The Choate News

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Choate Welcomes 2024 Summer Reading Authors

By **Eliana Li '26**
Copy Editor

During School Meeting on September 17, Choate welcomed the authors of its 2024 summer All School Reads, Mr. Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah and Mr. Reginald Dwayne Betts, to campus. They shared insights into their books, *Chain-Gang All-Stars* and *Felon: Poems,* and participated in an informative Q&A session.

A *New York Times* Top Ten Book of the Year, *Chain-Gang All-Stars* explores the corrupt reality and injustices within the current U.S. prison system through a dystopian lens, set in a fictional society where prisoners are forced to fight to the death for their freedom. NAACP award-winning *Felon: Poems* recounts Mr. Betts's takeaways from having personally grappled with incarceration and its detrimental effects after release, urging readers to practice compassion towards those who have been dehumanized by the prison system. Over the summer, students had the option to choose between reading the two texts.

Photo by Emily Ma '25/*The Choate News*

Summer reading authors, Mr. Adjei-Brenyah and Mr. Betts, address the Choate community.

Before the authors took the stage, English teacher Ms. Cahaley Markman delivered an opening speech explaining the English Department's decision to center the summer reading books on the criminal justice system. "I think we often forget that each prisoner in our system today is a human being. It is because we forget this humanity that we allow many different forms of abuse to take place within the system," Ms. Markman said. She also expressed her gratitude that these books reminded readers to question prison policies.

The meeting started off with Mr. Adjei-Brenyah reading an excerpt from the prologue of *Chain-Gang All-Stars*, titled "The Freeing of Melancholia Bishop," where he asked audience members to chant "BISHOP!" every time the character's name was mentioned to mimic the crowd chanting in the fictional BattleGround. Afterward, Mr. Adjei-Brenyah was joined on stage by Mr. Betts and student interviewers Camila Granda '25 and Dani Aseme '25 to begin the Q&A session.

Throughout the session, both authors shared how their lived experiences influenced their writing. Mr. Betts, who spent nine years in prison from age 16, explained how his own life story has allowed him to explore a darker side of humanity in his writing. Although he has not experienced incarceration, Mr. Adjei-Brenyah emphasized that "when you're a writer, your life is in the work. It's your perceptions, it's your rhythm, it's your energy, it's your humor, it's your life."

Mr. Adjei-Brenyah addressed his usage of footnotes in *Chain-Gang All-Stars*. "The reason [I used footnotes] was a kind of fear … We're so attuned to violence. I wanted that unawareness to be almost impossible," he said. By directly connecting his narrative to the current criminal justice system through footnotes, Mr. Adjei-Brenyah urged readers to engage more deeply with the text and look past the normalization of brutality. His use of footnotes resonated well with the student body. "I thought the footnotes were really helpful. Certain statistics were crazy to see, but it puts things into perspective and really gets you thinking," Antonio Giraldez-Greco '25 said.

Following Mr. Adjei-Brenyah's explanation, Mr. Betts shared how his life has shifted since leaving prison and writing *Felon: Poems*. He explained the importance of declaring an identity, recounting how his act of self-determination carried him from solitary confinement to becoming an acclaimed poet and educator. "The one declaration that I was going to be somebody in the face of having made a decision that suggested to the whole world that I desired to be nothing … has profoundly changed my life. It has become the center of who I am in the world and every opportunity I have taken," Mr. Betts said.

Many members of the community walked away from the panel refreshed by the dynamic between the authors. Head of the English Department Mr. Mark Gostalyza shared, "I thought they complemented each other well. I liked how they engaged with something that the other had said, and that led them to something new." Similarly, Friday Acuna '26 said, "I loved listening to people who are passionate and well educated in their fields talk. To see two people come together and cooperate like they had, I felt like it was really fun, but also really insightful."

Later in the day, Mr. Betts and Mr. Adjei-Brenyah visited Choate's Advanced Creative Writing class to engage with students in a more personal setting and give them an opportunity to ask questions. Students enjoyed their company and perspectives on the research process behind writing their books. "I asked Mr. Brenyah how he did his world-building for his book and he told me how he found the inspiration for the Chain Gang system [by researching] real-life sports systems to create a realistic society and system in this dystopian book, which I thought was incredible and super inspirational," Connor Zeitlin '25 said. "Their work complemented each other, their conversations complemented each other, [and] their answers to our questions complemented each other. I was doubtful at first having two authors and then I realized we should do that every year."

Eliana Li *may be reached at eli26@choate.edu.*

SENIORS LEAVE THEIR LEGACY

By **Matthew Zhang '28**
Reporter

The L-Beam Signing on current construction projects for sixth-formers has been a cherished tradition ever since Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis stepped into his position in 2011. The goal of this tradition is to honor the senior classes impacted by the construction of new buildings who won't get the chance to enjoy the completed space. With each new project, the graduating seniors sign an L-beam, which is then placed within the new building so they can leave behind their legacy.

On September 6, the Class of 2025 signed the L-Beam that will be placed in Carr Hall, which is set to be completed in the fall of 2025. Head of Student and Academic Life and acting Head of School Ms. Jenny Elliot said, "I love the fact that kids are going to feel like they were a part of this campus indefinitely, and I am glad that so many kids were able to come out."

Student Body President Robert Haik '25 shared his experience signing the L-Beam. "Signing my name on the beam was a bittersweet moment. On one hand, this interaction felt like a tangible way to leave my mark on my school, that has been a place where I have

See* SENIORS, *Page 2

Photo courtesy of @gochoate

Class of 2025 signs the L-beam to be put up in Carr Hall.

Dartmouth Professors Lead Israel–Palestine Conversation

By **Francesca Howard '26**
Copy Editor

Understanding is the first step toward resolution, and Choate has been working to create opportunities for dialogue on campus. On Monday, September 16, Dartmouth College professors Susannah Heschel and Ezzedine C. Fishere visited Choate to deliver their talk, "How Did We Get Here? Historical Context to Current Predicaments of the Israel-Palestine Conflict."

The event, planned by faculty and student leaders, aimed to deepen students' understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict's historical, political, cultural, and humanitarian dimensions. Dean of Equity and Inclusion Dr. Rachel Myers, one of the event's organizers, explained that its goal was to "provide space for learning about a diversity of perspectives and cultivate empathy, integrity, compassion, and respect."

Prof. Heschel, a professor of Jewish Studies, and Prof. Fishere, a political scientist specializing in the Middle East, have collaborated extensively despite their different academic backgrounds. Though they don't always agree, they have been able to put aside those differences and co-teach courses at Dartmouth. Their talk at Choate reflected their dedication to education and civil dialogue, with Prof. Heschel reminding the audience, "We are here not to dispute and argue, but to learn."

Similarly, Prof. Fishere challenged audience members to question their assumptions and consider multiple perspectives, urging students to ask themselves, "What am I missing?" He emphasized that "every story has multiple facets." Prof. Fishere pushed listeners to recognize their commonalities with those they disagree with. "There are multiple stories in each story. Each story has some validity in it," he said.

Prof. Fishere and Prof. Heschel encouraged the audience to resist seeing the conflict as a matter of ascribing blame and instead focus on embracing nuance. "To fix a problem, you need to understand it," Prof. Fishere explained. "If you look at everything as a culprit versus a victim, your solutions will be unidimensional, and you will not redress past injustice."

Prof. Fishere also emphasized that framing the conflict solely as Israel versus Palestine is an oversimplification. "It's not just Israel and Palestine — it's multiple Israels and multiple Palestines," he said, noting that while Israel is powerful militarily, it is also vulnerable in many ways. Palestine, though weaker, continues to show resilience. Recognizing these concurrent facts, he suggested, is essential to fully understanding the conflict.

Blake Steremberg '26, a member of the Hillel cabinet, attended the event. "I wanted to learn more about such a complicated conflict," they explained. Steremberg learned to "think of what can actually fix the problem instead of just noise that might feel great but won't actually do anything in the long run."

Zaki Shamsi '26 appreciated that the discussion did not focus on offering easy answers. "It wasn't talking about the conflict itself very much but rather how to talk about the conflict," he said. Shamsi valued the speakers' emphasis on productive and realistic dialogue, and an understanding that solutions to complex problems are rarely straightforward. "A solution is going to be more than 'you get this and I get that'," Shamsi said.

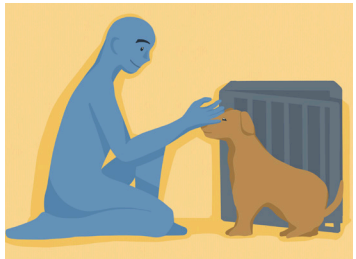
The event also resonated with Kadija Benzinane '27. "I'm really interested in Middle Eastern politics," she said. "Being Middle Eastern myself, an event like this really intrigued me." After listening to the speakers, Benzinane became more aware of "how different stories relate together in this larger conflict."

Prof. Heschel's final remarks challenged students to remain intellectually curious and be willing to talk to people who hold different views. "I don't want to hear people say what I think. That's so boring. I know what I think," she said. Rather, she wants to engage in meaningful, respectful discourse where there's room for disagreement. It is only through this exposure and debate that we can learn. She encouraged students to instead be open to opposing perspectives, and use them to create their own informed opinions.

Prof. Heschel also noted that while diplomacy and peace agreements are essential, they are insufficient. "What we need is a cultural shift," she said. We should adopt a mindset that prioritizes empathy and understanding, and recognize our shared humanity. Initiatives like this one at Choate, she argued, are a step toward fostering that change.

Francesca Howard *may be reached at fhoward26@choate.edu.*

Paw Patrol
37 Dogs Rescued from Cramped Barn
Local News • P3



Kamala is "*BRAT*"
How Do Memes Influence Politics?
Opinions N/W • P5

Where to Sit?
Students Share Their Most Cherished Chairs
Features • P6

Serving Up Victories
Celebrating Coach Loeb's 500th Win
Sports • P8

What's Inside

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

Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Leah Han '27, Evelyn Kim '25, Izzy Cook '27 and Emily Ma '25.

New Faculty, Welcome to Choate!

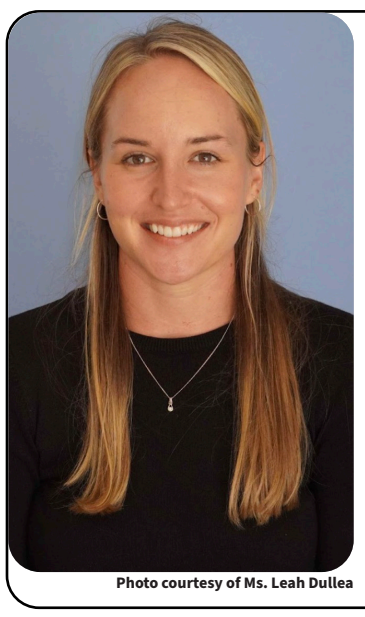


Photo courtesy of Ms. Leah Dullea

Ms. Leah Dullea, Choate's new Health Center Response Coordinator and Health and Wellness teacher, became a full-time faculty member after serving as a part-time Health teacher last year. Before Choate, she worked as a Chemistry teacher and the Associate Dean of Residential Life at St. George's School. Ms. Dullea resides in Nichols House with her wife, Math teacher Ms. Molly Dullea, their two children, and nine-year-old poodle. In her free time, she enjoys working on home improvement projects and spending time outdoors. She is committed to enabling students to discover their authentic selves.

Photo courtesy of Mr. Tom Cottle

Mr. Tom Cottle joins Choate fter earning a degree in Political Science at Vassar College. He teaches U.S. History and Contemporary Issues in the HPRSS Department. Mr. Cottle is also the Assistant Coach for Boys' Thirds Soccer and will be the Assistant Coach for Boys' Varsity Lacrosse. Since arriving at Choate, he shared, "I really like the community, especially living in Logan Monroe. Everyone has a bit of obligation to one another ... This makes me feel at home." Mr. Cottle's goal is to provide students with a practical perspective on U.S. History that they can apply daily.

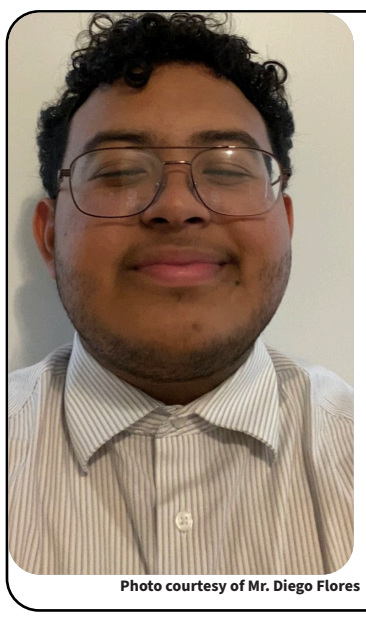


Photo courtesy of Mr. Diego Flores

Raised in Washington D.C., Mr. Diego Flores is excited for a new experience at Choate. Before joining Choate, he was a teaching assistant for a math and science scholarship program for minority students affiliated with Phillips Academy Andover. At Choate, he teaches Accelerated Algebra II, serves as a House Mentor at West Wing and Hall, and coaches Intramural Squash. Mr. Flores also enjoys playing the bass guitar, crocheting, and drawing. He looks forward to seeing all the events in store for this year. "My goal is to be anything and everything that the students need," Mr. Flores said.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Beatrice Voorhees

Choate is excited to introduce Ms. Beatrice Voorhees to the HPRSS Department. A double major in Slavic Studies and History in college, Ms. Voorhees teaches U.S. History and will serve as the Assistant Coach to the Boys' and Girls' Varsity Swimming and Track and Field teams. Originally from Kent, Connecticut, she now lives in Memorial House with her cat, Otto. Ms. Voorhees hopes that her students gain a deeper understanding of history and the upcoming U.S. presidential election. "It brings me joy to work with young people and talk about important topics with them," she said.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Jess Pablo '20

Ms. Jess Pablo '20 is a new Admission Officer and a proud Choate alum. After graduating from Wesleyan University, she pursued a career in educational leadership and management, bringing her back to Choate. "[At] Choate, I had such a strong alumni network and amazing mentors who taught me how to advocate for myself," she said. "So when I was deciding on what the next steps were after college, I thought about where it all started and where I started to figure out who I was." Ms. Pablo is a House Mentor in Mead House and loves watching political documentaries and attending sports games.

Photo courtesy of Mr. Mike Pereira

Born and raised in West Haven, Connecticut, Mr. Mike Pereira is joining the Admission Office and will serve as the new Head Coach of Boys' Varsity Ice Hockey. "I grew up playing sports, and gravitated towards hockey as I became older." Before Choate, Mr. Pereira was the Assistant Coach to the Men's Ice Hockey team at the University of Connecticut. In his free time, Mr. Pereira enjoys reading, fishing, and golfing. He stated, "I feel like those four years in high school help shape the next 40, and [I] hope to bring a positive impact and instill life lessons in students."

Photo courtesy of Mr. Anthony Vignola

Mr. Anthony Vignola is Choate's new Athletic Trainer. He earned his Bachelor of Health Science from Sacred Heart University, where he played Division 1 hockey. Growing up in Cheshire, Connecticut, Mr. Vignola called coming to Choate "a full circle moment," remembering how he played youth hockey in the Remsen Arena. He currently serves as a House Mentor in Lowndes House and enjoys exercising and playing softball with his friends. "I am grateful to work in an environment where I have others by my side and hope to make an impact on an individual level with students," he said.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Jenny Simpson

Ms. Jenny Simpson is an Admission Officer and the new Head Coach of Girls' Varsity Lacrosse. Ms. Simpson earned a Bachelor of Arts in Kinesiology Sports Studies from the University of New Hampshire. Previously, she coached lacrosse at the College of William and Mary and at the University of New Hampshire. While living in the United Kingdom, Ms. Simpson played for the England National Lacrosse Team, earning a gold medal at the 2019 European Championships and a bronze medal in the 2017 World Cup. "I'm looking to bring my playing and coaching experience," she said.

Photo courtesy of Ms. Talia Dell Angelo

Ms. Talia Dell Angelo is joining the Science Department as a physics teacher and will be teaching Honors Physics and Honors Advanced Physics. Previously a teacher at Cushing Academy in Massachusetts, she brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm. Ms. Dell Angelo is from Los Angeles, California, and holds physics and philosophy degrees from Purdue University. She is a House Mentor in Bernhard House and an Assistant Coach for Girls' Varsity Soccer and Girls' Thirds Tennis. "I'm excited to get involved in the community and find ways to be helpful," she said.

Photo courtesy of Mr. Matthias Baudinet

Mr. Matthias Baudinet will be teaching Honors World History and Regular U.S. History. Before coming to Choate, he taught at La Salle High School in Yakima, Washington, and Millbrook School in Millbrook, New York. He joined the Choate community to teach in a "larger community with a more robust and rigorous curriculum." Additionally, he is a new Assistant Coach for Boys' Varsity Soccer and House Mentor in Bungalow. He loves interacting with students and faculty members but also values having his personal time where he can "contemplate in silence."

Photo courtesy of Ms. Liza Wolf

Ms. Liza Wolf is a new English teacher, currently teaching third- and fifth-form English classes. Before joining Choate, she taught English and coached tennis and field hockey at Kimball Union Academy. She lives in Memorial House and enjoys unwinding by reading or baking. She enjoys teaching her "9th graders, who have lots of enthusiasm and energy," and feels welcomed by the kindness of the Choate community. Ms. Wolf looks forward to building meaningful relationships with her students and hopes to become the "warm welcoming person who students feel comfortable talking to."

Photo courtesy of Mr. John Rocklin

Mr. John Rocklin joins Choate's Language Department as its newest Latin teacher. After earning his Master of Education at Columbia University, he served as the Chair of the Classical Languages Department at St. Stephen's Episcopal School for nine years. Outside of teaching, Mr. Rocklin spends time reading, blacksmithing, painting, and cross-country skiing. He lives in Nichols House with his wife, Ms. Renaud, and his cat, Abigail. Mr. Rocklin coaches Boys' Cross Country and will coach Track and Field. He hopes to "make strong connections and relationships" at Choate.

Students Gather for 2024 Debate Watch Party

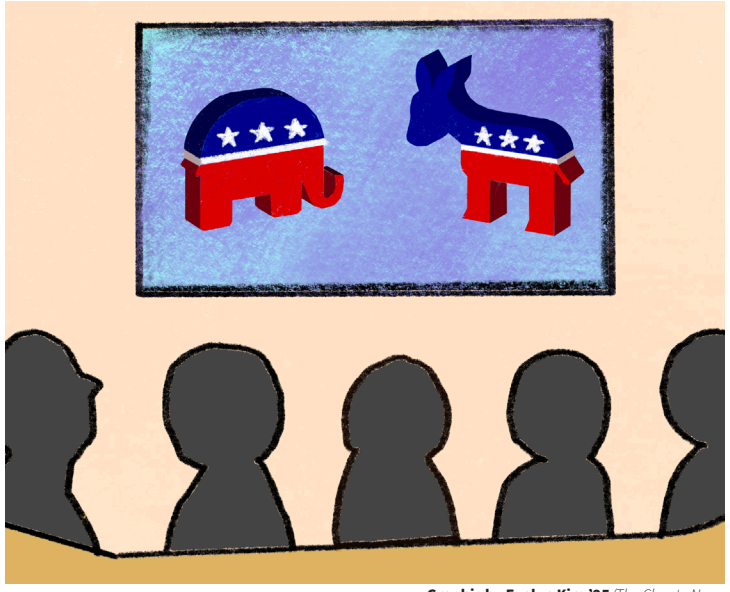
By **Hiyab Mebrahtu '27**
Reporter

On September 10, the highly-anticipated debate between presidential candidates Donald Trump P'00 and Kamala Harris took place at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. To get the Choate community engaged with the election, cabinet members of the Choate Young Democrats, Choate Young Republicans, and Choate Political Union organized a debate watch party in the Student Activities Center (SAC). Filled with thoughtful conversations and enthusiastic reactions to critical moments, the event gave students the opportunity to watch and enjoy the debate together.

Sofia Schmidt '25, a Young Democrats cabinet member, felt that the event was a success. "The event was both educational and fun, which I think is why so many students decided to attend," Schmidt said. "Displaying the debate to a large group was a great way to educate the audience and possibly entice passersby or SAC dwellers."

Attendees thought it was a great way to spark conversation about the election. Harper Marsden-Uren '26 said that she "had a wonderful time" and "loved hearing various different people have different reactions." Celeste Shattuck '25 added, "It was a great way to get people politically involved on campus and ... it was a great atmosphere to be in."

However, planning the event also came with several challenges. Since the debate took place from 9:00 to 10:30 p.m., students were required to get special permission on the Reach app to stay in the SAC past curfew. "Beyond getting permission to hold an event after curfew, one difficulty we faced was turning away students who did not have permission to be out past curfew," Schmidt said. As a result, many students didn't get the chance to attend the watch party, and only 50 students were allowed to stay after 9:30 p.m. "There were actually a few people that begged to stay past curfew even though they had not reached, which I suppose is a testament to how entertaining the debate was," she added.


Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

In a school setting, some may discourage conversations regarding politics to avoid potential conflicts; however, many students are now looking to embrace political dialogue and hear new perspectives. "We're so lucky to be at a school like Choate, where there are so many passionate and intellectual people, and getting to hear people's different views ... is exactly what we should be doing," Marsden-Uren said.

Schmidt believes the watch party accomplished its goal of encouraging more people to engage with the election. "The watch party served its purpose: generating interest and excitement about the upcoming election in the Choate community. I wouldn't change anything about the way we planned it," Schmidt said.

Hiyab Mebrahtu *may be reached at hmebrahtu27@choate.edu.*

SENIORS SIGN L-BEAM

Continued from Page 1

called home," he said, "On the other hand, it reminded me of the last couple of months I have left here "

Haik also appreciated how the L-Beam displayed the diversity of personalities within his class. "As we all signed the beam, everyone shared a sense of camaraderie. Some people wrote their names large and bold accompanied with a smiley face, while others wrote their names in a small print font, highlighting the wide range of personalities in the senior grade," he said.

Building on this sentiment, Xiu Lim '25 added, "It is a huge privilege for the Class of 2025 to be able to sign the beam because for many of the prospective Choaties, the first building they will see would be Carr Hall, and I think it is very wholesome to be given this opportunity."

The L-Beam signing left a mark on many members of the Class of 2025, signifying the beginning of the end of their journey at the School. As each senior signed their signature, they contributed to a lasting legacy that will be remembered and cherished long after they've graduated.

Matthew Zhang *may be reached at mzhang28@choate.edu.*

Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Students sign L-beam with friends.

Wallingford Residents Jam Out at Porchfest

Photo courtesy of Mr. Mark Vogt

A local band performs at Wallingford Porchfest.

By **Reid Bock '27**
Reporter

Free concerts on Wallingford porches: this is not a drill! On September 14, Wallingford held its fourth annual Porchfest, a day filled with live music right from the porches of local homes. With musical performances by people ranging from the mayor, to student bands, to a mariachi group, attendees came from all over town to enjoy the live music.

This year's Porchfest featured an eclectic mix of genres, including rock, jazz, funk, blues, and more. Many local musicians and bands performed, including Remove Before Flight, Vinnie Testa, Joe Town, and guests Youth Mariachi, Bethany Brothers, Ukes of Hazard, and Bear Mountain Rock House School. The event's lead organizer, Mr. Mark Vogt, said, "A lot of people came out. We probably had a couple hundred people, so it was pretty successful in that regard." To get the word out, Mr. Vogt and other community members put up posters and lawn signs promoting the event around Wallingford.

The idea for Porchfest originally came from Mr. Vogt's friend, musician Mr. Brandon Kaswer, who was inspired by porchfests in his hometown of Sommerville, Massachusetts. Noticing them in other Connecticut towns like Guilford and Milford as well, Mr. Vogt decided to plan a porchfest for Wallingford. Four years later, Wallingford Porchfest has become a local favorite and was even listed as one of the top eight things to do in Connecticut on Channel 8 News.

Looking ahead, Mr. Vogt is excited about expanding the event. "I'd like to double the number of bands for next year, and not [be] centralized to the downtown area, expanding it into some of the other neighborhoods," Mr. Vogt said. He also hopes to increase marketing for the event. "Maybe next year we'll get a banner, telling people about it. Not everybody's on Facebook; not everybody catches social media pitches; just expanding it to hit more households," he said.

Mr. Vogt emphasized Porchfest's role as an opportunity for families, friends, small businesses, and artists to come together and experience the joys of live music. "Bringing the community together and bond[ing]. That was what we were going for … music is a bonding experience," he said.

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

37 Dogs Rescued from Hoarding Situation in Wallingford

By **Maia Shah '27**
Reporter

On August 30, Animal Control rescued 37 dogs that had been hoarded in a barn in Wallingford. Animal Control learned about this situation after receiving several noise complaints about barking dogs.

After the noise complaints were submitted in repeated anonymous letters, the Wallingford Police Department entered the residence and seized control of the dogs. While they showed no apparent signs of abuse, the dogs appeared neglected and cramped in close quarters. They had no access to regular grooming, clean drinking water, and the standard of care that many pet owners might typically provide.

The dogs' owners, a 69-year-old woman and her son, allowed Animal Control to access the space and obliged with all search procedures without hesitation. While the police and Animal Control have been aware of the situation for approximately seven months, officers gave the owners a chance to improve the dogs' living conditions without outside intervention. However, no sufficient improvements were made, prompting the police to take action instead.

The police department classifies this situation as a case of hoarding rather than abuse. The National Library of Medicine defines an animal hoarder as a person who "accumulated a large number of animals and who: 1) fails to provide minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care; 2) fails to act on the deteriorating condition of the animals (including disease, starvation or death) and the environment (severe overcrowding, extremely unsanitary conditions)."

After the intervention, the owner and her son gave up possession of the dogs, which were subsequently dispersed to various locations across New Haven County, including Meriden, North Haven, East Haven, New London, and Poodle Rescue CT, a non-profit organization located in Naugatuck. Poodle Rescue was helpful for the relocation efforts by providing the dogs with temporary shelter and grooming services and taking in four of the dogs.

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

For the dogs, the grooming process was crucial to understanding the severity of their condition. It was not an easy task to treat the dogs' immense matting and overgrown hair, but it did help indicate the dogs' need for veterinary attention. Mr. Daryl Masone, a representative of Poodle Rescue, said in a statement for NBC Connecticut that "the dogs' biggest needs appear to be around socialization." His colleague, Ms. Allyson Eliason, a groomer with Beauty in the Beast grooming services, added, "they were pretty matted. One of them, the tail was so matted I had to slide my scissor down the tail to cut the mat open to shave it off."

Due to the grooming, veterinary care, and attention they still require, and the ongoing nature of the investigation, the dogs will remain in temporary shelters until they become candidates for adoption. As the police receive comprehensive evaluations and obtain a search warrant to further investigate the dogs' poor living conditions and the owners' motivations, more information will become available to the public. As of now, no arrests have been made, and no charges have been pressed.

Maia Shah *may be reached at mshah27@choate.edu.*

Crossing Safely: Choate and Wallingford Plan Bridge Construction

By **Aiden Kuo '27**
Reporter

At the Wallingford Town Hall meeting on September 10, Choate advanced its plan to construct a pedestrian bridge that would connect the Bruce '45 and Lueza Gelb Track and Rosemary Lane, improving both campus safety and connectivity. The proposed bridge would cross over the cross-country course, the JV baseball field, and the Thirds Girls' soccer field, with the goal of being completed by next summer.

Choate student Victoria DeVito '27 represented the School at the Town Hall meeting about permission for an air easement. This easement was necessary because some parts of the bridge will be on Choate property and others will cross into town jurisdiction.

DeVito emphasized the importance of the bridge for ensuring student safety. "It's an opportunity to make crossing safer for students. I've had experiences and have had friends who have been in close calls with cars, and I think it's essential that we alleviate this burden, not only from the students but also from the drivers," DeVito explained. Once completed, the bridge will allow students to safely cross over the road without the issue of waiting for cars to stop, improving both student safety and traffic flow for drivers.

Choate's Chief Financial Officer Mr. Patrick Durbin, who played a vital role in planning the bridge and developing other efforts to improve campus infrastructure argued that the bridge serves a dual purpose. First, he highlighted the bridge's role in enhanced safety, pointing out that the road structure poses risks to pedestrians. "The road is on a hill, and cars can't stop until it is very close," Mr. Durbin said. "By creating the bridge, the risk of severe accidents can be eliminated."

Mr. Durbin also stressed that it would increase efficiency for all community members. "It's not just for the students and faculty," he explained. "There are people that park in Colony Hall that need to cross over to reach their cars and use the track." In the Town Hall, Councilor Mr. Jesse Reynolds echoed Mr. Durbin's sentiment by acknowledging that Wallingford sports teams sometimes use Choate facilities. The bridge would also facilitate quicker access for Choate athletic teams, such as cross country, baseball, and soccer, to their respective fields.

Nevertheless, councilors Mr. Samuel Carmody, Mr. Thomas Laffin, and Mr. Reynolds expressed hesitancy to grant approval to the plan so quickly. They noted the potential negative effects of Choate projects on the town of Wallingford, citing the monetary aspects involved. Because Choate is a nonprofit institution, it does not pay property taxes on initiatives such as buying homes on Curtis Avenue. The councilors also believed that a $10 payment for the air easement due to crossing into town property was insufficient, as easements are typically over $100.

After the debate and other speeches from Wallingford residents, Choate alumni, and members of the Choate community like Chief Communications Officer Ms. Alison Cady, the Town Council motioned to vote. Overall, the Council was in favor of the bridge project, and in a 6-3 vote, the Council passed the air easement agreement.

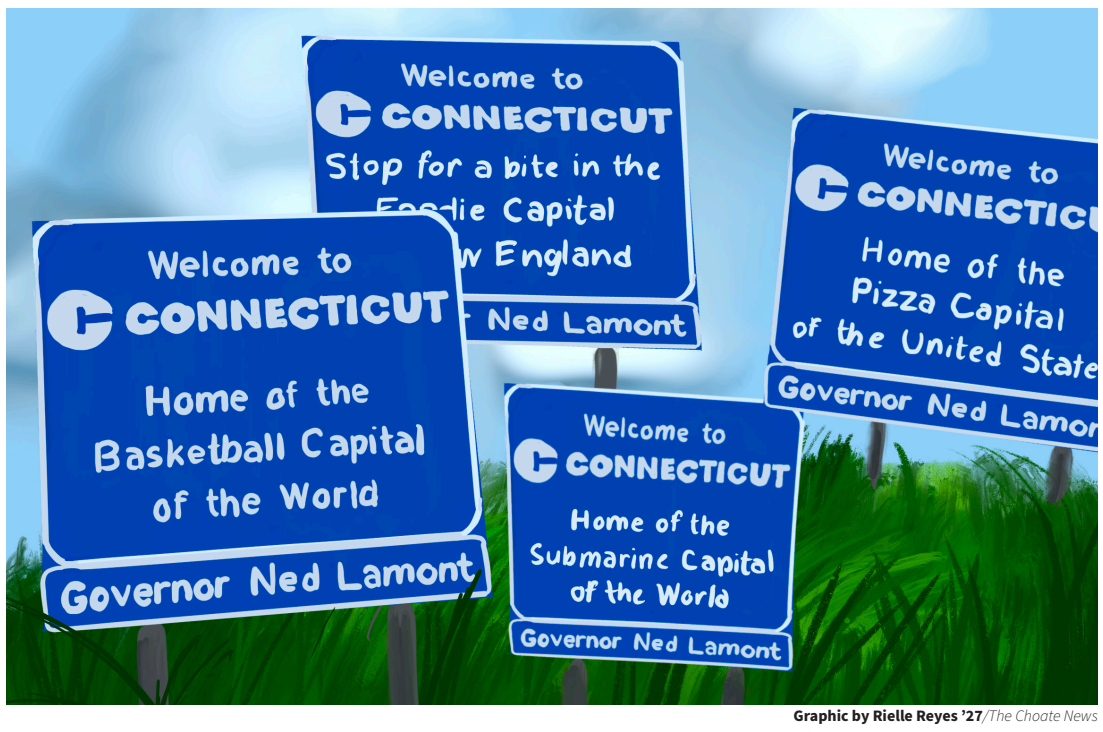
In order to begin bridge construction, the School must get zoning approval from Wallingford's Planning and Zoning Commission and finalize the bridge's blueprints.

Aiden Kuo *may be reached at akuo27@choate.edu.*

Photo courtesy of Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard '98 and Chief Financial Officer Mr. Patrick Durbin

A digital rendering of what the pedestrian bridge may look like.

Connecticut's New Signs Raise Eyebrows



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

By **Jai Midha '27**
Reporter

In early September, Connecticut unveiled new highway signs in a grand ceremony that boldly expressed the state's identity and culture. The signs, displayed at crucial entry points along major highways from Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island, were revealed amidst a flurry of excitement and celebration, proclaiming Connecticut as home of "the Basketball Capital of the World," "the Pizza Capital of the United States," "the Submarine Capital of the World," and "the Foodie Capital of New England."

Governor Ned Lamont proudly shared the new signs on social media. "These updated signs are a testament to our state's pride, showcasing some of the best of what we do in Connecticut," he said. However, the signs have sparked online and offline conversations about their validity.

Specifically, the "Basketball Capital" declaration has roused debate. With the University of Connecticut Women's and Men's Basketball teams sharing 11 and six National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) tournament titles respectively, Connecticut has a solid argument. However, as journalist Melina Khan noted, "From a historical perspective, basketball started in [Springfield], Massachusetts, and they have the Naismith Museum. So I think the most interesting thing is the rivalry in terms of who has more claim over being the basketball capital of the world."

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey even responded to this claim with a tongue-in-cheek meme on X by posting a photo that displayed "Connecticut" crossed out and replaced with "Massachusetts."

Equally disputed is the assertion that Connecticut is the "Pizza Capital of the United States." While New Haven's famous pizzerias like Sally's Apizza and Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana have long been celebrated, some would argue that New York's iconic thin-slice pizza and Chicago's deep-dish pizza deserve equal, or even more, recognition for their unique styles.

Perhaps the most surprising claim is that Connecticut is the "Foodie Capital of New England." While the state does offer unique dishes like the Connecticut-style lobster roll and steamed cheeseburger, this title has raised some eyebrows. "The fact that one of the signs said Connecticut is the foodie capital of New England is, I think, a little bit more contentious," Khan noted, reflecting on the reactions she observed among her colleagues. "That is a major take, but it has gotten people talking."

On the other hand, the signs denoting Connecticut as the "Submarine Capital of the World" are less disputed. Both the Naval Submarine Base New London and General Dynamics Electric Boat, the primary manufacturer of submarines for the U.S. Navy, have their headquarters in Groton, Connecticut. Members of the U.S. Navy also have to go to Groton for initial training at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, also known as Boot Camp. Connecticut has used this sign to further stress its importance to the U.S. Navy.

Regardless of the controversies or conversations surrounding these new signs, their intentions are clear: to celebrate Connecticut's contributions and foster state pride. Whether these bold claims will be universally accepted is another question. What's certain, however, is that the signs have succeeded in bringing attention to Connecticut's unique culture and history, sparking lively debates among residents and visitors alike.

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

The Choate News

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The Value in Choate's Carr Hall

By **Peter Ganzenmuller '26**
Opinions Writer

In the spring of 2024, the football field was torn up to make way for Carr Hall, the new Admission building that will open in the fall of 2025. Like most new building projects at Choate, Carr Hall is hotly debated amongst students for its seeming lack of purpose and high cost. Contrary to popular student opinion, Carr Hall will provide significant benefits to the Choate student population and the overall community by increasing the School's diversity and improving community safety.

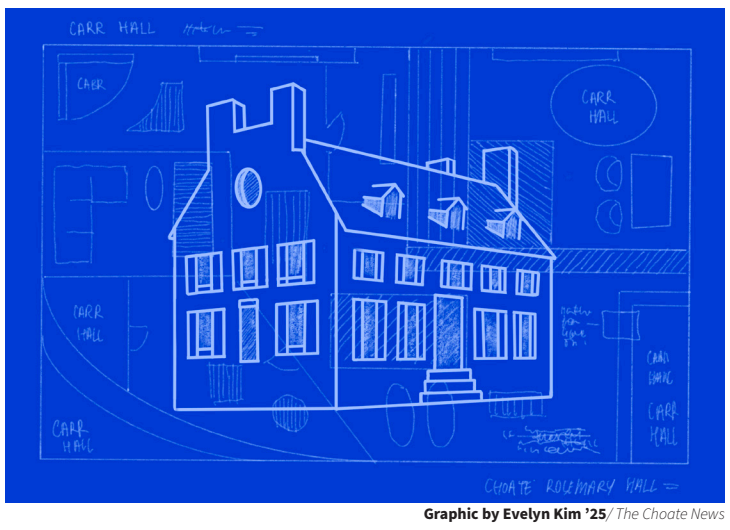
On its surface, Carr Hall seems like an extensive and over-designed solution to a problem Choate doesn't have: a lack of applications. Every year, Choate's Chief Enrollment Manager, Mr. Jeff Beaton, gives a very similar speech to new students. He stresses the selectiveness of Choate and references the thousands of applications he and his team combed through the past winter. But, according to Choate's Chief Financial Officer Mr. Patrick Durbin, Carr Hall isn't meant to increase the number of applications, but instead up the quality of acceptances.

New buildings are guided by Choate's strategic plan, which details the School's general ideas for the future. Carr Hall was designed with two specific goals in mind. Firstly, it is intended to be a purpose-built Admission building, which differs from the current multi-use Archbold office. Having infrastructure solely dedicated to prospective students will provide the Admission Office more space to hold events that will broaden the demographics of Choate's applicant pool and put its best foot forward to attract potential community members.

Carr Hall's increased capacity will provide a dedicated space for the best students from all over the world to get a feel for Choate, helping improve the School's diversity. For me, one of Choate's best qualities is the variety of opinions and backgrounds you are exposed to every day. It is an immense privilege to learn from people who are vastly different from myself. Our vibrant community allows students to gain a better understanding of other cultures and perspectives. Carr Hall can further improve this strength by facilitating more admissions events for underrepresented demographics.

Secondly, in addition to the admission-related benefits, Carr Hall will improve community safety. It will also allow for what is currently the Gunpowder Creek parking lot to be converted into a pedestrian thoroughfare, thereby limiting interaction between students and cars as much as possible and reducing the chance of accidents. While the direction of capital investments is without a doubt a contentious topic, the construction of Carr Hall is a sound decision that will improve the diversity of opinions and ideas on campus.

***Peter Ganzenmuller** is a fifth-former from New York, NY. He may be reached at at pganzenmuller26@choate.edu.*



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/ *The Choate News*

All-School Read: Time for a Change

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

By **Zahabiya Khokha '27**
Opinions Writer

Some students discover their new favorite book through Choate's All-School Read, while others dread each summer that they have to open the novel. Whether you love it or hate it, the summer reading undoubtedly provides valuable insights on hot-button topics, but often, the focus is centered solely on American issues. Considering the School's diverse demographic, the issues discussed in the summer reading should represent global issues, not just U.S. ones.

This year's books, *Felon: Poems* by Reginald Dwayne Betts and *Chain-Gang All Stars* by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, focused on the American criminal system and the unfair and harsh realities faced primarily by people of color. Last year's book, *World of Wonders* by Aimee Nezhukumatathil, focused on what it's like growing up in America in an immigrant family through the lens of nature. After the conversations with the speakers and the subsequent Q&A sessions, it is clear that Choate encourages the student body to recognize the struggles of being a person of color in America — a very prominent topic today.

40% of Choate students identify as people of color, thus, the student body should have no trouble connecting with the topics expressed and portrayed in our most recent school-wide reads. However, 18% of our students are international, and their stories deserve to be celebrated as well. This means that to make all students feel seen, the future all-school read should address ideas from both the United States and worldwide.

These texts should push the envelope, exposing students to new ideas and perspectives. While Choate is already doing a great job weaving contemporary political and social conflicts into the summer reading themes, students are often focused only on what is happening in their immediate surroundings. By considering international perspectives that address new ideas, the School could make better use of the All-School Read.

This doesn't mean that American perspectives and issues can't be woven into texts; they just shouldn't always be the centerpiece. For the 2025 summer reading book, the School can achieve this goal by selecting a book like *North America: The Middleman and Other Stories* by Bharati Mukherjee. This book is a collection of short stories about the experience of immigrants coming in and out of America from around the world, incorporating varied perspectives to constantly introduce the reader to new ideas. Such a text would push students to think critically about American as well as global issues, thereby including the perspectives of the entire Choate community.

Commenting on the considerations taken when choosing *Chain-Gang All Stars* and *Felon: Poems*, English teacher Mr. Cobb, a member of the All-School Read committee, said, "I teach the satire course here, and I think it's, it is a brilliant satire on professional sports, on imprisoned people, on race relations and the rest." Exposing students to new styles of writing holds value alongside exposing students to new perspectives. These two aspects should be balanced when choosing texts in the future to ensure that the Choate community grows through summer reading.

***Zahabiya Khokha** is a fourth-former from Guilford, CT. She may be reached at zkhokha27@choate.edu.*

Boars at the Ballots: Should Choate Encourage Voting?

By **Rachel Fan '27**
Copy Editor

On a fine Tuesday evening on September 10, I settled in bed early to watch the presidential debate. It was amusing, to say the least. Right after it ended, online forums exploded with traffic, a flood of reactions and commentary pouring from every corner of the web. It was a wild week in the political online world, with everything from Taylor Swift's surprise endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris to unfounded rumors of "Haitian immigrants eating cats in Ohio," and even talk about a second assasination attempt on former President Donald Trump P '00.

Considering that a sizable portion of our student population is over the federal voting age of 18, I couldn't help but wonder about the digital world's overwhelming impact on students' ability to make informed voting decisions. Although Choate shouldn't explicitly encourage voting, it is still an unavoidable, fundamental part of our lives; therefore, Choate should prioritize equipping students with critical tools to navigate disinformation and promoting intellectual autonomy while taking a neutral stance.

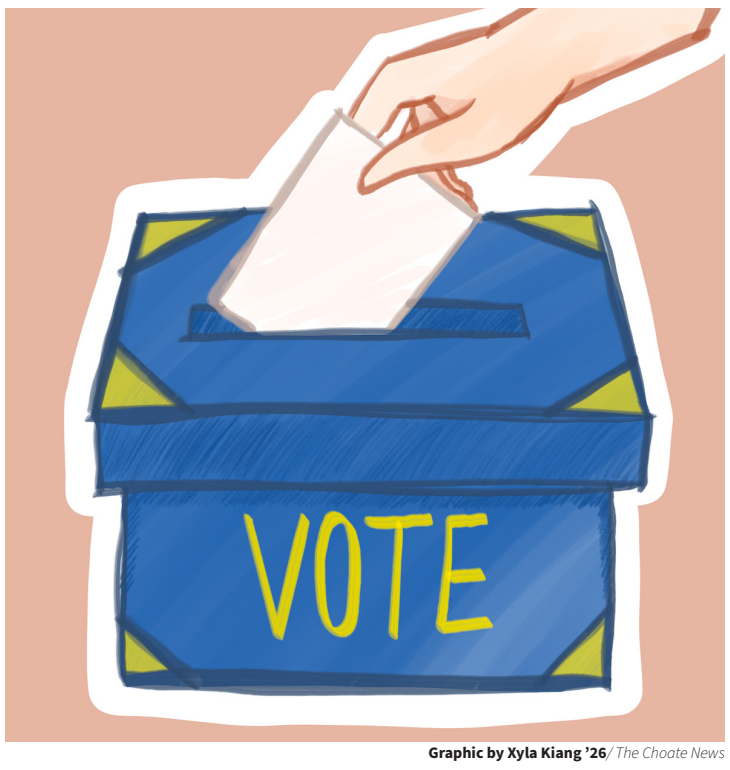
For us Gen Z-ers, who live largely online, the sheer volume of misleading content on the internet makes it difficult to separate reality from rumor, which could complicate a student's ability to make informed decisions. In this chaotic landscape, our student body's eligible voters face a serious challenge: how can they confidently navigate the truth when it's buried under so much noise?

While Choate offers 14 unique courses about American politics, none focus on postmodern politics. Understanding global affairs in the context of the last few years, or studies of current politicians, allows students to make an educated decision in the voting booth on who to choose as their next president. Learning about the Constitution or the economy is all fine and well, but that is not enough when students are staring down the ballot, trying to decide between candidates whose policies aren't even part of Choate classroom discussions?

This is where Choate's role becomes even more crucial. Rather than solely pushing students towards voting, the School should focus on creating a broader sense of civic engagement. While voting is certainly important, pressuring students to vote without the proper education could lead to uninformed or superficial participation. Instead, Choate should inform its students about the complexities of today's democratic processes and current issues without endorsing any single form of civic engagement and allow students to discover diverse ways to participate in democracy.

Some students might argue that voting is a fundamental right and Choate should encourage students over 18 to vote, claiming that failing to participate weakens democracy. They believe it complements education by giving students a direct way to act on their learning. However, voting isn't just some checkbox exercise; it's about understanding policy nuances, recognizing who will represent one's interests, and cutting through the political theater to find the truth. And yet, students are expected to figure this out on their own, armed with little more than what they've picked up from history class or whatever viral content happens to be trending on X. Choate can responsibly address this gap in knowledge by providing an education on postmodern politics that excites engagement with voting as well as broader civic life.

***Rachel Fan** is a fourth-former from Shanghai, China. She may be reached at rfan27@choate.edu.*



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

Cheque Books for Textbooks: Overpriced Books at the Choate Store

By **Steven Kee '27**
Copy Editor

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

At the beginning of every academic year, students flock to the Choate store to buy textbooks and school supplies. Many of these items are sold at significant markups compared to other sellers. While the store's operating costs may drive the price of items up, and it's logical for convenience to come at a cost, much of the School Store's pricing is beyond unreasonable. There must be limits to the markups, and the School must find ways to lower prices.

The TI-84 calculator, which costs $149 at the School Store, was purchased by the store at $100 and is $130 at Walmart. A used chemistry textbook sold at the store costs $50, while it could be purchased at half the price online. Even unused textbooks are significantly marked up. One online Spanish textbook costs $120 on the publisher's website, yet it is sold for $162 at the store, a 35% markup.

Even though many factors may go into the School Store prices, including the cost at which they buy used textbooks, it's apparent that the School Store is marking up prices more than necessary. The idea of having a 100%, markup for any item is feasible for a designer brand, not a high school store. Though the markup percentages for used books differ vastly, the availability of much cheaper alternatives online speaks volumes about how much lower some of the items could really be. It's valid if the School Store charges slightly higher prices for the convenience of having the books immediately available, but such increases are unfair. Even textbooks with average markups are sold at unacceptable prices.

The School Store Manager, Ms. Kate Meehan, shared that the average markup for new textbooks and items at the store is around 30%. While this is standard for retail establishments such as Walmart, which has an average 24% markup, the objective of the School Store is not the same as that of Walmart. Walmart's goal is to maximize profit, while the School Store's is to provide students with the correct resources they need to learn. The School Store has a different purpose that is unlike other retail establishments, therefore the markup percentages for items should also be different — and much lower.

Despite the School providing generous stipends of up to $850 to students on financial aid, covering almost all textbook costs, students who do not receive these benefits are left out in the cold — and are prone to the School Store's pricing tactics. The School must act to protect students' wallets. This means attacking the core of the problem, which is textbook costs. Even if the price of textbooks is included in tuition, students would still be indirectly paying unreasonable fees. To address this, the Administration should take multiple steps that involve but also exclude the Choate store and its third-party operator, the Higher Learning Supply Company.

One key way to lower prices would be for the School to provide an alternative convenience shop to the School Store. In addition to the free textbooks provided by C-Proctors, the School can organize a marketplace at the end of each academic year, where students who are set to take a certain course can purchase used textbooks from students who previously took the course. If students drop or add classes the following year or a seller fails to find a buyer, they can sell or buy the book from the School Store. Although a student-coordinated marketplace may come with organizational challenges, it is worth the trouble if it means lowering prices. When dealing directly with the store and its operator, the School should cap markups for items.

The School must take measures to lower prices at the Choate store and end unjustified markups. Prices should be lowered when they can be, rather than maintaining them and offering an opportunity for profit. In a community that highlights compassion and equity, a system that takes profits off of students has no place.

***Steven Kee** is a fourth-former from Hong Kong. He may be reached at skee27@choate.edu.*

BRAT ON THE BALLOT: DANGERS OF MEME-IFYING POLITICS

By **Francesca Howard '26**
Copy Editor

With just three words — "Kamala IS brat" — pop singer Charli XCX made X, formerly known as Twitter, go berserk. Charli's support gave Vice President Kamala Harris just the boost she needed to surge in the polls despite her late entry into the presidential race.

While the media's impact may seem harmless at first glance, it is going to have major ramifications this November. The 2024 election is drastically different from any election we've ever seen. Social media and memes are defining how candidates connect with voters, and, ultimately, they could decide who gets to sit in the Oval Office.

Released in late July, Charli's album *BRAT* quickly became TikTok's "anthem of the summer." Just days after Vice President Harris announced her presidential candidacy, Charli endorsed her, and the timing couldn't have been more perfect. Almost overnight, the internet was inundated with "brat" memes: video edits of Vice President Harris set to Charli's music circulated TikTok, Instagram, and other social media platforms. Her fans wore chartreuse green swag, alluding to the album's iconic cover.

As one of the most significant pop culture and political crossovers in U.S. history, this collab rejuvenated the Democratic Party, with thousands of voters proudly identifying as "Demobrats." Crowned Gen Z's "Meme Queen," Vice President Harris has leaned into the meme culture that dominates much of the up-and-coming voter population's digital experience. Through comedy, Vice President Harris has successfully connected with the younger electorate and incentivized them to vote.

Though Vice President Harris's "brat" rebrand might be popular, it makes zero sense. After listening to *BRAT*, I wondered why Vice President Harris wanted to be portrayed as such. Charli describes the "brat" aesthetic as "that girl who is a little messy and likes to party and maybe says some dumb things sometimes, who feels herself, but then also maybe has a breakdown, but kind of parties through it." According to Charli, a "brat" might have "a pack of cigs, a Bic lighter, and a strappy white top with no bra." I beg your pardon? I don't know about you, but I hope our potential president is not some chaotic, unstable, stupid party girl. Is this really the woman running for the highest office in the country? Has Vice President Harris even listened to this album? Does she not know what "bumpin' that" means? Instead of being more inclined to vote for Vice President Harris, her supposed "brat era" left me wondering why she'd want to embrace such an unpresidential persona.

Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

But that's the thing about memes. It doesn't matter if they are constructive. It doesn't matter if they are true. It doesn't matter if they are even funny. Memetic content is purely designed to get people talking. As memes take on a larger role in political discourse, they make conversations more accessible to the average voter. President Joe Biden tripping down the stairs. Former President Trump P'oo's sassy mugshot. Vice President Harris's nonsensical coconut tree tangent. These are things we can collectively laugh at whether or not they have actual value.

Memes are part of a larger cultural revolution we have witnessed over the last few years. Social media has changed the game when it comes to politics. The internet's instantaneous transmission of information allows users to be updated on just about everything in mere seconds. As a result, many people now get their news from social media. A study by the Pew Research Center found that 55% of Americans aged 18 to 29 rely on social media for their news, and that number is substantially higher for Gen Zs.

What's more concerning is that America's meme problem has only gotten worse. Trump's 2016 campaign was the first to exploit meme culture's power. The American public created memes that both celebrated and mocked him. He became more of a meme than a politician. Trump's ability to dominate the conversation on social media arguably secured him the presidency. Since then, nearly every campaign has followed that same playbook. Whether it's U.S. Representative Nancy Pelosi's "tic-tac-toe" reference, Trump's "Covfefe" gaffe, or former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's "Pokémon go to the polls," memes enshrine public figures in cringy internet lore.

There are numerous reasons why the memeification of American politics is undermining our political process. Firstly, they don't teach us anything. Memes are fun because they make people feel like they're in on a joke, but politics isn't a joke. When we focus so much on the humor of a meme, the issues at stake are overlooked. Memes make us think that relatability translates to capability. This idea is ridiculous. Someone can be a funny person and an incompetent president.

The problem isn't just that memes are part of our political discourse but instead that our entire approach to politics is growing lax. The 2024 election will undoubtedly be decided by social media, but the consequences will be felt in the real world. Vice President Harris being "brat" is one of the most pressing issues on our hands, but the solution isn't to get rid of these memes. Clearly, they are here to stay. However, we cannot afford to rely on memes as our sole source of information. Memes can be funny, but they are even more humorous when you understand their context. To do that requires initiative on your part to do your research. Look into the candidates, their policies, and what they stand for. And for those who make political content, it's incumbent upon them to find a balance between being relatable and responsible creators.

As we draw closer to election day, we must take the negative impact of meme culture into account. This upcoming election could make or break us as a country. People's livelihoods are at stake. If we keep ignoring our meme problem, the joke will be on us.

Francesca Howard *is a fifth-former from New York, NY. She may be reached at fhoward26@choate.edu.*

Drawing the Line: Do Politics Belong in the Olympics?

By **Sienna Kim '28**
Opinions Writer

Since it was revived in 1896, the Olympics has held people's attention in a tight grip, with the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games reaching a global broadcast audience of more than 3,000,000,000. Because of its appeal to viewers of all ages and its capacity to deliver unparalleled athleticism, nationalism, and pride, the Games have always had immense power over the public. The wielding of such power becomes an issue when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) employs its influence to undermine unity, spark international tension, and impose beliefs on its viewers.

The Olympics is built upon the idea that every nation, regardless of race, age, and belief, deserves an equal chance of returning home with a bright gold medal. The Games are a celebration of not only athletic prowess but also of the athletes around the world who dedicate their lives to a moment that only arrives every four years.

However, this mission is threatened by complications, such as certain countries being boycotted or being barred from competition due to conflicts unrelated to the Olympics. By propagating certain ideas and condemning others, the IOC risks worsening political relations amongst both national leaders and Olympic athletes, simultaneously skewing global audiences' perceptions of foreign powers. Morality is a fickle idea, and when burdened by centuries of histories and cultures from all around the world, it becomes nearly impossible to create a concrete definition of what should be considered permissible. Thus, it's absurd for the IOC to decide on their own accord what they deem good or bad. Issues within our societies are complex, and oversimplifying these problems by holding certain countries accountable while authorizing others evokes unnecessary animosity.

The event's history has long been political, from perpetuating Nazi propaganda throughout the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin to prohibiting Germany from participating in the 1948 Summer Olympics in London (per their involvement with the Axis Powers during the Second World War).

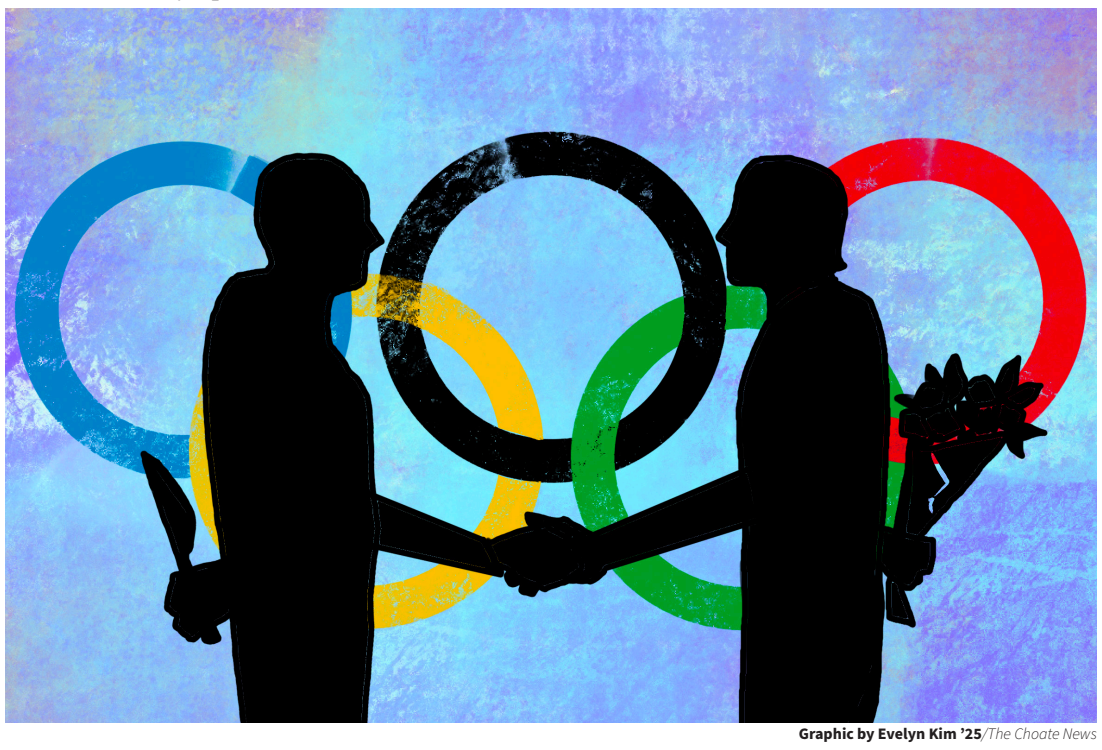
It's difficult to disregard all of the contributions that the IOC has made to political discourse, whether it's by restarting dialogue between the United States and North Korea after the latter's invitation to the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, or banning South Africa from the event up until the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona for Apartheid. This practice sets a dangerous precedent in which the narratives presented at each Olympics will heavily depend on which country is hosting.

As one of the world's most coveted sporting events, the Olympics' primary goal must be to highlight athletic talent. When host countries begin to stray from this goal by banning nations from competing due to their political beliefs and miscellaneous "red flags" that are unrelated to the Games, they jeopardize this event's fundamental mission.

Athletes and their years of blood, sweat, and tears are robbed of the attention they deserve due to the IOC's' selective negligence. When politics dominate the narrative, athletes' amazing feats are pushed aside and replaced by hot topics and buzzwords that fuel the media and controversy, backpedaling on the Olympics' goal to create a platform for athletic excellence.

The IOC cannot continue to allow countries and athletes to promote their own political ideals. They must stop fueling the flames that divide us and instead encourage unity and pride in our country's staggering athletes. Otherwise, the Olympics risks rusting their medals for human achievement in the name of clashing political beliefs.

Sienna Kim *is a third-former from Hong Kong. She may be reached at skim28@choate.edu.*


Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

Media Literacy in A World of Misinformation

Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

By **Zaki Shamsi '26**
Opinions Writer

In a world where breaking news infiltrates our ears faster than our fingers can scroll, it's easy to wonder: who gets the mic? Should the news be government-led, ensuring a steady stream of verified truths? Perhaps it's better in the hands of private companies, where competition could inspire innovation. Or maybe we should let the people speak for themselves — building a digital tapestry of social media posts that captures both facts and feelings in real time.

Each option feels plausible, but none is ideal. The truth is, it's not about who is holding the mic — it's about how we listen. What's needed is improved media literacy to help us navigate inevitably flawed media. No matter how you slice it, the news will always be biased and incomplete, but our understanding doesn't have to be.

At first glance, government-controlled media seems reasonable. The government is accountable for its citizens, so shouldn't it ensure the dissemination of accurate information to them? This works for outlets like the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) or National Public Radio (NPR), where public funding produces reliable, non-sensationalist reporting.

The trouble, however, is that government-led media can slip from accountability to authoritarianism. In less democratic regimes, state-run media turns into propaganda. Even in democracies, governments have agendas, and objectivity becomes the first casualty. While government-led media might promote public interest, it often comes at the cost of bias and selective storytelling.

If not the government, how about private companies? Surely, free enterprise will keep things honest, right? Unfortunately, while privately owned media theoretically allows for diverse voices and encourages high-quality journalism, profit-driven organizations are motivated to keep us engaged, not informed.

Ratings, clicks, and ad revenue drive content. It's not a conspiracy, just economics. We're often fed sensationalism, with just enough truth to feel informed but not enough to question the narrative. In the race for eyeballs, nuance is sacrificed for digestible drama, leaving us misinformed.

This brings us to social media — our modern, messy, free-for-all. There's something romantic about the idea of every citizen being a journalist, breaking the news one post at a time. But the democratization of news hasn't led to a more informed public — it's led to a fragmented one. Social media is the Wild West of information: fast, unchecked, and dangerous.

Platforms like X, formerly known as Twitter, excel at amplifying voices, including ones that spew falsehoods. Misinformation spreads rapidly because outrage gets more engagement than facts. And close-minded echo chambers cement our worldviews as definitive, preventing fruitful discussion with those of different opinions.

None of these systems will ever be perfect. But these systems aren't going anywhere, and neither are their flaws. Instead of choosing the "best" outlet, it's time we focus on how we consume the news.

Before you dive into a story, ask yourself: Who's telling it? A well-established news outlet or a random blog post? And is who wrote it credible? Separating fact from opinion starts with knowing who's behind the mic. Don't settle for one version of the truth either. Read different outlets, especially those with opposing viewpoints to get the full story. This way, you avoid echo chambers and get a clearer, more balanced view of the facts.

The key to surviving today's media landscape isn't about finding the perfect system — it's about becoming smarter navigators. We need to equip people with the tools to critically assess what they're reading, watching, and scrolling through. Media literacy is about teaching people to spot biases, question sources, and understand that every outlet, platform, and post comes with its own set of limitations. In an age where anyone can publish, the power doesn't lie in who controls the news but in how we interpret it.

Improved media literacy empowers us to engage with news without being manipulated. If we learn to read between the lines — whether they're written by a government body, a private company, or an X user — we can extract truth from a sea of half-truths.

Zaki Shamsi *is a fifth-former from Glastonbury, CT. He may be reached at zshamsi26@choate.edu.*

CHOATE'S MOST CHAIR-ISHED SEATS

By **Ethan Zhang '26**
Copy Editor

It's going to be a long day: five classes, two hours of sports practice, and ensemble rehearsal. Hoping to ready yourself for the storm yet to come, you find an empty seat and flop down in relief. With the array of chairs on campus, from century-old couches to modern leather chairs, students have staked their claim for the best seat on campus.

Graphic by Izzy Cook '27/*The Choate News*

Hill House

The Hill House common room boasts the iconic spinning yellow sofa chairs, a standout in the Choate chair-loving community. Both comfortable and situated in a prime location, Hill House prefect Jenna Kim '25 believes the chairs are one of the reasons her friends come to see her. "A lot of my friends come to Hill to hang out on the chairs," Kim said.

On the other hand, Hill House resident Everett Royall '27 enjoys the chairs for a more practical reason: "They are really good for getting work done, and the location is really secluded. You can utilize the armrests to hold your iPad up," Royall said.

Larry Hart Pool

The Larry Hart Pool may seem like the last place to have a comfortable, dry seat. However, hidden in the pool lobby is a timeless blue couch, battered over the years but still structurally sound. For Boys' Swim Team Captain Daneel Polakoff '25, the antique couch holds both comfort and memories. "You can sink in the mattress of the couch. It's comforting, warm, and [has] a homey vibe," Polakoff said. "It's also quite nostalgic. That's the same couch I've slept on during meets since freshman year."

Sally Hart Lawn

In front of the Sally Hart Lodge rests blue, wooden lawn chairs, striking in both color and location. Libby Dai '25, a frequenter of these seats, said, "On a nice spring day, they're perfect for reading, tanning, and talking with friends." Dai also enjoys hosting picnics and playing spikeball near these chairs.

Third-Floor SAC Study Rooms

The third floor of the Student Activities Center (SAC) is home not only to the meeting room of *The Choate News*, but also to Mason Kwee '27's favorite seats: the study rooms' plush sofas.

Though comfortable, Kwee finds the location of the rooms particularly appealing. "It's secluded, so I can get most of my work done without distractions," Kwee said. At the same time, its proximity to the Project Room means he can grab pencils or scissors if necessary.

West Wing and Hall Common Room

With the recent renovations to the Andrew Mellon Library and the joining of Hall and West Wing into one dorm, some of the community's most beloved chairs were relocated; the plush, leather armchairs near the fireplace in the Library were moved to the West Wing common room.

West Wing resident Emma Zeng '26, whose favorite chair used to be the Library armchairs, now has the privilege of enjoying their comfort in the convenience of her own common room. "I can do my work and, more importantly, since it's angled to the doorway, I can also see people who walk into the room," Zeng said.

Lanphier Cafe

Lanphier Center is home to many chairs on campus that are easy to fall asleep in. However, due to its optimal architecture and comfort, the gray chair in the corner of Lanphier Cafe holds a special place in Andrew Fazzone-Chettiar '26's heart. Fazzone-Chettiar appreciates its otherworldly comfort and function as a cup holder. He noted that, "[My drink] could technically fall off since it's not super stable, but it's a risk-to-reward ratio that is [worth it]."

With the wide variety of chairs available on campus, the competition is tough. Whether you're cramming for a Spanish test or simply looking for a spot to relax during Conference, try out some of these chairs and decide for yourself which one should be deemed Choate's most chair-ished seat.

Ethan Zhang *may be reached at ezhang26@choate.edu.*

From *Cars* to *Brawl Stars*: How Prefects Chose Dorm Themes

By **Deyi Meng '26**
Copy Editor

For many Choate students, a dorm is much more than just a simple brick building; it's their home as they navigate the tribulations of boarding school life. Recently, prefects have begun selecting a dorm-wide decoration theme each year, adorning common rooms and attaching posters and name cards on every prefectee's door. As the school year kicks off, here's a look at how prefects are helping to liven up the dorm decor!

East Cottage

After a week of brainstorming, the prefects of East Cottage decided to go with the theme of Brawl Stars, a fast-paced, multiplayer, online arena game. The game, which both the prefects and prefectees play, has fostered dorm bonding by encouraging teamwork and friendly competition. "You can always find at least five people in the common room playing it together, and that's really how the dorm became close," East Cottage prefect Alex Wang '25 said.

As a result, the prefects randomly matched everyone in the dorm to a picture of a certain brawler with their own personalities and abilities. Although not everyone landed their favorite brawler, students were happy to see familiar faces on their doors. "Some people teased me about what brawlers I picked for them, but … it was fun," Wang said.

Logan Munroe

Logan Munroe initially had the idea of doing car brands for their theme but decided to transition to the *Cars* movie because, according to Logan Munroe prefect Jordan Dodd '25, "it's more recognizable." Students and parents alike enjoyed the theme, and even resident House Mentor and Humanities teacher Mr. Jonas Akins joined in on the fun, receiving the car "Sarge," while his daughters were given the twin cars "Mia" and "Tia."

McCook

As opposed to choosing the theme before students arrived, McCook prefects asked everyone to rank their favorite music albums after they all moved in. Using Photoshop, they made personalized posters and hung them on each door. Nia Watts '25, a prefect in McCook, said that they enjoyed receiving student input because "people can be iffy about what [prefects] put on [the doors]."

In October, the prefects of McCook plan to put decorations in the hallways representing the residents' cultures, such as images of food from around the world. Reflecting on this decision, Watts said, "It's an all-inclusive dorm at the end of the day, so we just want to make sure that we are including everybody."

Nichols

Inspired by the exhilarating 2024 Summer Olympics, the Nichols prefects assigned different sports to each dorm member. Nao Murata '25, a prefect in Nichols, chose wrestling for herself: a sport with which she has a personal connection through her father, who was on the wrestling team at Choate.

Nichols also decorated their common room with a sign that says "Nichols is Gold," with the Olympic rings and the names of every dorm resident inside of the rings. The prefects hope to boost dorm camaraderie and spirit with these fun decorations.

West Wing & Hall

West Wing and Hall, two dorms that recently merged into one, went with disparate themes this year. The former went with the show "Gilmore Girls," decorating their doors with autumn leaves along with signs and characters from the show. Since the boarding school that the main character Rory Gilmore attends is heavily inspired by Choate, the prefects knew students would recognize the concept. "It's fun, and [it's] fall," Katerina Karathanasis '25, a West Wing prefect, said.

Hall chose cereal, pairing each roommate duo with their own flavor such as Cocoa Puffs and Cocoa Pebbles. The prefects have vintage cereal brands, and the House Mentors have special versions of Frosted Flakes, such as Minecraft and Star Wars editions. Reflecting on this choice, Syna Mathod '25, a prefect in the dorm, said, "We wanted to do something fun … that people would resonate with and enjoy. I think cereal is … a commonly shared experience, [and] if not, it's still a cute idea."

Mead

This year, the prefects styled Mead to resemble Lanphier (Lanphy) Cafe. Student doors are decorated with cafe drinks, while the House Mentors' posters feature food items. There are also signs in the common room spelling out "Lanphier Cafe" in big letters and a menu displaying commonly used phone numbers and important facts. "We really wanted to do something that was going to be useful for the kids to know," Mead prefect Quinn Farmer '25 said.

Though students may be away from their families, these dorm-wide decorations help the space come alive, and more importantly, build a sense of community and belonging among the residents. Each dorm's creative theme reflects its students' individuality, making our school upon the hillside feel like a home away from home.

Deyi Meng *may be reached at dmeng26@choate.edu.*

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

Nichols prefects borrowed inspiration from the 2024 Summer Olympics in decorating their common room.

Going Back in Time: Choate 100 Years Ago

Photo courtesy of the Choate Rosemary Hall School Archives

The Kindly Club in the 1925 *Answer Book*, Rosemary Hall's yearbook.

By **Jocelyn Rivard '28**
Reporter

A century ago, the Choate Rosemary Hall we know and love today was a very different place. In 1925, The Choate School and Rosemary Hall were separate schools: the former in Wallingford for boys, and the latter in Greenwich for girls. With the help of the Choate Rosemary Hall School Archives, however, we can get a glimpse into how students of both institutions lived 100 years ago.

In 1925, classic campus landmarks, such as Hill House and Memorial House, existed, but others were just being designed. Edward P. Mellon, Andrew Mellon's nephew, served as the architect for the beloved Library. However, some buildings are altogether unfamiliar, like St. Bede's Chapel on Rosemary Hall's Greenwich campus, where the girls prayed each morning.

Certain traditions have stood the test of time, with sports like football at the core of community spirit. Impressive plays were celebrated in student publications. The 1925 *Brief* (Choate's yearbook) read, "Most spectacular play of the season was Cottrell's 85-yard run-back of Kent's kickoff, leading to the Choate touchdown." Choate also had an all-male cheer squad (akin to today's BoarPen) who would hype up students on the train ride to Deerfield and in the stands.

Strong friendships were forged on and off the field through clubs and activities. Though options were limited, the Class of 1925 at The Choate School had some unique ones to choose from, such as the Gun Club, and of course, the ever-resplendent *Choate News*.

Though there were fewer clubs at Rosemary Hall, one of the most popular was the Kindly Club, a group dedicated to spreading kindness and helping the local community through charitable deeds. In 1925, some of their most notable projects included raising money through selling sports-pins made by disabled artisan Paul Rehnborg, and sewing clothes for small dolls, which were given to "our impoverished sisters," according to the January 1925 edition of *The Question Mark*, Rosemary Hall's news, alumni, and literary magazine.

Back then, The Choate School's daily dress code resembled today's Special Academic Dress; no sweatpants or hoodies allowed! Students at The Choate School wore suits and ties of their own choosing. Rosemarians, however, were made to follow a mandatory dress code, including "knickers, cape, tam [hat], skirt, stockings, and sashes," and purchase their school wardrobe from specific order forms given to families by the Rosemary Hall administration.

Friendly competitions between students were prevalent throughout campus life. Students would compete for awards such as "Best Poem" and "Excellence in Bible Study." Senior superlatives such as "Most Popular," "Class Snake," and "Noisiest" exemplify the lively and tight-knit community that we see 100 years later in our 21st century editions of *The Brief*.

Although the world was vastly different 100 years ago, we must not forget the thousands of students that walked the halls of both The Choate School and Rosemary Hall, nor the lasting friendships and joy passed down through generations.

Jocelyn Rivard *may be reached at jrivard28@choate.edu.*

ARTS AND LEISURE

Choate Students Pursue the Arts Year-Round

By **Ha Jin Sung '28**
Reporter

While summer break is a time for rest, relaxation, and fun, it is also a time for Choate students to pursue their artistic passions. From play productions and personal projects to art internships and summer programs, four students in Choate's Arts Concentration Signature Program avidly engaged with their respective disciplines over the summer.

Max Leventon '25 is a dedicated playwright. "I've been writing forever," he said. While his passion for the arts began with opera, Leventon made the switch to playwriting when he came to Choate, where he developed a love for the behind-the-scenes role playwrights take on. Over the summer, Leventon had one of his own plays, *Crank 004*, produced in Los Angeles. In addition to this incredible experience, he attended several workshops where he learned and gained inspiration from other creatives.

Leventon's key takeaway from the summer was to consume as much media as possible. "It's super undervalued how important it is to watch things, read things — read things that you wouldn't normally read," he said. Now, as a senior, Leventon hopes to create a short film or movie with the playwriting skills he has developed over the past few years and showcase his work in this year's Fringe Festival. "Just starting some projects and going out with a bang," he concluded.

Katherine Chong '25 spent her summer pursuing her love for visual art. With an initial passion for oil painting and sketching, she made a move towards a conceptual and mixed media path after arriving at Choate. Now, she focuses on creating collages and sculptures with found materials. Over the summer, Chong worked as an intern in public programs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. "My job there was trying to engage a public audience," she explained. She helped design programs that aligned with various audiences' wants and needs.

"A lot of cultural institutions of our day are run on a genuine kind of love and appreciation for the arts," Chong said, expressing her admiration for those she worked with. Chong's summer experience has compelled her to continue supporting the advancement of the arts, no matter which direction her future takes her. Along with her internship, Chong also worked on a collage book that analyzed the style of contemporary artist Marcel Duchamp. "I used his signature style of collage to put together this little book," she said.

Back on campus, Chong is preparing for her senior art show and focusing on how curators utilize museum space, learning how the placement of various art pieces can tell a narrative on its own. "Hopefully, I'll put together something that I'm really satisfied with and also take from what I've seen in very fancy places," she expressed.

Kristie Lu '26 is a violinist in the Choate Symphony and attends Juilliard Pre-College. Over the summer, she developed her personal projects. "I mainly focused on preparing recordings for my future portfolio," Lu said. She takes inspiration from as many artists as possible as she learns violin pieces to add to her repertoire. "I get all their interpretations of the piece so that I can create my own interpretation," she shared. This year at Choate, Lu plans to take her violin skills to the stage, performing at recitals and working with quartet chamber music.

For Sophie Eliades '27, her passion for filmmaking took her back to the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan for a second year to participate in a three-week film program. "All of the teachers there are so incredibly qualified," Eliades remarked. Her hard work culminated in a major project: shooting and editing an original movie. Eliades took on the role of an editor and sound recordist for her piece.

For Eliades, connection and collaboration through art are two significant lessons she took away from her summer at Interlochen. Along with editing and sound recording for the first time, she learned about film history and technical skills, which she plans to bring to her pursuits in film at Choate.

The summer experiences of these four students illustrate the different artistic paths Choate students take during both the school year and the summer.

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

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

Summer Songs are Out, Fall Beats are In

Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/*The Choate News*

By **Bruce Van Wingerden '28**
Reporter

As "BRAT summer" comes to a close, many students are wondering what music to listen to this fall. Fortunately, the Choate community is buzzing with song suggestions for the back-to-school season. From soul folk to cloud rap, students are listening to all kinds of music.

A big fan of timeless classics, Yui Sugimoto '28 said her favorite song is "(Sittin' On) the Dock of the Bay" by Otis Redding. "I [first] heard about [Otis Redding] when I went to go see this play in Greece ... his music is more calm, and I like that about it." This soul folk song has an upbeat tune yet a somber meaning — paralleling the possible ups and downs back-to-school season can bring.

Sugimoto's second song choice was "Gypsy" by Fleetwood Mac. "I like listening to [this song] because it reminds me of summer ... I like how they're upbeat, and [their music is] very unique." This indie song has a more carefree feel, reminding listeners of happy summer times.

Kaz Kousaka '27 enjoys "That's What I Like" by Bruno Mars and "Broken Clocks" by SZA. He said, "I put them on when I'm in the shower ... and it's peaceful." Both of these songs have enchanting melodies and relatable lyrics, making them easy to listen to on repeat. "That's What I Like" has a cheery beat, and "Broken Clocks" talks about the struggle of balancing work and personal life. Bruno Mars is a particular favorite of Kousaka: "He's always consistent — great beats and he has a really good voice," he said.

Rahewa Ocbazgi '27 often begins her day by listening to "Headlock" by Imogen Heap. "I like to listen to this song, especially when school starts, because it gets me upbeat in [the] morning and ready for my day." "Headlock" has eerie yet energizing instrumentals, making it the perfect song to start the spooky season.

Jordan Dodd '25 recommended the song "Tiny Dancer," by Elton John, "specifically the 'hold-me-closer-tiny-dancer' part." This classic rock song gently builds up and then explodes into an ethereal chorus. The song is about the spirit of California in the 1970s.

Dodd also loves "Cherries and Cream" by Remi Wolf. "When I first heard it, I was like, 'oh my god.' [This] is all [the] songs I like put into one." This alternative hit, with its laid-back melody, is a strong addition to any fall playlist.

Jennifer Obijuru '27 is a big Jhené Aiko fan, specifically of her song "Spotless Mind." Obijuru enjoys calming music, something that this song encapsulates with its dreamy instrumentals and uplifting vocals. "I feel like [the song] describes a lot of real-life experiences really well ... [specifically], the idea of changing and becoming a new person," she said. Obijuru appreciates how Aiko's music "flows nicely ... it's calm and she's not going too fast or going too slow ... it's just perfect," she said.

Taliah Buckney-Small '27 said her favorite song of the fall is "Sunset" by LUCKI. This cloud rap tune reminds Buckney-Small "of [her] friends here, [at Choate], [and] friends from back home." With a melancholy beat and spacey instrumentals, LUCKI's unique style truly shines through in this song. This piece can leave listeners feeling very reflective and introspective, aligning with autumn's somber mood.

Luna Bronin '27 was initially exposed to her top fall song, "ROLE MODEL" by Brent Faiyaz, by her roommate on their first day at Choate together. Since then, Bronin has kept "ROLE MODEL" on her getting-ready playlist. With its chill yet encouraging melody, this warm song feels appropriate for the warmer days of fall.

Whether it's the upbeat vibes of Fleetwood Mac or the more eccentric style of Imogen Heap, these tracks offer a variety of songs for the Choate student body to enjoy this fall.

Bruce Van Wingerden *may be reached at bvanwingerden28@choate.edu.*

Fall Fashion 101: What to Wear this Season

By **Julie Ha '28**
Reporter

We've all been there: staring at our closet, feeling overwhelmed by the sheer number of options. Daily, we struggle with the age-old question, "What should I wear?" At Choate, where individuality is celebrated, students express themselves through their fashion choices. With no strict dress code, the hallways are a vibrant tapestry of styles, from classic to trendy.

As the school year begins, first impressions matter more than ever. This article offers a comprehensive guide for back-to-school fall fashion, helping you curate a wardrobe that reflects your unique personality and helps you make a statement.

Transition from Summer to Fall

Summer fashion was all about light, airy fabrics and breezy silhouettes. Choate students embraced linen, stripes, and button-down shirts to create effortlessly cool looks. As the school year begins, it's time to transition your wardrobe with the seasons — from summer to fall. Fall fashion is about layering and versatility. It is crucial to incorporate fall elements into your summer outfits for a more gradual and fashionable transition.

Nick Aston '28 shared his expert tips on mixing summer and fall pieces: "For me, that would consist of keeping those light colors and stripes going through and then also mixing in things like jeans [and] sweaters with the summer pieces," he said. "An example of an outfit would be a linen button-down with blue jeans."

Essential Fall Staples

The weather is cooling down, which means it's time to update your wardrobe by adding some essential fall pieces. Swap your summer staples for thicker, warmer items that will keep you cozy. Embrace the season's aesthetic with rich, earthy tones like brown, burgundy, and muted neutrals. Add a touch of luxury to your fall wardrobe collection with suede and crochet textures. A classic trench coat, stylish leather boots, and leather accents are must-have pieces that will elevate your look and keep you snug throughout the season.

"My favorite [fall] pieces have been my bigger, bulkier sweaters," Henry Gillibrand '26 explained. "You can wear [them] around the shoulders when it's a little bit hotter out, and then wear [them] just on."

Comfort Meets Style

Comfort is key when it comes to school fashion. As students, feeling confident and comfortable in our clothing can significantly impact our overall well-being and performance at school.

Jordan Dodd '25 said, "My goal, or my fashion, is to be as comfy as possible ... How can I make comfy look cool? And I think that's always a good challenge, and it always makes me feel good about myself when I find the right outfit for the right day." He added, "I look for oversized things with cool patterns, like my corduroy quarter zip." Dodd also tries to highlight or exemplify certain parts of his body, like his arms or collarbones. He also views his daily outfits as a way to ease stress of school life. "It's like Ms. Elliot's 'I get to' speech," he said. "I get to do this really pressing thing while looking and feeling my best."

Fashion as an Outlet of Expression

As a dancer, member of BoarPen, student council member, and prefect, Nao Murata '25 uses fashion as a means to show her aspirations. "[Fashion] reflects my desire to stand out, but not in a 'look at me' kind of way," she said. "[It's about] being happy with who I am and being confident with who I am, and not having to blend in or fit into everyone else." Her unique accessories and personalized choices of clothes, most of which are from her mom, reflect her dynamic personality and commitment to excellence.

Similarly, Gillibrand said, "For me, [fashion] is fun — it allows you to just be yourself. I just love getting ready in the morning — other people have fun with it, they like to see what you're wearing that day ... fashion decisions are everything."

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

Jordan Dodd '25 flaunts his creative style.

Fashion is more than just clothing; it's a way for us to communicate our identities, beliefs, and moods to the world. Whether it's a bold statement piece, a comfortable uniform, or a vintage find, our choices in fashion reflect who we are and how we want to be perceived. These students are bringing a fashionable attitude to the new school year. Why not try something unexpected in your wardrobe this fall to show Choate a new side of you?

Julie Ha *may be reached at jha28@choate.edu.*

The Choate News

SPORTS

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FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

27 - 4 - 3

Varsity Games

Football (1-0)
vs. Lawrenceville, 38-0

Girls' Field Hockey (1-2)
vs. Ethel Walker, 3-1

Boys' Water Polo (3-0)
vs. Suffield, 24-12

Girls' Soccer (1-0)
vs. Lawrenceville, 35-6

Boys' Soccer (4-1)
vs. Rivers School, 5-1

Girls' Volleyball (4-0)
vs. Ethel Walker, 3-0

Boys' Soccer (4-1)
vs. Worcester, 1-2

Girls' Field Hockey (1-2)
vs. Taft, 1-8

J.V. Games

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

Boys' Soccer (1-0)
vs. Salisbury, 7-0

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

***Girls'* Field Hockey** (1-0-1)
vs. Pomfret, 1-1

Celebrating Coach Loeb's 500th Win

By **Sofia Fronzi '26**
Reporter

On September 14, Girls' Varsity Volleyball Head Coach David Loeb reached a milestone that few can claim over a dedicated 39-year coaching period: 500 wins. The Girls' Varsity Volleyball Team took the win over the Kent School in their third game of the season, highlighting Coach Loeb's profound impact on both the program and its players throughout his years as a coach and mentor.

Coach Loeb's coaching journey in Choate volleyball began nearly four decades ago. When he first started, he was the Girls' Thirds Volleyball Head Coach and made his way up to becoming an assistant coach for the Girls' JV team. In 2008, Coach Loeb became the Girls' Varsity Head Coach, leading the team with enthusiasm and positivity. Reflecting on his journey to 500 wins, Coach Loeb said, "Every year, I'm just trying to coach the team I have, and sometimes we win, and that's fun."

Coach Loeb's positive impact on his players complements his strategic abilities. His encouraging and sympathetic personality, plus his willingness to connect with the team, has stood out to many players. Co-Captain Cait Ahn '25 reflected on her first season at Choate in 2021 and how Coach Loeb "made the environment fun and carefree," helping her "feel at home." Co-Captain Fernanda Opazo-Aravena '25 added, "We know that no matter what happens, he's always going to have our back, and he's always going to be there for us." With his uplifting and supportive approach, Coach Loeb has shaped great athletes and a cohesive team.

Photo by Emily Ma '25/*The Choate News*

Coach Loeb surpasses 500 wins with the Girls' Varsity Volleyball Team.

Volleyball holds endless memories for Coach Loeb, embodied by his motto, "It's not the destination, but the journey." Every season consists of a new team composed of different players, and creating memories that last means much more than just simple wins and losses. Coach Loeb recalled moments like "singing on the bus on the way back from Exeter or just wacky practices" to be some of his fondest memories during his years coaching.

Coach Loeb has been instrumental in creating memorable moments for players that define their Choate Volleyball experience. Ahn recalled an exhilarating game during her sophomore year where the student spectators started mimicking everything Coach Loeb did. She pointed out Coach Loeb's playful coaching style and ability to bond with others as he just "ended up dancing and playing with them." Ahn said, "He's like the mascot, spirit person, and the cheerleader."

For Coach Loeb himself, this is truly a significant milestone in his career, representing far more than just a number. "It's certainly very gratifying," Coach Loeb said, acknowledging the fun of celebrating the momentous achievement with his team. For Coach Loeb, 500 wins symbolize the growth of his efforts over the years, serving as a testament to his work and the friendships forged within the team he loves.

Sofia Fronzi *may be reached at sfronzi26@choate.edu.*

Strike a Pose: First Media Day

By **Lauren Bellissimo '27**
Reporter

For the first time in school history, Choate has begun the tradition of having a sports Media Day: a common practice for many high schools and universities across the country. Sports Media Day is a varsity team bonding event where student-athletes take fun photos together, creating lasting memories and promotional media for their teams.

While Media Day might seem like a straightforward event, it demands meticulous planning and preparation. "It's not something you can just do on the fly or plan the next day," Assistant Athletics Director Mr. Nolan Silbernagel, who helped direct the process, said. Numerous factors were considered, including securing an available space, booking a professional photographer, and, most importantly, ensuring that Media Day took place during a time aligned with the athletic schedules.

Media Day was exciting for students, fulfilling their long-held hopes and expectations. "As a varsity athlete, I know that many of us have been talking about having a Media Day. We've tried to do it individually, but it never was able to work out," Girls' Varsity Soccer player Madi Macdonald '26 said. "It really brought us together, especially since we've been talking about it for so long, and it finally came to be."

In addition to being a bonding activity for teams, the resulting photos serve various purposes. "Team pages will be able to use them to promote their programs and their players," Mr. Silbernagel explained. "Individual athletes are welcome to use them for their own personal uses."

Across the board, Media Day generated positive feedback from athletes. "I thought Media Day was a ton of fun, and I really enjoyed doing it with the team," Girls' Varsity Field Hockey player Alexandra Horowitz '27 said. "I think Media Day really contributes to team bonding because we worked together to make fun poses, and we had a really great time hanging out together."

Boys' Varsity Water Polo Co-Captain Daneel Polakoff '25 was also pleased with the new tradition and shared how the team embraced the opportunity to express their team spirit in a light-hearted and unique way. "It was a fun experience overall, and we got the whole team to do a team photo in our Speedos, which we couldn't do for the team photo on the website," Polakoff said.

Similar opportunities for Media Days will arise for athletes who don't compete in the fall. Mr. Silbernagel explained that he intends for Media Day to reoccur for the winter and spring seasons. "My hope is that this will become an athletics tradition, just like signing days or team roster photo days," he said.

A product of both thorough planning and preparation, Choate's first sports Media Day proved to be a huge success for fall student-athletes.

Lauren Bellissimo *may be reached at lbellissimo27@choate.edu.*

Kickoff in England: Choate Boys' Soccer Preseason Trip

By **Kaz Kousaka '27**
Reporter

Jerseys on, soccer balls in hand, and heads in the game – this summer, the Choate Boys' Varsity Soccer Team toured the United Kingdom (UK). The athletes flexed their footwork in London, Burnley, Sheffield, Nottingham, and Manchester, where they competed against formidable local teams. While the players certainly pushed themselves on the field to hone their soccer skills daily, their preseason trip wasn't all work. The athletes celebrated their wins by exploring the country alongside Head Coach Charlie Fuentes, Assistant Coach Zachary Kafoglis, and Assistant Director of Admission Michael Rodriguez.

Organized by Coach Fuentes, the trip allowed the team to compete against several of the most prestigious youth academies in the UK, all while becoming better teammates and friends throughout the journey. Having played against local teams such as Nottingham Forest Football Club (F.C.), Wolves F.C., Burnley F.C., and London Elite Youth, the players not only tested their skills but also experienced English football and culture firsthand.

Coach Fuentes reflected on the trip, emphasizing the importance of both performance and team-building. "It was really good to be able to not just have soccer, but also a team-building experience together," Coach Fuentes said. Beyond competition, the team had the opportunity to explore the cities, get a proper tour of professional stadiums such as the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, and watch live games, allowing new players to bond with returning ones.

The Boys' Varsity Team, who previously only competed with other teams in New England, found themselves up against skilled, professional soccer academies. "I think we're a very competitive boarding school, but the reality is that there are levels above that," Coach Fuentes noted. Facing teams that have been training together since childhood presented a new challenge, yet it also reinforced the team's potential. Coach Fuentes emphasized how the matches solidified his confidence in the team. "I knew we had a strong team, which is why I wanted this to happen this year," he said. He also emphasized the importance of team bonding during the trip. "The goal wasn't to win but to ensure that everyone had a chance to be involved," he said.

For Co-Captain Kameron Mohammed '25, the trip was a chance to test the team's ability against strong opponents. "In the UK, you start playing from a young age, like four or five years old, whereas in the U.S., you don't start playing until nine or 10," he said. Despite these challenges, Choate Boys' Soccer proved their worth, showing up each day with energy and dedication to compete and learn from every match.

Off the field, the trip brought the team closer together. Co-Captain Drew McClay-Ward '25 described how the trip helped new players integrate into the team. "This iws the most tight-knit group I've had in my three years at Choate," McClay-Ward said. Through activities like playing mini golf, the team grew closer through shared moments of recreation and reflection.

One of the trip's highlights was attending the Sheffield Wednesday F.C. vs. Leeds United match. "The atmosphere was unreal," Mohammed said. For many of the players, it was their first time experiencing the passion and intensity of an English football crowd, leaving a lasting impression on them.

As captains, Mohammed and McClay-Ward took on leadership roles, ensuring that everyone felt included and focused throughout the trip. "Communication was key," McClay-Ward explained. They ensured the new players were always involved and gave pre-game speeches to motivate the team. Both captains agreed that the trip deepened their understanding of their teammates and enhanced their ability to lead effectively.

As the team continues into the regular season, they carry with them the lessons of English football — quick play, high intensity, and the bonding that comes from shared experiences. With a solid foundation laid during their time in England, Choate's Boys' Varsity Soccer is ready to take on the challenges of the fall season, both on the field and off.

Coach Fuentes and the captains are optimistic about maintaining the strong team chemistry built during the trip. They plan to keep up their camaraderie through activities like team dinners and casual hangouts. "We may be teammates on the field, but we're friends off of it as well," Mohammed said.

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

Photo courtesy of @choateboyssoccer on Instagram

Choate Boys' Soccer faces London Elite Youth at Gunnersbury Park Sports Hub in London.