply enrolled in Government and Politics I out of curiosity.



Photo courtesy of Alex Renaud '26
Gov I students listening to Representative Craig Fishbein.

Trip chaperone and HPRSS teacher Ms. Beatrice Voorhees emphasized her appreciation for the visit to Hartford. She said that "it allows students to see politics at the state level in action, and to make what they learn about in the classroom somewhat real." To both Ms. Voorhees, Mr. Akins, and Mr. Gallagher, the trip is more than just a trip around the capital — it is about meeting officials and engaging with legislators who represent the communities that we all are a part of.

Mr. Akins's A block students especially enjoyed the knowledge and insight that the trip provided. Sarah Coyne '27 said, "I learned that the minority party in the House uses time as a tool to make their voices heard – like speaking for hours during debates." Further, Josh Pan '27 reflected on these takeaways from the trip, and shared his newfound admiration for the "nonpartisan office that provides unbiased information to both sides ... It's like a truth-checker, and it's essential."

Harry Holmes '27 shared his gratitude for having the opportunity to hear from Representative Craig Fishbein, who represents Connecticut's 90th state district. "He gave us a different perspective on what it's like being in the minority party, and that was interesting," Holmes said. Representative Fishbein's district encompasses Wallingford, and he traveled to Hartford specifically to speak to Choate students.

The trip to Hartford offers a unique chance to engage in person with the processes that students read about in class just weeks before. An often overlooked aspect of the government, the State Capitol plays a crucial role in shaping the policies and decisions that affect us all at the local and state levels.

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

Carr Cookies: A Bite-Sized Welcome



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

By **Nick Aston '28**
Reporter

What makes a place feel like home? For the Choate Admissions team, it might just be a cookie. For prospective families visiting Choate, the Admissions team has started giving them Boar Bites, cookies inspired by the Dusty Miller ice cream sundae. The flavors are a nostalgic favorite among alumni as it was a go-to treat at the Tuck Shop for years. Typically made with vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce, and a generous dusting of malt powder, each prospective family can get a bite of the Choate experience after their tour.

Chief Communications Officer Ms. Alison Cady said the construction of Carr Hall prompted the team to "find ways to make the place and the experience feel really warm and welcoming and reflective of the Choate experience," and nothing is more warm and welcoming than cookies.

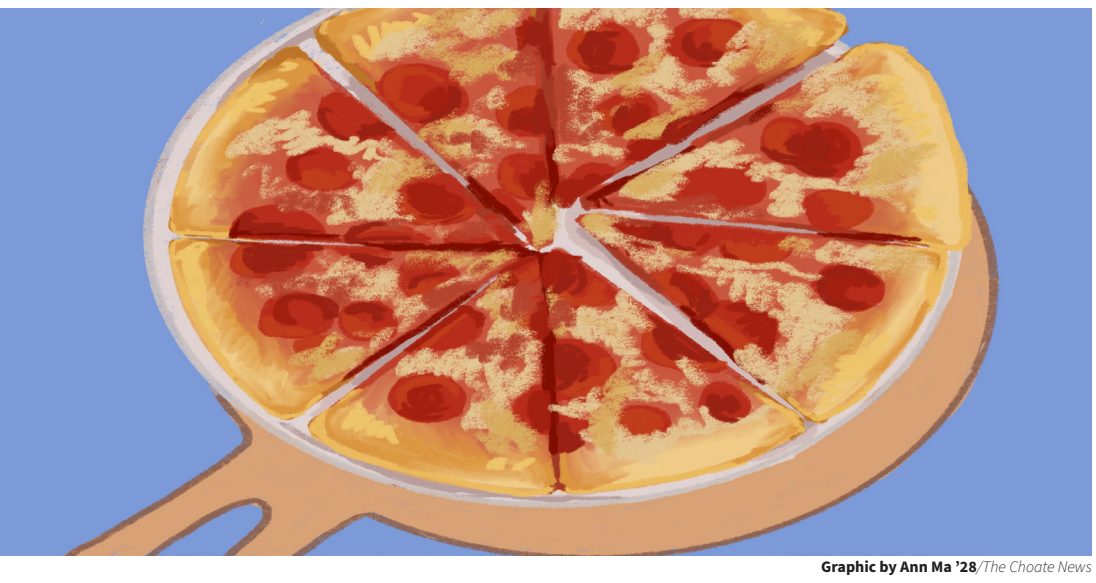
According to Ms. Cady, the Communications team collaborated with SAGE Dining Services to develop an original and special cookie recipe — refined and baked to perfection. The cookies are distributed weekly to prospective families, accompanied by a handout from their tour guide and regional representative information. Fourth-form Gold Key Ambassador Maddie Bloom '28 described Boar Bites as the perfect way to end her tour. "I think that's something that I would have liked when I was touring, especially with applying to boarding schools, which is a stressful experience," Bloom said. Bloom also reflected on the families' reactions when receiving cookies, which she said have been full of gratitude and excitement.

Although most view Boar Bites as a warm gesture, Jennah Idrees '27 raised the potential redundancy of the new addition to our tours, raising questions about efficacy and food waste. "They're coming to visit the School because they already have an idea that they want to go here. I don't think a cookie is going to change their opinion, and I feel like it could be a waste of food," Idrees said. She suggested other ways Choate could show gratitude and leave a lasting impression on families, such as buttons or pins that families can keep forever, as a memento of their tour.

The introduction of Boar Bites has had a positive impact on the admission process for prospective families, and, regardless of differing student opinions, there is no doubt that they have become part of Choate's touring experience — another detail that helps families see our School for what it is: sweet and welcoming.

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

Apizza Feast Sets Staggering World Record



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

By **Malaika Fonkem '29**
Reporter

In the span of three hours and with over 9,000 slices of pizza, New Haven made history during its most recent annual Cycling Grand Prix and A-1 Toyota Apizza Feast. On September 12, 2025, the self-proclaimed "Pizza Capital of the U.S." broke the Guinness World Record for the largest pizza party by a substantial margin.

New Haven held its first annual Apizza Feast in 2015, after residents requested a citywide pizza festival. To begin planning, the city contacted Mr. Colin Kaplan — founder of "A Taste of New Haven," a touring service to show off New Haven's unique food and culture — to create a citywide pizza festival capable of garnering state-wide recognition. Although Mr. Kaplan started planning in 2014, the first Apizza Feast didn't occur until late 2015. The feast started off small with a modest showing of pizza and drink vendors. However, the festival's presence quickly gained popularity and turnout, now boasting an abundance of different food and drink vendors throughout the park and drawing thousands of attendees each year. This year, Mr. Kaplan hoped to showcase the success and spirit of New Haven's annual Apizza Feast through a larger turnout and increased sales.

Mr. Kaplan dedicated his heart to breaking a Guinness World Record previously before last year's Apizza Feast. But, after reaching out, Guinness informed him that the planning process usually takes at least a couple of months due to the meticulous rules and regulations. As a result, he decided to postpone his goal for one more year.

There were many challenges surrounding the planning of this event, stemming from the strict requirements imposed by Guinness' criteria. Mr. Kaplan explained that when deciding who should be the main vendor for over 700 pounds of dough, he knew he needed a large enough vendor to handle the volume. He ultimately decided on Big Green Truck, the first-ever pizza truck in the nation. So, he contacted the current owner of the family business, Ms. Liane Page, hopeful that her company and its 12 pizza trucks could provide a sizable amount of pizza.

The world record, serving more than 4,525 people, placed New Haven in an even brighter spotlight on the global pizza stage. The event captured New Haven's unique style of pizza and culture. However, to Mr. Kaplan, Ms. Page, and many more, the event meant more than a title or a record: "It was crazy. I could have cried from excitement when we did eventually break the record," Ms. Page said. The team valued the collective spirit of the community that came together to successfully end the event. Without the vendors and hundreds of people rallying, the event wouldn't have been as exciting as it was. People enjoyed and cherished the pizza, the vibrant atmosphere, and each other's company, all while witnessing New Haven set its name in the record books.

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

Glazed and Praised: Neil's Donuts Goes National

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

Neil's Donuts, a longtime favorite in Wallingford for its donuts, pastries, and sandwiches, recently received national recognition when Yelp named it one of the "Best Coffee Shops in America."

Yelp's list was compiled using factors such as the number of reviews and overall ratings for coffee and tea businesses across the country. Neil's ranked 75th nationwide and was the only Connecticut establishment to make the list. The shop currently holds approximately 650 five-star reviews on Yelp.

Mr. Neil Bukowski founded Neil's Donuts nearly 25 years ago after eating what he described as a "mediocre" donut during a sales meeting. He was frustrated with the corporate approach of cutting ingredient quality to maximize profit, and was motivated to create better quality donuts that didn't sacrifice ingredients and cut corners. "I'm trying to be the opposite of corporations, and I try not to cut back on [ingredients]," Mr. Bukowski said. "If I have to charge more, I'll charge more." To bring this idea to fruition, he began working early mornings at a Milford bakery before his sales job while researching the bakery business, eventually saving up enough to open his own shop in Wallingford in 2001.

Now, Neil's Donuts offers over 40 variations of donuts. Mr. Bukowski himself is partial to the classics — "glazed, sugar, cinnamon, ... Boston cream, [and] jellies" among his favorites. The store's layout is built for efficiency: a line often stretches across the room, while five to ten employees work behind the counter to keep customers moving. "I want to make it so that everybody knows if you got a line, you don't have to wait," Mr. Bukowski said. Behind the counter, rows of dozens of colorful donuts line the back wall, and the scent of fresh-baked donuts fills the air.

Beyond providing delicious donuts to the public, Neil's Donuts has also made a considerable impact on the Choate community. Boar Bites, a Student Council initiative, sells Neil's donuts every Tuesday outside of Colony Hall, with all proceeds going to a student-selected charity. "We sell 60 donuts every week," Fifth-form Student Council Representative Ethan Sun '27 said. "We've made close to $500 so far this year," Fifth-form President Jason Schmidt '27 added.



Photo by Sabrina Liu '28/*The Choate News*
The iconic Neil's Donut storefront in Wallingford.

This year's proceeds benefit The Sisters Project, a Wallingford-based nonprofit that supports and fundraises for cancer patients and their families. It is "another way we're giving back to the community of Wallingford," Schmidt said. Both students emphasized the decision to purchase from Neil's Donuts rather than a chain store. "It would have been easy to choose Dunkin' Donuts," Schmidt said. However, Neil's Donuts "adds a little bit of personal aspect."

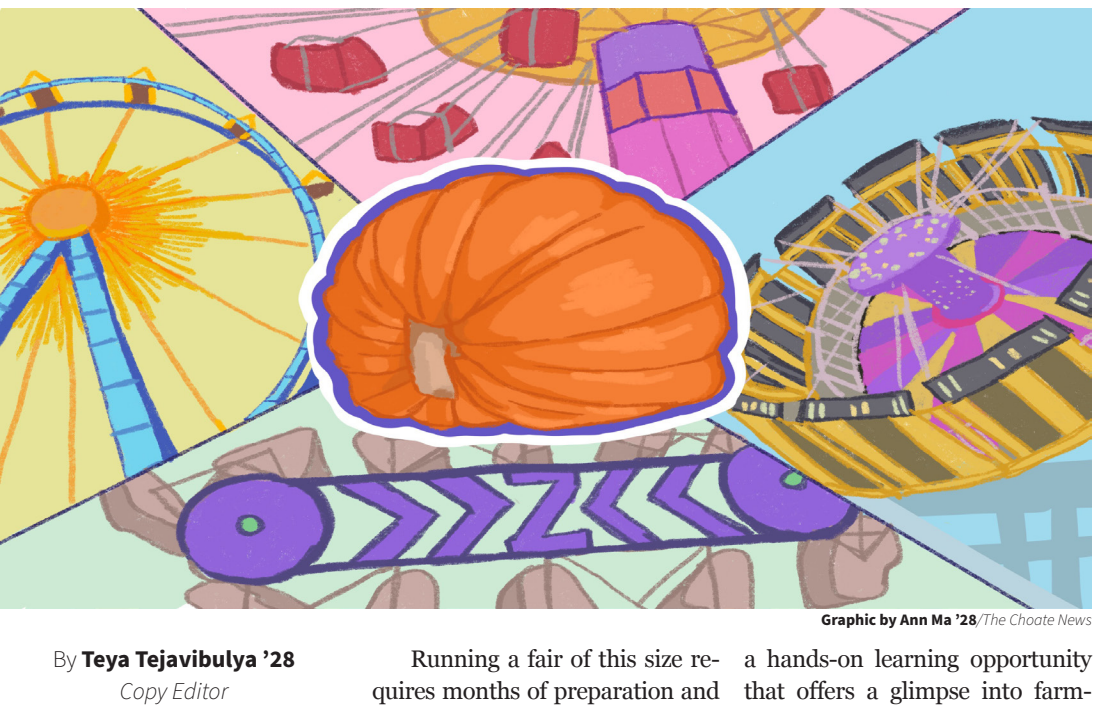
Holiday enthusiasts may have noticed that the donuts offered at Tiz the Season last December seemed strikingly familiar. If so, they've hit the nail on the head: due to SAGE Dining Services not being able to provide donuts for the event, Mr. Marquis "Tiz" Tisdale had to fill the void in with a special "gift:" a fresh batch of Neil's Donuts. "People loved the varieties and delicious works of art on display ... They were indeed a fan favorite," Mr. Tisdale said.

Even though Neil's was only offered for one year, Mr. Tisdale's experience with the shop was outstanding. "The people at Neil's were [also] incredibly gracious with their understanding that this event was funded by myself, and [Mr. Bukowski] made sure I was completely taken care of," he said.

Neil's latest recognition from Yelp adds to a series of local and national accolades the bakery has received over the years. For many Choate students and Wallingford residents, the shop remains a well-known and frequently visited part of the community.

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

Durham Fair Draws Crowds for 105th Year



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

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Copy Editor

From giant pumpkin records of more than 2,000 pounds to classic rock music, the annual Durham Fair offered something for many crowds. For four days, from September 25–28, the quiet town of Durham transformed into a lively carnival filled with the aroma of fresh fried dough, colorful rides, and a variety of livestock barns. Now celebrating its 105th year, Connecticut's largest agricultural fair welcomed families, students, and visitors from across the state.

Founded in 1916, the Durham Fair started as a small agricultural gathering where local farmers showcased their livestock and crops. Over the years, it has evolved into a festival featuring three livestock barns, six exhibit halls, a farm museum, and five stages of live entertainment spanning over 50 acres of land. This year's main attraction was the Garden of Giants, where a 2,181-pound pumpkin set a new fair record. In addition to the agricultural exhibits, there were food trucks, handcrafted stalls, and quirky events like dropping a pumpkin onto a minivan. Headlining the weekend's entertainment was the rock band Styx, whose performance drew fans from all over the country.

Running a fair of this size requires months of preparation and coordination. Durham Fair Marketing Coordinator Ms. Debbie Husher explained that more than 1,800 volunteers worked during the fair weekend, with another 300 contributing year-round. "When I got involved, I was really kind of blown away that ... if we actually looked at every volunteer and how many hours they put in, and you just do that by minimum wage, it's incredible," she said. As a nonprofit organization, the fair relies entirely on volunteers who build it from the ground up: setting up stages, managing gates, and dedicating their weekends, evenings, and vacation days to make it happen. This year, the fair's operating costs exceeded $635,000, covering expenses such as police patrol, infrastructure set-up, and crowd management.

Despite the growth, organizers emphasized that agriculture remains at the fair's core. Durham Fair President Ms. Kim Terrill described the fair's mission as both educational and memorable. "We're always making sure that we're reminding people that their milk doesn't just come from the grocery store, that it actually does come from a cow, and your egg comes from a chicken," she said. Ms. Terrill views the fair as a hands-on learning opportunity that offers a glimpse into farming traditions and the work that sustains daily life. She also noted that the fair awarded $25,000 in scholarships to local students and offered discounted vendor space to 26 nonprofits. To her, the fair's success lies not in record-breaking pumpkins or headline musical acts, but in the way it continues to bring communities together. "What touches me every year is that there's just more and more generations of people who really love the fair," she said.

For Choate students, the Durham Fair offered more than just rides and food — it was also a chance to reconnect with friends. "It's just such a good place to be with your friends, since you get to share this experience for four years of your life. I always look forward to it," Leilani Gao '26 said, who especially enjoyed the apple crisps but hopes to see "more scary rides" in the future. Stephanie Nguyen '26 shared a similar sentiment, describing the fair as refreshing. "Being outside, meeting new people from other high schools, and just experiencing something different was really fun. I'd totally recommend it," she said.

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

Fried Dough and Friendship at Annual Celebrate Wallingford

By **Mia Lo '29**
Reporter

The familiar ambiance of blasting music, gathered crowds cheering on the 5K race, children marveling at the magic show, and locals enjoying the sights and smells of downtown encapsulate Celebrate Wallingford — one of the most anticipated community events. For new Wallingford residents and Choate students alike, the festival offers a perfect introduction to the town's spirit and culture.

Held annually in early October, Celebrate Wallingford runs over an entire weekend — this year on October 4 and 5. First organized in 1986 to celebrate the completion of public projects, including the town gazebo and a freshly painted train station, the celebration has become a cornerstone of local tradition. Although admission was free, attendees were encouraged to support small businesses and local restaurants that lined the downtown streets.

The festival's schedule was packed with entertainment, featuring live performances, family activities, and tents showcasing local organizations, institutions, and nonprofits — including Choate. The event provided a unique opportunity for Choate community members to connect with many Wallingford residents. For Maphis Huang '29, attending Celebrate Wallingford as a first-year international student was both energizing and eye-opening. "There's a lot of good energy ... It's really diverse. There are bakeries, face paint, and people promoting different things," Huang said. "Since we'll be living here for the next four years, it's important to get a sense of the culture in town."

"It's a perfect way to highlight the students and the passion that they have ... and that's where our neighbors really get to engage with Choate students and see beyond just kids crossing the street," Ms. Cheryl Madden, Choate's Parent and Community Relations Manager, said. The Choate tent promoted various initiatives, including day-student admission events, summer programs, community service projects, and Paul Mellon Arts Center performances. Ms. Madden also encouraged more student participation: "If it's in line with what we're doing, then it would be fabulous to have some student support!"



Photo by Lauren Kim '29/*The Choate News*
Vendors line the streets in anticipation of the festival.

Last year, for example, the Robotics Club presented their projects and upcoming outreach events at the Choate tent: "It was an exciting experience to share the great engineering we've done as a team with the Wallingford community and promote our upcoming community teaching events," Max Lo '25 said.

Other Choate students also had the chance to volunteer and represent the School. "I think it's important because we're a part of the town, and it's necessary for the community to know what we do, to get aware of who they're sharing this town with," Jennifer Obijuru '27, who volunteered at the tent, said. "All the food vendors [are] really good, and just seeing a bunch of little kids having fun," she added, noting how the festival captures Wallingford's sense of warmth and togetherness. Likewise, Majo Soria '26 highlighted the importance of Choate's participation: "There are so many small businesses that I think it's important to support. It's great to help the community, the food, the police department, all these people that come together to support Wallingford."

Other students shared how the event helped them feel more connected to town life. "It was really fun to walk around and see everybody, and it's important that Choate integrates itself into the Wallingford community," Tessa Wilhelm '27, a day student from Wallingford, said.

But whether you are a new student or a returner to Choate, Celebrate Wallingford is a great way to learn about and explore town, and to get to know the wider community Choate is a part of.

Whether it's tasting fried dough, learning about local nonprofits, or helping a child win a prize at one of the booths, Celebrate Wallingford bridges the gap between Choate and its surrounding community. For students, it serves as a reminder that being part of the Choate community provides an opportunity to engage in and celebrate the thriving local community.

Mia Lo *may be reached at mlo29@choate.edu.*

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

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

*Head of Team

Advisers
Ms. Cahaley Markman
Ms. Courtney DeStefano

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

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

Staff Contributors

Josh Pan '27
Ayaz Zuberi '27
Callie Crowell '28
Eliza O'Neill '27
Hiyab Mebrahtu '27
Kaylin Lam '27
Rielle Reyes '27
Norah Wang '27
Drew Wolfson '27
Shaleen Sheth '27

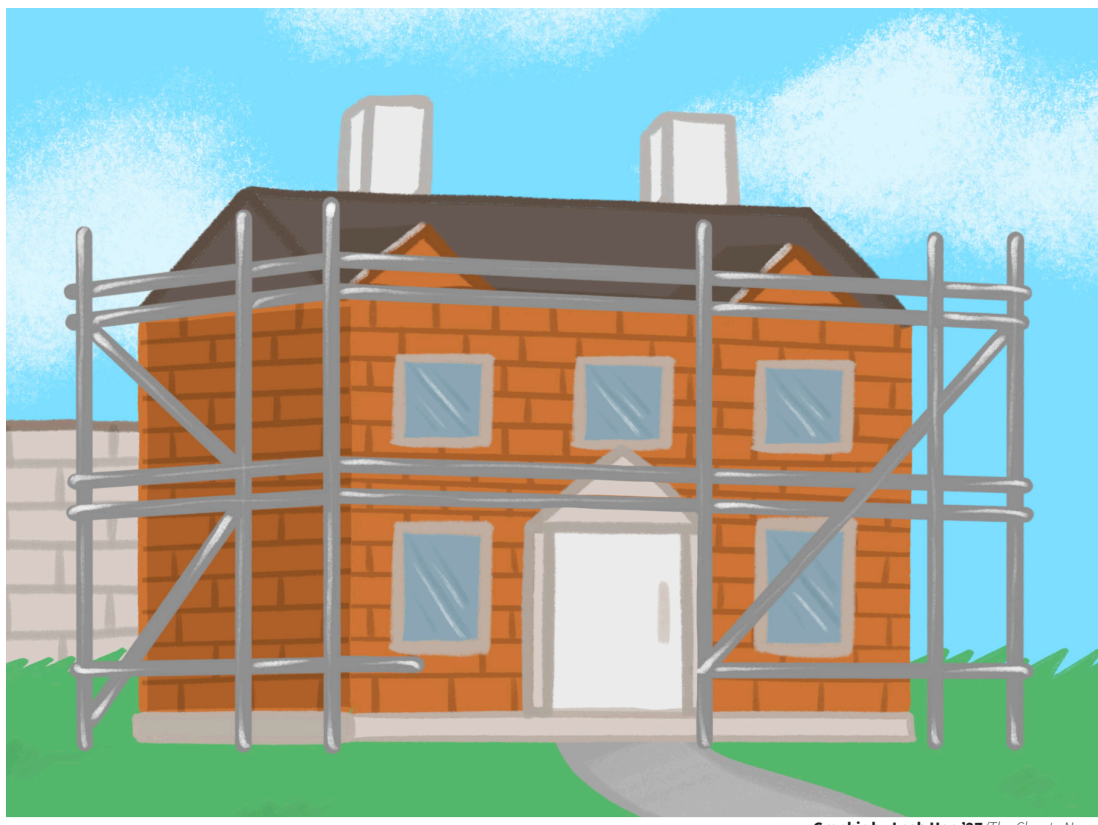
@choatenews @choatenews @choatenews

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

Print by Valley Publishing, Derby CT

Steele: A Renovation Long Overdue

By **Angel Soto '29**
Opinions Writer



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

Over the past few years, the School has made significant strides in upgrading facilities, including the dining hall, Admissions Office, and, most recently, the ongoing renovation of the Paul Mellon Arts Center's Little Theater. Steele Hall, home to Choate's world languages department, was built in 1967 and should be the focus of Choate's next renovation project.

In the classrooms of Steele Hall, students aren't just learning languages — they are discovering the cultures, histories, and traditions that underlie them. Despite its significance, Steele Hall itself is not particularly notable, and the building isn't even included in Gold Key tours. Renovating the building will help enhance student experiences learning inside the building and further promote inclusivity across cultures.

While other buildings have undergone updates over the years, such as the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC), which was renovated in 2002, Steele Hall has remained untouched for 35 years. It's clear that Steele deserves attention and care equal to the importance of the various programs it houses.

Renovations to Steele Hall could play a significant role in increasing its accessibility. Currently, Steele Hall is not very accessible to people with mobility challenegs. My friend, who recently injured her leg and now uses crutches, finds it extremely difficult to walk up the stairs at the front entrance. While the narrow steps add charm to the building's architecture, they create barriers for students with mobility challenges. Although there is an alternative ramp for the entrance on the side, it is a considerable distance away and impractical for those with mobility issues. Adding a wheelchair ramp at the front of the building would make the space more inclusive and accessible for all.

Renovation could also revitalize language classes in new ways. According to Spanish teacher Mrs. Patricia Antunez, updating the furniture would make classrooms more comfortable and welcoming, as much of the current furniture has been in place for decades and has worn out. Other faculty have also proposed installing a small kitchen in the building, allowing classes to cook dishes from different countries and experience culture from a culinary perspective. Imagine rolling crêpes in French class or making dumplings in Chinese class — all while practicing the language in practical application scenarios. Revamping the interior of Steele Hall will undoubtedly enhance the learning experience.

Finally, renovating Steele Hall demonstrates Choate's commitment to cultural appreciation and preparing students for engagement in the global community, as stated in the School's statement on the central qualities of a Choate education. Language and culture are a core part of a person's identity, and as the languages taught in the building are the native language of some Choate students, it is important that the building's condition reflects that cultural appreciation. Moreover, upgrading the building's facilities will reinforce the dedication to language learning. Renovating Steele Hall would show Choate's commitment to allowing every student to experience culture in meaningful ways.

Renovating Steele Hall would make the building more accessible, revitalize the language learning experience, and embody Choate's commitment to diversity and global engagement. A renovation is long overdue, and the School should work to create a language building that will become a landmark of culture and inclusivity on campus — one that future Gold Key tours will not merely walk past.

Angel Soto *is a third-former from Houston, TX. She may be reached at asoto29@choate.edu.*

CAKE CONES TAKE THE CAKE



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

By **Zack Cao '26**
Opinions Writer

After lunch, if a student is looking for something sweet to top off their meal, the obvious first stop is the ice cream machine. Soft serve ice cream has been a staple dessert in American cafeterias for years, and for Choate students, it's a small, sweet reward to brighten the rest of the day. Long lines in the Hill House dining hall servery often form as students wait for their swirl of vanilla, chocolate, or both. But before you even pull the ice cream machine lever, you are faced with a dilemma: the flat-bottom cake cone or the pointed sugar cone? The cake cone is the clear winner — it's more practical, holds more ice cream, and is easier to eat.

The first advantage of the cake cone is its structural stability. It can sit steadily on a plate or a flat surface without falling over. I remember one lunch, I had a plate of food in one hand and ice cream on a sugar cone in the other, and I wanted to get a second plate of food. Both of my hands were full, with a single sugar cone taking up an entire hand. The cone's pointy bottom prevented it from standing on its own, so I was forced to awkwardly juggle all three items at once. That's never a problem with the flat-bottom cake cone — you can simply set it down on your plate and free a hand whenever you need. The flat-bottom cones ensure that your sweet cravings will never get in the way of your practical needs.

Another strength of the cake cone is its capacity. The sugar cone is tall and narrow, so the ice cream sits tightly inside, making it prone to spillage if you add too many swirls of soft serve. Why wait in a long line for ice cream only to limit yourself to getting less than what you want due to a fear of making a mess? With the cake cone, you never have to play it safe. Its wide top and round base provide more room for ice cream, allowing you to stack a higher swirl without worrying that it will spill over. The cake cone lets you maximize the amount of ice cream you get, making the wait for it genuinely worthwhile.

The final advantage of the cake cones is how simple they make the ice cream eating experience. With an open, straight base, every bite is accessible and neat. You can enjoy the ice cream evenly without having to work around cracks or sharp edges, and without having to eat dry bits of cone. Pointy sugar cones, by contrast, can be awkward, with you often needing to place your head at awkward angles to work around the odd shape of the cone. Moreover, at the end, you are forced to chew through extra bites of the cone just to reach the last bit of ice cream. The cake cone keeps things simple and straightforward, complimenting the ice cream eating experience.

The cake cone may not look as fancy as the sugar cone, but it proves itself where it matters. It remains steady on a surface when you need to free your hands, offers more room to enjoy a bigger swirl of soft serve, and makes finishing your ice cream satisfying and effortless. The advantages that the flat-bottom cake cones hold over the pointed sugar cones are apparent, and it clearly comes out on top. At the end of the day, ice cream should be easy and enjoyable. Next time you are in line at lunch, you know which cone makes the most sense — pick the flat-bottom cake cone.

Zack Cao *is a sixth-former from New York, NY. He may be reached at zcao26@choate.edu.*

Looking Sharp, Thinking Deep



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

By **Josie Kimball '29**
Opinions Writer

While most students would be deterred from taking their F block tests in uncomfortable formal wear before School Meeting, upholding the Choate tradition of special academic dress is worth the extra coat and tie. Special academic dress (SAD) refers to the formal attire worn for significant school events. Choate has upheld its custom of special academic dress for decades, and while some students question its relevance and convenience, it is a core part of Choate's culture that emphasizes respect, promotes unity, and builds life skills.

According to Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98, special academic dress has been around "forever," and has changed very little over the years. Associate Dean of Students Mr. Pat Dennehy noted that much like today, "everything had to be a collared shirt with a tie and khaki pants." Mr. Gilyard added on to this, mentioning that students had to remain in SAD even after school, which is no longer the case today. While the SAD policy has become more relaxed, the meaning behind SAD still remains.

So, what is that meaning? Mr. Gilyard explained, "There are speakers that are for certain departments we typically dress up for, and it's really the ones that are in my purview are the ones that I call the special dress for." Eileen Piao '29 shared a similar view. "[Special academic dress] is a tradition that ... makes special occasions more formal and make them stand out," she said. Dressing up for special events helps highlight the value that they hold and the respect we have for those involved, which contributes to making them "special."

Special speakers themselves have appreciated the gesture. When the *New York Times* best-selling author Mr. John Green visited campus to speak to Choate about his book, *Everything is Tuberculosis*, he complimented the community for their attire, and said, "You all look great, thank you for dressing up."

Beyond showing respect, SAD also strengthens Choate's sense of unity. "[Special academic dress days] really just bring the larger community together when we all have this sense of unity, everyone's dressed in a similar way for a similar event," Piao added. By enforcing SAD during special events, the School promotes a shared, unified identity among students — one of shared tradition. SAD reminds students of the broader community they belong to.

Furthermore, SAD prepares students for life beyond Choate. Mr. Dennehy attended a boarding school where special dress was required every day, yet when he first enrolled, he didn't know how to tie a tie. "By the time I got to the School," he recalled, "I was like, I can do this three different ways." That experience of learning to present himself stuck with him, illustrating how SAD helps students build skills they'll need later in life. Particularly, in the professional workforce, many offices require their employees to dress up in formal attire. SAD prepares students for that future and helps them acclimatize to formal wear.

Ultimately, special academic dress represents more than looking polished. Despite the annoyance that many students may feel toward SAD, it's more than just an inconvenience. It's a gesture of respect, tradition and unity — a way to show pride in our school and gratitude to our guests. It reflects how much we value a particular event. Moreover, it prepares us for the future by familiarizing us with formal attire. Beyond simply looking sharp, special academic dress has a rich history and plays an important role in conveying respect, and we should continue to honor it.

Josie Kimball *is a third-former from Cheshire, CT. She may be reached at jkimball29@choate.edu.*

Laufey, Labubus, and Lattes

By **Emma Woo '29**
Opinions Writer



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

You've probably seen him on social media, even if you don't know his name. A matcha latte in hand, a feminist paperback peeking from a tote bag, a meticulously curated Letterboxed page on his phone, with Clairo or Laufey playing through his wired earbuds. This is the "performative male," styled as the antidote to toxic masculinity: approachable, self-aware, and emotionally literate. However, his carefully assembled image of sensitivity is less a revolution than it is a remix of an age-old script: the art of making oneself desirable.

To see the irony, we must first consider history. For centuries, women were taught to perform endlessly for male attention. Corsets, foot-binding, makeup, and even their behavior were shaped to satisfy an external gaze — a form of labor that was exhausting and compulsory. In some ways, it's a major cultural shift that men now feel pressure to perform desirability at all — but this reversal still mirrors old dynamics rather than erasing them. Today, men perform similar acts. They curate, style, and stage their identities to be wanted, turning what once was a burden for women into a form of social capital. The outward details may have changed, but the principle remains the same: performance serves desirability.

At first glance, this looks like progress. It is healthier to see men reading books written by women or openly admitting they like indie pop than to see them suppress all softness under a hard shell of aggression. Yet even in their progressiveness, these gestures remain signals of desirability, carefully calculated to earn approval. Do these men genuinely engage with these interests — or do they flaunt them to appear enlightened? The ambiguity itself exposes how performance and sincerity blur. Social media amplifies the effect, rewarding men who present the most polished "sensitive" selves. Every curated outfit, Spotify playlist, or moody coffee shop photo becomes a badge of virtue. Think of the classic Letterboxd "Top 4" — usually Lady Bird, Call Me By Your Name, Her, and Past Lives — less a record of taste than a quiet advertisement: "See me, and see what kind of man I am."

The truth behind this is uncomfortable but simple: people want to be desired. Desire drives behavior, shapes choices, and structures social hierarchies. The performative male proves this point with perfect clarity. They reveal that even progressive gestures are deployed in the service of being admired, accepted, and validated. Liberation from the gaze has not occurred; the gaze has simply been redirected.

Yet, we should resist the temptation to dismiss the performative male entirely. Performance is not always a hollow act; sometimes it opens the door to real change. If men curate more sensitive identities, even partly out of vanity, the result might still expand cultural expectations of masculinity. A boy who sees his older brother or a celebrity comfortably embracing "softer" behavior may feel permission to do the same, whether or not it was performed sincerely at first. Performance can be both limiting and liberating, depending on what follows it.

Ultimately, the performative male is a mirror. He shows us that progress is not measured by new gestures alone, but by whether those gestures dismantle the systems that demand them. In this case, they do not. They simply repackage the same need for validation under a different aesthetic, keeping the logic of performance intact. The performance of desirability persists because the human drive to be wanted remains the same. This cycle is universal, but that universality should not be mistaken for liberation. Instead, it is merely proof that the human impulse to be desired remains a powerful force, and that fashion, culture, and media, among other things, will always provide that stage.

The lesson is clear: the performative male is not the antidote to so-called forms of toxic masculinity. He is applauded for doing exactly what humans have always done: striving to be seen, liked, and valued. Desire has not been overturned. Instead, it has simply been repackaged, proving that the cycle continues and that we, as a human race, remain as hungry for recognition as ever.

***Emma Woo** is a third-former from Singapore. She may be reached at ewoo29@choate.edu.*

NYC Can't Afford Zohran Mamdani


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

By **Shaleen Sheth '27**
Staff Contributor

When Zohran Mamdani, a Ugandan-born upstart from Queens, surged to an upset primary victory in New York City against Andrew Cuomo, a seasoned Democrat with decades of experience, many saw Mamdani as a new face for progressive politics. He promised free public transit, universal childcare, rent control, and taxpayer-funded grocery stores. On the surface, this utopian agenda has a strong appeal for a city where poverty and inequality run rampant beneath the skyscrapers of Wall Street.

Yet Mamdani's socialist vision, built on grandstanding promises and hostility toward the wealthy, is both unrealistic and dangerous. Under scrutiny, it becomes clear that Mamdani's proposals would accelerate New York's already undeniable decline by driving out investment, depleting the tax base, and saddling taxpayers with failed experiments.

The central flaw in Mamdani's proposals is funding. Every policy he touts with a smile — from universal childcare to fare-free transit — costs enormous sums of money. New York's budget already relies heavily on the extraordinarily wealthy: the top 1% of earners pay more than 40% of the city's income taxes. Should they leave, the fiscal model of the city collapses, as seen in patterns over the last few years. Between 2021 and 2022, the state lost an estimated $14 billion in net adjusted income from taxpayers moving out. Personal income tax revenue fell from $16.7 billion in 2022 to $14 billion last year, before Mamdani's proposed hikes. His plan to pile another two percent onto millionaire households throws the combined city, state, and federal tax rate up to 53.7%. At that point, relocating to Connecticut or New Jersey seems like common sense. This exodus of the wealthy would leave a gaping hole in the New York City tax base, cutting off funding for much of his other proposed "free" services and rendering those promises impossible.

Then, the issue of city-owned grocery stores arises. Mamdani claims these would bring inexpensive food options to underserved neighborhoods. In practice, these are fiscal black holes. Erie Market in Kansas, for example, is a city-owned store that lost money every year until its closure in 2024. In a small market with no competition, a municipal store could conceivably endure. However, in New York, where grocers abound, city-run stores would be inefficient money pits. Taxpayers, already squeezed for every cent, would be subsidizing a bad business that the private sector runs better anyway.

His rent control proposals are no better. Mamdani backs stricter caps without income thresholds. On paper, this looks like relief for tenants. In practice, however, it provides housing security for those who are already well-off. Nearly a third of rent-stabilized tenants in New York earn over $100,000 a year, while thousands of homeless people sleep in shelters or on the streets. A blanket rent freeze locks middle- and upper-income families into subsidized apartments, while those in the most desperate need are shut out of the limited supply of units.

Even if he were to move past the pragmatic barriers to his grandiose goals, the ideological problem remains. To begin with, Mamdani is openly a socialist, and his proposals reflect it. Time and again, socialist experiments in American cities have collapsed. Consider Detroit's public housing experiment, which was known for its mismanagement of chronic vacancies, or Baltimore's public utility attempts, which were forced to raise rates after years of poor performance.

The message is clear: when the government substitutes political control for market incentives, failures follow. Mamdani's disdain for billionaires and dream of an equity-driven economy ignore the reality that private enterprise and wealth creation are what make New York the financial capital of the world. Without them, the city would lose revenue and relevance.

Supporters of Mamdani argue that he gives a voice to working families ignored by establishment Democrats and Republicans, which is true. He has tapped into genuine frustrations over affordability, inequality, and stagnant wages. Identifying these real problems, however, is not the same as stopping them. Socialism, no matter how eloquently sold, has never delivered prosperity in the United States. If New York wants to increase opportunities for the working class, there are clear options: investing in infrastructure, reforming tax codes, and promoting public safety through targeted training. Piecemeal socialist experiments at the city level will only worsen the New York City economic decline and the average citizen's quality of life.

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

Iran's Youth Won't Stay Silent

By **Leela Curry '29**
Opinions Writer

Iran is in the midst of a generational upheaval that is inevitable. Driven by education, technology, and desire for freedom, today's youth are not just more engaged and informed than past generations — they are the most fearless and socially conscious demographic that Iran has ever produced. The rise of educated young women, digital activism, and courageous nationwide protests demonstrate that cultural change in Iran is the defining characteristic of this generation.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has been ruled as a theocratic state, where religious authorities wield ultimate political power and enforce strict moral codes on daily life. In 2024, authorities enacted a new Hijab and Chastity law, forcing women to cover their hair and dress modestly in public, with severe penalties including fines, prison sentences, and restrictions on education and employment. Rather than intimidate, these measures have exposed the regime's fragility and fueled youth defiance. By challenging these laws, young people are not just resisting; they are dismantling tyranny with courage and moral clarity.

Currently, literacy among young Iranians aged 15-24 has reached 98.81%, and women now dominate in fields such as medicine and engineering. This surge in secular, science-based education stands in stark contrast to the regime's religious orthodoxy, creating deep tension between state ideology and the nation's intellectual class. By June 2025, women represented 70% of STEM university graduates — a cultural shift that threatens the entrenched patriarchy. History shows that educated generations are engines of reform, and Iran's youth are no exception. Armed with knowledge and critical thinking, they are prepared to confront Iran's long-standing injustice, inequality, and oppression.

Even official statistics display the regime's vulnerability: nearly 60% of university graduates are women. Highly educated women will not remain silent; they will demand equality, liberty, and representation. Cultural revolutions often begin quietly, then explode — and Iran's youth are already lighting that fuse.

The 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests following the death of Mahsa Amini — a 22-year-old woman who died in police custody after being arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating hijab laws — exemplified this courage. Women removed their hijabs in public, students organized walkouts, and men stood in solidarity. These were not just symbolic gestures — they were revolutionary acts signaling the end of passive obedience. These protests mark an irreversible cultural awakening. By willingly facing arrest and violence, Iranian youth are actively reforming social norms and asserting their right to determine the nation's values.

Social media has magnified their influence. Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter empower youth to document injustice, coordinate demonstrations, and mobilize global support. For instance, the hashtag #MahsaAmini went viral, forcing the world to witness Iran's struggle in silencing the youth. Young women led these efforts, proving digital platforms are no longer just for communication — they are weapons of resistance. By continuously leveraging technology, Iranian youth can expand their influence globally, shaping international awareness and support for domestic change.

While skeptics argue that authoritarian regimes rarely collapse due to youth movements alone, they are wrong. Political structures fall when cultural momentum shifts beneath them, and Iran's culture is already changing at its core. For example, the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the collapse of the Berlin Wall all show how political structures can deteriorate when cultural momentum shifts. The persistent activism and changing attitudes of young Iranians show they are not just participants, but rather the creators of the nation's future.

In the coming decades, Iran will not resemble a nation of injustice and inequality. Educated, connected, and unwilling to let the past dictate the nation's future, this young generation is already rewriting the story of their country. The statistics are clear, the protests are visible, and the courage is undeniable: Iranian youth are not waiting for change — they are making history.

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



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

FEATURES

Inside Hill House Dining Hall's New Makeover

By **Harry Kim '28**
Copy Editor



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

Hill House dining hall's new brick oven offers a variety of pizza options.

The renovation of the Hill House dining hall wasn't just about updating the space — it transformed the entire dining experience. With expanded food options, upgraded equipment, and new stations from a brick-oven pizza station to a soft-serve ice cream machine and a refrigerated drop-in cold food well, the newly renovated dining hall has brought more excitement at every meal for the Choate community.

One of the highlights of the new setup is the Action Station, better known as the grill that serves main entrées. A rotating menu featuring dishes such as sweet chili salmon, beef hot dogs, grilled turkey burgers, and omelets keeps meals fresh and dynamic. Emile Krauss '26 said, "It's nice to have a grill in the renovated dining hall; the food is delicious, and it's comforting to be able to see the food cooked in front of you."

Additionally, vegetarians can also enjoy more options thanks to the new Veggie Toss station. According to Ms. Casandra Goodnight, Choate's Assistant Catering Director, the station will be open for "lunch and dinner seven days a week," eliminating the need for Meatless Mondays. Vegetarian students and faculty can now look forward to a more diverse vegetarian menu throughout the entire week.

Another standout addition is the rotisserie chicken oven, which produces perfectly seasoned chicken twice a day using Choate's own spice blend. "The [rotisserie chicken] spice blend was made specifically for you guys," Ms. Goodnight said. Science teacher Dr. Chris Hogue enjoys this new addition and said, "The ability to add rotisserie chicken to any salad is really nice. It's just a lot more appealing than [adding] the cubed chicken that was in the salad bar last year." Rotisserie chicken is available for lunch and dinner on weekdays.

According to Ms. Goodnight, preparing the rotisserie chicken required new back-end equipment and additional staff training. "We get chickens in, and then we have a special seasoning blend that we rub them down with, and then they go into the rotisserie chicken oven," she said. "We have one guy who preps the chicken, cooks the chicken, and then breaks it down and cuts it for you guys."

The brick-oven-style pizza is another major upgrade. Ms. Goodnight said, "Last year's pizza oven was like a two-tiered system where we had frozen pizza crust. Now we have an actual brick oven, where everything is fresh dough, and it goes into the pizza oven for about 10 to 12 minutes on pizza paddles before we take it out." Zoie Wang '26 appreciates this new addition to the dining hall. "Compared to the old Hill House dining hall, the pizza taste and quality is improved, and I think it's really cool to have an actual pizza oven on campus," Wang said.

Ms. Goodnight also noted other behind-the-scenes improvements, including hot plates for main entrées, double-sided salad bars, and cold wells that keep toppings fresh. "When you do something like hamburger day, your American cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes stay in the cold well," Ms. Goodnight said. These upgrades have not only streamlined meal service but also enhanced food safety and presentation.

Beyond main courses, the new dining hall has expanded dessert options, especially with the soft-serve machine. "My favorite is the ice cream station: having a sweet treat after meals always elevates the experience, and it makes going to the dining hall a lot more fun and enjoyable," Ada Tieanworn '26 said.

As the new school year kicks off, so does Choate's new dining hall, with new food options like rotisserie chicken, brick-oven pizza, and vegetarian meals. Ms. Goodnight encouraged students and faculty alike to explore everything the dining hall has to offer. "Definitely be open to trying new things. Branch out and try our variables: different recipes from different areas of the world... Try new things, new equipment, new recipes, and new tastes with our renovated dining hall," she said.

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

A Cup of Kindness: Meet Lanphier's Baristas

By **Eason Ni '27**
Reporter

Every day, stampedes of students visit Lanphier Café for a much needed pick-me-up in the form of an iced coffee or a warm smile from their favorite baristas. For many, it's a comforting daily ritual, and Lucas Du '29 is a regular. "I come to Lanphier Café very often, like four times a week," he said. However, the vibrant atmosphere that Lanphier Café offers would not be possible without the staff behind the counter.

Ms. Sherriann Rafonne, who has worked at the café for three years, noted that regulars are quick to form. "Most kids who come here, if they're not regulars, they become regulars," she said. Even when the line stretches far out the door and spills into the hallway, she embraces the rush, noting that the café can get "out-of-control busy, but those are the best times to be here." With lots of experience, Ms. Rafonne handles the pressure well. "The kids make it enjoyable," Ms. Rafonne said, "so as long as you get to talk to them as they're coming through the line, it just makes you smile and keep going."

Her colleagues, Ms. Fadoua Janati and Ms. Heather Rizza, agreed that connecting with students is the highlight of their job. "We become friends with them [Lanphier Café regulars]," Ms. Rizza said. "We talk to them and give them advice, and suggest new drinks for them."

As for their daily routines, Ms. Rafonne, Ms. Janati, and Ms. Rizza arrive early in the morning to set up shop before classes start. "[Ms. Janati] comes in at 6 a.m. to brew the coffee, and every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday she'll fill up the food we get delivered. [Ms. Rafonne] comes in at 7 a.m. to put the pastries away, I come in at 7:30 a.m., and the day begins," Ms. Rizza said. Throughout the class day, they spend hours preparing drinks and take trips to the basement to replenish supplies. When they leave, Ms. Rafonne, Ms. Janati, and Ms. Rizza close by sweeping and mopping the café floors, taking out the garbage, and cleaning the machines.

Of course, every day brings new challenges. For example, Ms. Rizza shared that one day, "everyone wanted espressos, but the machine was down, so they ended up walking away and not ordering." Despite the occasional hiccup, the staff's energy and kindness never falter. "I'm really happy to be here with the kids every day with a smile, to see all of them happy," Ms. Janati said.

These dedicated staff members ensure that every student gets their caffeine fix or a quick bite when the dining hall isn't an option. Du said, "I get to have a source of caffeine that helps me stay awake in the morning, and I also get to have breakfast when I miss it, because I like to sleep in more often."

For Irene Tseng '27, who sometimes visits the café twice a day, the staff's friendliness and efficiency stand out. "They usually know my order, so it's really fast. Faster than Starbucks, like twice as fast," she said. Tseng especially enjoys the quiet mornings and recommends trying the café's mango smoothie with boba.

Whether it's for a quick breakfast, quiet place to relax, or station to pump up your caffeine levels, Lanphier Café is a crucial part of daily life at Choate. Additionally, the warmth of the staff makes the café more than just a pit stop. "Lanphier Café is one of the most rewarding places that we can be on campus," Ms. Rafonne said. So, the next time you find yourself in line at Lanphier Café, take a moment to appreciate the people who bring warmth and caffeine to Choate's community.

Eason Ni *may be reached at eni27@choate.edu.*



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

Lanphier Café workers Ms. Janati and Ms. Rizza pose for a picture.

Dorm to Dorm: Faculty On the Move



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

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Reporter

Most members of the Choate community are no strangers to moving, from saying farewell to the place they called home to stripping the walls and packing treasured belongings in dubious cardboard boxes. This year, many teachers, including Ms. Rachel Hudelson, Ms. Michelle Thompson-Taylor, and Mx. Athira Sanal, moved houses and dorms across campus.

Ms. Hudelson

To be closer to her family, Math teacher Ms. Hudelson, moved from her North Main Street house over to Tenney House.

As a dorm advisor in Library last year, Ms. Hudelson found herself challenged to be in two places at once. In her new apartment, dorm duty happens right where she lives, making it easier to grab a snack or put her kids to bed. "Having a family, it's easier to be in the [apartment] when I'm on duty, particularly on the weekends ... if I'm hungry, I can just grab a snack and I can give my kids a goodnight hug before they go to bed," Ms. Hudelson said.

Ms. Hudelson feels that the transition has gone well for her whole family, providing a clean slate to build on. "It gave us ... a chance to kind of reevaluate our systems for everything ... we had a sort of build-up of years of clutter at [our old apartment], and so it gave us a fresh start," Ms. Hudelson said. With the new place, the Hudelsons also welcomed the newest addition to their family: Sadie the beagle, the family's second dog.

Ms. Thompson-Taylor

Tenney House also welcomed Associate Dean of College Counseling Ms. Thompson-Taylor this year. It was not her first time switching houses — she lived in the freshman girls' dorm Nichols House for six years, then spent a year in non-dorm housing on Curtis Avenue.

The best part about her space, Ms. Thompson-Taylor said, is the natural light. "My plants are happy. I think if they could talk, they would be telling me: 'We love this,'" she said. The large porch not only provides more living space but also some peace and quiet. "On quiet mornings and weekends, I can go out there and just have breakfast quietly. I can imagine there'll be some evenings when I could just go out there and sit and relax as well," Ms. Thompson-Taylor said. "I've really enjoyed this space."

Mx. Sanal

"Pivot!" Ross Geller shouts, while Phoebe and Rachel attempt to help him maneuver his precious new purchase. "You couldn't exactly do the Friends thing where you pivot," Mx. Sanal said, describing the challenge of bringing her couch up the narrower Hall staircase from Nichols. Though Mx. Sanal managed to get the couch upstairs, they joked that it felt straight out of a classic Friends scene.

Nonetheless, a slight structural inconvenience is definitely worth the perks of life in Hall. Not only is it a centrally located dorm, sitting right above the dining hall, but it is also one of the few dorms on campus with air conditioning. "The air conditioning is nice because I lived on the third floor of Nichols, and there was no air conditioning. It would get pretty hot in that apartment, so it is nice to have some temperature control," Mx. Sanal said.

Another perk? Not being a complete stranger to the dorm. "I'm working with fourth- and fifth-formers now. What's cool is that I was in Nichols for two years. I know a lot of the people already," Mx. Sanal said.

Hall has also proven to be a very unique place on campus for Mx. Sanal. "If you come here at around six, you can hear a buzz, because everyone begins eating in the dining hall ... It isn't loud ... it's really sweet, like a white noise," they said.

Dorm moves come with big changes; for some, it means more tranquility, for others, it brings the family closer together. For all the new students at Choate, moving away from home can be difficult and uncomfortable, but you are not alone — there are teachers across campus who have navigated the same transitions this year.

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

The Ultimate Guide To Family Weekend Performances

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



Photo courtesy of Choate Photos
Mr. Gene Wie leads the Symphony Orchestra and Choate Chorale in a joint performance of "Zadok the Priest" by George Frederick Handel.

As Family Weekend approaches, Choate's music ensembles are preparing to take their talents to the stage. From jazz tunes to symphonic masterpieces, this year's fall musical performances will begin on Friday, October 17, at 7:15 p.m. in Colony Hall.

Orchestra Director Mr. Gene Wie is eager to showcase the progress students in both orchestras have made since coming together for the first time, with new and returning members, in September. "Every year, the puzzle to put all those musicians together is different, and when they collectively come together, there is a different kind of vibe and energy and enthusiasm," he said.

The Concert Orchestra will be performing "Sunset Hill" by Yukiko Nishimura, a guest composer Choate hosted last spring. The concert orchestra will also put on a rendition of Alan Lee Silva's "Blue Ridge Run," an enthusiastic piece that mimics fiddle-style playing. Mr. Wie explained that this year, he is encouraging students to explore newer, 21st-century music. "[We] pick things that the audience will enjoy, but also significant works that are of interest ... I want students to play newer repertoire," he said. However, Mr. Wie emphasized that having a healthy balance between new pieces and familiar favorites is key to pleasing the audience. "We have to balance exploring new [works] with playing things that our audience will appreciate and come back for more," he said.

Following the Concert Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra will perform Yukiko Nishimura's "Shining Echoes." Mr. Wie added, "After her visit last year, I love doing her work because it's a great way to get string players to really start thinking beyond the really simplistic aspects of technique and how they have to do things to listen to one another and come together as an ensemble."

In addition to Nishimura's composition, the Symphony Orchestra will also perform Brian Balmages' "Origins." Mr. Wie described the piece as "a very new work, but it's one of those very interesting tonal poems for orchestra."

Under the baton of Mr. Matthew McLean, the Jazz Ensemble, a group that performs works from composers of swing and Latin jazz, will open the concert with "Miss Missouri" by Count Basie and "The Jody Grind" by Horace Silver. Jazz Combo, which consists of student musicians who specifically focus on improvisation and harmony in jazz, will perform "Are You Real" by Benny Golson and "Summertime" by George Gershwin.

Through Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Combo, Mr. McLean aims to "represent important jazz composers," explaining the ensemble's work to perform works from significant jazz figures, such as Count Basie and Horace Silver. "We want to represent the music appropriately in terms of the history," he said.

The Wind Ensemble, also conducted by Mr. McLean, will be performing "Brighton Beach" by William Latham, "English Folk Song Suite" by Ralph Vaughn Williams, and "Mars" by Gustav Holst. Mr. McLean particularly expressed his excitement about performing "Mars" for families. "We wanted to choose a wind ensemble piece that was more symphonic in nature ... it makes the wind ensemble show off all the ways in which it can match the orchestra."

The Concert Choir, conducted by Dr. Julie Hagen, will perform "Sing to Me" by Andrea Ramsey and "Hands Are Knockin'" by Kyle Pederson. Dr. Hagen said she wanted to "balance different genres and different languages" in her pieces. "'[Hands Are Knockin']' is a collaborative piece commissioned by the American School in Oman," she said. "It's partly in English and partly in Arabic."

The Choate Chorale will perform "Wade in the Water," a traditional African American spiritual arranged by Moses Hogan, "The Lake of Innisfree," composed by David Brunner, and "Bridge Over Troubled Water," composed by Paul Simon.

While rehearsing "Wade in the Water," Dr. Hagen explained that the focus was on understanding the context in which the spiritual was sung. "We talked a lot about the history of [Traditional African American] music, which is a very common genre to be sung in choral literature ... it's important that we sing it and talk about it," she said.

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is more of a comforting, consoling piece. "It's about finding your place, finding a place of solace," Dr. Hagen said. On the other hand, "Bridge Over Troubled Water" is a pop song. "[It is a] Simon and Garfunkel tune that came out in the 60s ... it's pop, but it's more like a vocal jazz kind of style," Dr. Hagen said.

To close the concert, the Choate Chorale will collaborate with the Symphony to perform "O Fortuna" from Carmina Burana, a cantata composed by Carl Orff in 1936. "It's one of the most famous choir orchestra bombastic finale kind of piece," Mr. Wie said. "[It] works really well for the choir and the orchestra ... [it's going to be] a great closer for the program."

Directly following the instrumental concert, Choate's five a cappella groups, Bellacanto, Lilith, the Whimawehs, Maiyeros, and the Melatones, will sing on the Colony Hall steps.

Isabelle Jiao '26, the co-president of Bellacanto, expressed her excitement to perform for the families. "This is the first [performance] of the year, and I think it's really fun to also be able to perform with our new singers."

Co-president of Lilith, Savannah Emery '26, had a similar perspective. "It's always a really lively environment. It's the first real performance of the year ... all the a cappella groups cheer each other on, and it's nice to see your family and friends in the audience," she said. "It's my last year, and this year I got more say in what songs we do and how the group goes ... It's really fun to see the group come together," Emery added.

Ms. Le'ah Griggs, the advisor of the five a cappella groups, explained how the Family Weekend performance provides a warm and encouraging atmosphere for the students. "[A cappella] is such a student-led group ... it's nice to see them give a performance that they did a lot of work to prepare for, and see their families supporting them," she said.

With Family Weekend being the only time all year when all of Choate's music ensembles and a cappella groups perform together, students will take their families and audience members on a journey through various musical genres and styles, celebrating their progress in the arts within the first half of the fall term.

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

The Passing of Arthur: A Mural of Fidelitas et Integritas

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Copy Editor

Above the fireplace of Choate's Dining Hall, looking out at the senior section, hangs a painting that has quietly borne witness to over a century of community meals, conversations, and traditions. The mural, The Passing of Arthur by Robert Van Vorst Sewell (1860-1924), was gifted to the School in 1914 and now serves as a work of art, a symbol of values, and a living reminder of the school's past.

The mural depicts the moment when the wounded King Arthur, supported by Sir Bedivere, awaits the mystic ship that will carry him to Avalon. In the background, a ship sails away — said "to be carrying the Queens of Hope, Faith, and Charity" — allegorical figures who embody the virtues that guide Arthur into his final rest.

When Sewell first saw the space in the dining hall, he felt compelled to contribute something meaningful. "Mr. Waterman, the architect, has designed the wood panelling above the mantle so as to make for it an artistic setting," a Choate News article from December 4th, 1913 noted. Into that setting, Sewell placed his dramatic interpretation of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem, "The Passing of Arthur."

Around its border appear the words of Tennyson's famous line: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new; and Gold fulfills Himself in many ways." For the School still in its formative years, the mural offered a vision of progression, endurance, and renewal.

Sewell was one of the leading muralists of his time. Born in New York, he trained in Paris at the Julian Academy before returning to the U.S., where he earned acclaim for large-scale commissions in banks, libraries, and colleges. His most famous work outside Choate is The Canterbury Tales frieze at Georgian Court College in New Jersey.

The Passing of Arthur was part of a much larger series Sewell painted: twelve canvases depicting the Arthurian legend. Choate received The Passing of Arthur mural as a donation in 1914, while both of Sewell's sons were attending the School — Robert Sewell '14 and William Joyce Sewell '18.

Headmaster George St. John (from 1908-1947) recognized the mural's significance. Captivated by Sewell's work, he later arranged to purchase the remaining eleven Arthurian paintings at a reduced price, creating one of Choate's earliest and most ambitious art collections. In a letter to Sewell's son, St. John emphasized that the murals offered more than decoration: "Everyone who comes to the School, whether [Sewell] knows it or not, is made happier and stronger by the paintings being here." For St. John, the Arthurian canvases carried moral weight, teaching concepts of loyalty, integrity, and civic responsibility.

Over the decades, The Passing of Arthur has endured dust from renovations and the daily bustle of student life. This year, the mural has entered a new chapter. Conservators recently tested a small section of the painting with oversized swabs and water. Archivist and Special Collections Librarian Mrs. Stephanie Gold said, "If you look at just between 11 and 12 o'clock, you'll be able to see a tiny little section right there. It's a bit brighter. That's where they spot clean." The contrast revealed just how much dirt and residue had accumulated over more than a century.

After more than a century of overlooking countless meals and milestones, the mural is poised for renewal. According to Mrs. Gold, the full mural, along with the companion painting on the other side of the fireplace, is scheduled to be professionally cleaned early to mid next year. By the spring of 2026, students are expected to see The Passing of Arthur restored to its original brilliance.

As it has since 1914, Sewell's painting will continue to serve not only as a work of art but also as a reminder of Choate's enduring traditions. With its theme of faith, endurance, and renewal, The Passing of Arthur remains, in the words of Headmaster St. John, a source of "beauty and inspiration and chivalry," and a lasting gift to generations of students who pass beneath it.

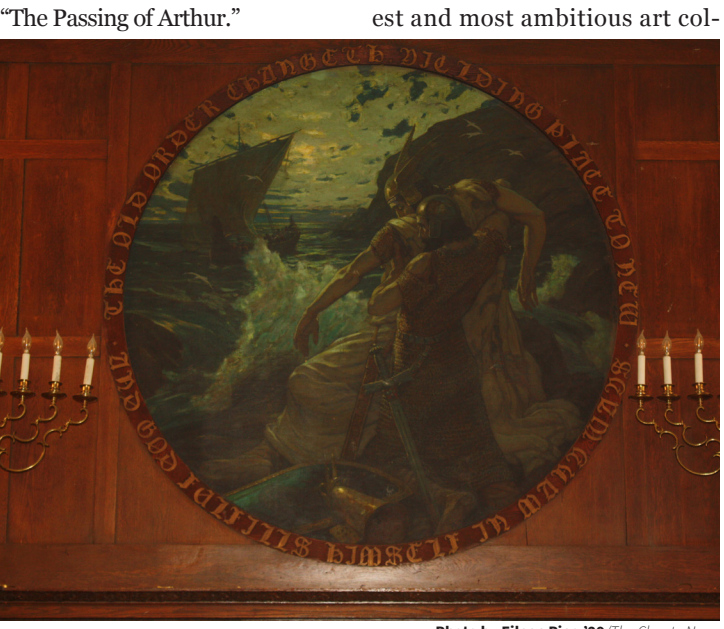


Photo by Eileen Piao '29/*The Choate News*
The Passing of Arthur reinstated in the rennovated dining hall.

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

Constructing Families at the PMAC



Photo courtesy of Finn Wikstrom '26
An Arts Concentration staged photograph inspired by Jamie Diamond's collections.

By **Sophie Chang '29**
Reporter

On October 3, artist and filmmaker Jamie Diamond's "Constructed Family Portraits" portfolio premiered at the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC). While these family portraits depict close relationships, they actually contain an interesting twist: all of the subjects Diamond chose to photograph were actually strangers brought together in foreign locations.

For almost two decades, Diamond has worked in the photography industry, focusing her collections on the evolving nature of the human connection and experience. Her photography collections have been featured in exhibits around the United States and internationally, including places like the Bronx Museum in New York City and the Trapholt Museum in Denmark. She has also worked as a cinematographer and producer on short films "A Minor Variation" (2018) and "Skin Hunger" (2024), which showcase her experience in the film industry.

Although Diamond has dabbled in candid photography, "Constructed Family Portraits" features Diamond's creative staging, challenging the expectations of her audience. "The family portrait depicts a particular mythology or stereotypical ideal of a happy life, yet family is an ongoing performance where roles are assigned, with a constant expectation of an audience, both private and public," Diamond wrote in her artist's statement for the series.

Finn Wikstrom '26, a two-year member of the Visual Arts Concentration (Arts Con) signature program, said, "Through the nature of photography, there exists this contradiction within her series. Each piece in her series is a testament to or memorialization of each 'family' and therefore each piece in itself inherently serves as this tangible proof or physical evidence of something nonexistent."

Students also had the opportunity to get involved in the creation of the gallery. "We learned a lot about camera work, scouting locations, and how to direct models," Nila Rajan '26, another member of Arts Con, said. "It's super interesting because once you know the backstory of the image, it completely changes when you see their expressions and the way they're deliberately directed and posed."

Other Visual Arts Con students like Emmy Jones '28 used the collaboration with Diamond to develop their artistic skills. "I [had] never worked with photo editing before, but one of the roles that you could do was directing the photo and positioning [the subjects]," she said. "I was the director, and once I really got into the zone of doing the project ... It was a great opportunity to be able to work with a professional, as well as the models who have different backgrounds in art."

The entire exhibit was planned to be as surprising as possible — the models, photographers, and location of the shoot were completely varied each day. The students' work of impromptu Choate scenes is displayed on the walls of the PMAC, alongside Diamond's shoots. "It was really exciting getting to work with Jamie, especially as someone particularly interested in photography, and I'm very grateful to our Arts Con advisors for having made it possible," Wikstrom said.

Students and members of the Choate community are all encouraged to visit the PMAC this fall to explore the "Constructed Family Portraits," an exhibition that captures the collaboration between Jamie Diamond and the Visual Arts Con students.

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

THE CHOATE NEWS

VOL. CXIX • NO. 2

SPORTS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2025

FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

51 - 19 - 1

Varsity Games

Girls' Volleyball (7-1)
vs. Andover, 3-2

Boys' Cross Country (2-1)
vs. Taft, 32-24

Girls' Soccer (6-1-1)
vs. Worcester, 2-1

Boys' Water Polo (7-0)
vs. Deerfield, 16-4

Girls' Cross Country (1-1)
vs. Andover, 18-47

Boys' Football (2-2)
vs. Avon Old Farms, 13-14

Girls' Field Hockey (2-4)
vs. Andover, 0-9

Boys' Cross Country (2-1)
vs. Andover, 17-46

J.V. Games

Girls' Field Hockey (4-1)
vs. Hopkins, 1-0

Boys' Football (1-0)
vs. Loomis, 22-20

Girls' Soccer (0-4)
vs. Exeter, 1-2

Boys' Cross Country (2-1)
vs. Andover, 15-50

SOCCER AND SERVICE WITH CHAPEL HAVEN

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**
Copy Editor



Photo courtesy of Sophie Li '26

Students pose with the athletes at the Chapel Haven and Choate Soccer Tournament.

Loud cheers echoed from the Class of '76 Field as Choate students and Chapel Haven athletes ran across the grass. The Chapel Haven and Choate Soccer Tournament, hosted on September 28 and organized by Sophie Li '26, was a day that combined competition and connection — one filled with laughter, teamwork, and joy.

For Li, who has long been involved in inclusive soccer programs, the tournament was the realization of a vision she had since coming to Choate. "I've been part of programs like the Crusaders in Hong Kong, where I trained weekly with adults with disabilities," Li said. "Sports, especially soccer, have always created a sense of joy and belonging. I wanted to replicate that at Choate and also connect our campus with the broader Wallingford community," she added.

The event featured mixed teams of Choate students and Chapel Haven athletes, coached by Choate's varsity soccer players, with matches that were designed to prioritize fun and inclusion. "Teamwork was a huge part of it," Li explained. "We celebrated every goal and every pass. The environment was supportive rather than overly competitive."

Students who participated in the event left with meaningful takeaways. Boys' Varsity Soccer player Jamie Lee '27 recalled his excitement during the day. "[The event was] one of the most fun service experiences I've had. When our goalkeeper, Luke, from Chapel Haven, made a save, our whole team went wild. Seeing him smile like that was unforgettable."

Teammates with Lee, Eden Tung '28 described the event as a rejuvenating experience. "Our school games often feel competitive and intense, but these games were more encouraging and free," Tung said.

Lee and Tung built many new friendships with their Chapel Haven teammates. "I got to know [my teammates] really well," Lee said. "It felt natural to connect with them and cheer them on." Tung echoed that sentiment: "I formed a lot of new friendships that day ... It made the tournament so much more special."

Li said the most important part for her was seeing the athletes' pride as they received their medals. "It was incredible to see months of planning turn into an experience where [everyone] left with a smile," she said. "The five hours flew by because there was so much joy and energy."

When the final whistle sounded across the field, players high-fived and exchanged smiles. Later, Li remarked, "Sports can be a powerful medium to build friendships and community."

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

NO GYM? NO PROBLEM!

By **Reid Bock '27**
Copy Editor

When most Choate students think about staying in shape, their minds go straight to the gym at the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC). But all across campus, students are discovering new and underrated workout spots. These places offer privacy, outdoor space, or simply a change of pace from the usual Cybex machines. From fields to dorm rooms, these spots prove that the gym is not the only place where you can get a good workout in.

Nana Winston Ashie '27's favorite workout spot goes far beyond the gym's walls. "I like to take nature runs at the cross-country course," she said. "Observing wildlife and overlooking the [WJAC] is great for clearing my mind and getting a quiet workout in." Though weather and daylight can limit her visits, she said, "Running the course improves my endurance, allows for a mental reset, and encourages me to soak in nature after a long academic day."

Some students value privacy over wide open spaces. Boys' Varsity Squash Captain Lucas Carlson '26 discovered a hidden workout spot close to where he usually trains. "One of my favorite places to exercise is the little viewing area above the squash courts," he said. "I can ... focus really well [there]." Carlson discovered this spot while looking for a place to perform medicine ball slams uninterrupted. Beyond just convenience, the time spent alone helps sharpen his mindset: "I think it's important sometimes to train by yourself ... it helps build discipline and self-respect, which is important for sports," he said.

While some use different areas on campus for sport-specific training, others create their own personal workout spot. Tim Anantanavanich '27, inspired by fitness influencers promoting unusual exercises, uses his dorm room to test out these movements in private. "I like to work out in my room where I won't be judged for doing weird exercises like handstand pushups," he said. His room also has something the gym lacks: free space. "There's not really that much free wall space [in the gym] ... and a lot of the experimental workouts ... have something to do with a wall." For Anantanavanich, trying new things in the comfort of his own room boosts his confidence. "When I go to the gym and I try a workout there that I tried in my room earlier, I can smile and think to myself, 'These guys don't know where I found out about this.'"

While the gym remains a go-to spot, Choate has a variety of unnoticed spaces to suit any fitness routine.

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

Family Weekend Athletic Games in the Making

By **Adrienne Prater '28**
Reporter



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

Students and staff prepare for games on Family Weekend.

Once a year, the Choate campus overflows with cars on every street, people on every path, and loved ones in every class. Family Weekend, a long-standing Choate tradition, allows families to immerse themselves in their children's lives and experience the rhythms of Choate firsthand.

Among the weekend's highlights are the Saturday sports games, where parents get a front-row seat to the intensity, passion, and pride that define Wild Boar athletics. "Seeing everyone's families on the sidelines cheering everyone on, you feel a lot of love in the air. It makes these games feel particularly special," Veronique de Vries '26 said. Behind every memorable game is the work of Choate's Athletics Department staff. Their careful planning and coordination make the excitement of Family Weekend possible year after year.

Planning for Family Weekend athletics begins long before the event itself. Assistant Athletics Director Mr. Nolan Silbernagel said, "We're fortunate that our schedules are set ... for a large event like Family Weekend. We know The Hotchkiss [School] and [Northfield Mount Hermon] are always going to ... come here ... around mid-October." Mr. Silbernagel added, "It took a lot of years of planning and partnership, but now we are in a good rhythm where schools know what to expect." With this in mind, the priority of the Athletics Department becomes working on the details, such as scheduling, medical assistance, and equipment.

Because all Hotchkiss teams will be at Choate in the afternoon, the Athletics Department considers this critical aspect when scheduling games. Luckily, in the fall, all teams have their own courts or fields, so it is not extremely difficult to plan game times, but the medical trainers and staff have to work out their schedule due to the vast number of places games are being hosted. Head Trainer Mr. Brian Holloway said, "We are here several hours before the games start. We do everything from rehab to taping based on [students'] individual needs, and we are also here up to an hour and a half after the game ends for follow-up evaluations, treatment, [and more]." Additionally, Choate's fitness trainers also help support other schools' athletes. "Because all of Hotchkiss' athletes will be here, their athletics trainers will be here for support. We will also have an ambulance, medical carts, and our athletic trainers at all sports events covered under different zones of care. The athletics trainers also keep in contact with coaches through walkie-talkies in case they have an emergency," Mr. Holloway said. Like the athletics trainers, the Equipment Managers get equipment ready for athletes hours in advance. One thing in common between these different means of supporting Choate athletes is the importance of communication and preparation, especially for this large event.

When Family Weekend arrives, the Athletics Department will be working behind the scenes all day to ensure Saturday afternoon runs seamlessly. Thanks to their dedication, every kickoff, serve, and starting gun will unfold smoothly, allowing students and families to focus on what truly matters: celebrating Choate spirit.

Adrienne Prater *may be reached at aprater28@choate.edu.*

Trust Our Trainers: The Backbone of Choate Athletics

By **Gaby Yeung '29**
Reporter

Choate's athletic trainers are crucial to every athlete's journey to success. "[Many people think] that we just give people ice, and some people that know nothing about us and think that we work at a gym ... but really, we're healthcare providers," Mr. Anthony Vignola said, one of the Assistant Athletic Trainers. Other members of the team include Head Athletic Trainer Mr. Brian Holloway, and assistant trainers Mrs. Emily Osterhout and Ms. Brittany Post. Together, they work tirelessly to treat each athlete with care and professionalism.

The trainers arrive at the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC) around noon each day to perform administrative tasks such as making phone calls and sending emails. When athletes arrive from class to prepare for practice, the trainers help tape athletes and assist with injury rehabilitation. Once practices begin, some trainers monitor athletic practices in case of emergencies, while others stay in the athletic training room to provide care to those more severely injured. After practices end, trainers focus on recovery, which includes ice, cool-downs, and stretching. They also answer questions and conduct any extra evaluations when needed.

Each trainer brings unique experiences and motivations to their work. Mrs. Osterhout explained, "I wanted to be an athletic trainer because my family was always very involved in sports ... when we would watch football games and somebody would get injured, I would see everybody run out onto the field, and I thought that was cool."

Mr. Vignola shared some of the challenges of his job. "There are [chaotic] days, so you have to be able to keep a level head ... which is really hard to do sometimes. But I think the most rewarding thing is ... [when] athletes succeed and [fulfill] the dreams they have."

Ms. Post also reflected on the satisfaction of helping athletes recover from major injuries. "They work so hard to recover from their injuries, and then their first game or practice back, you feel that joy with them." Mrs. Osterhout added, "While it can be very stressful in certain situations, it's fun to be in the training room with the music on and kids being silly and joking around ... it's a cool way to end my day."

With only four trainers and hundreds of athletes, it can be difficult to provide individualized attention when the training room gets busy. Mr. Holloway acknowledged this challenge: "We have far more athletes and teams than we do athletic trainers ... but we try to do our best to help everyone that comes through our doors."

During her time as a trainer at Choate, Ms. Post has gained valuable insights on how to care for student athletes on campus. "We just try and support them in the best way possible," she said. "Everyone's actually really nice here, and everyone's here to support you and grow as a professional."

Choate's athletic trainers are the backbone of the School's athletic community. They ensure athletes recover safely, perform at their best, and stay healthy throughout the year. Far beyond just giving out ice, they are professionals who arecommitted to supporting athletes every step of the way.

Gaby Yeung *may be reached at gyeung29@choate.edu.*