



COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY 2024: HOUSING JUSTICE

By **Deyi Meng '26**
Copy Editor

This year, Choate held its annual Community Service Day on September 27. The theme, “Housing Justice,” aimed to generate awareness about housing affordability and homelessness. Choate students and faculty participated in various activities and listened to a panel discussion the prior afternoon. The panel included Mr. Ralph Gagliardo, Ms. Abigail Brone of Connecticut Public Radio, and both Ms. Kelly Dougherty and Ms. Stephanie Boyce from Hands on Hartford, a nonprofit organization based in Hartford, Connecticut, providing food, health, and housing services.

The panel started with the screening of Mr. Gagliardo’s music video, “Walk a Mile,” which highlighted the hardships that many homeless people face. Mr. Gagliardo then recounted his personal story of homelessness and addiction, which stemmed from a tragic vehicle accident. He shared that he initially had his own automotive business, but became addicted to drugs due to the painkillers he took while recovering from the accident, eventually losing the company and becoming homeless.

Mr. Gagliardo was then incarcerated, which in his words “saved his life” by shielding him from the fentanyl crisis and giving him motivation to stay sober. After leaving prison, Mr. Gagliardo worked at a Hartford street newspaper and attended Goodwin College, earning



Photo courtesy of phoos.choate.edu

School engages in Community Service Panel on September 26. an Associate Degree in Human Services. “Not all homeless people have the same story,” Mr. Gagliardo said, emphasizing the importance of understanding each individual’s unique circumstances.

The discussion that followed was moderated by Kiran Makam '25 and Arjun Pathy '25. During the conversation, the panelists delved into the complexities of the housing system and the legal obstacles that perpetuate housing injustice.

Mr. Gagliardo addressed common misconceptions about homelessness: “Anybody can become homeless at any point in their life ... It can be for any variety of reasons, but the number one reason is really a lack of affordable housing.”

Ms. Brone highlighted the recent Supreme Court case, *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson*, which

legalized the arrest and fining of homeless people camping in public spaces. Although this decision is not currently being enforced under Connecticut state law, law enforcement has become stricter against the homeless community. “Folks, especially within the city of Hartford, are getting ticketed for being in a park outdoors [and] are getting ticketed for panhandling. When that happens, that starts the cycle of criminalization of homelessness,” Ms. Boyce said.

The panelists emphasized the importance of addressing housing injustice through state-level action rather than solely through national efforts. “The focus should be a little bit on local elections because a lot of the movements that we’re trying to aim towards increasing affordable housing and



Photo courtesy of @gochoate on Instagram

Choate students place panels on a house for Community Service Day. housing accessibility start at the local level,” Ms. Brone said.

Reflecting on the conversation, Makam said, “I think there’s positive feedback from the audience, because this was an issue that we hadn’t previously known much about.”

The next day, Choate students got the opportunity to apply their learning by participating in various service activities focused on addressing housing justice.

Ada Tianworn '26 went to Healing by Growing, an organization dedicated to supporting trauma survivors through agricultural work. “This experience helped me learn that there are many forms of therapy ... and opened me up to the possibility of receiving therapy through non-traditional forms,” Tianworn said.

For Ernie Mok '25, Service Day was both educational and eye-opening. “It made me realize how relevant and widespread this issue of housing justice is, and partly because the services I worked in were in Connecticut, it makes you realize how prominent these problems are and how close you are to them,” he said.

Mok went to Elim Park, a senior living community in Cheshire, Connecticut, where he conversed and played games with elderly residents. Reflecting on his experience, Mok said, “People from different generations and different times have their own stories and struggles, and it is empowering for them to show yourself as a listener and to be present in their lives.”

Similarly, Camila Granda '25 went to Oak View, another senior

living community. Granda found the experience particularly touching, as she bonded with an 86-year-old woman over their shared interest in travel. “You have to be aware, you have to be empathetic, you have to be compassionate, so just try to understand the people around you,” Granda said. She plans to return for another visit.

Director of Community Service Ms. Melissa Koomson reflected on the interconnectedness of this year’s theme. “[The panel] really highlighted the intersectionality of all the issues at play, like security, affordability, [and] the people who are trying to get the housing,” she said. Moreover, Ms. Koomson sought to help students realize the severity of housing justice in today’s world through hands-on service. “Here at Choate, we can be in such a bubble and a privileged community that students don’t always get the opportunity to go off campus and see what is happening beyond,” she said. “It’s important for me that students have those experiences. That’s part of the value of experiential education.”

Community Service Day brought the widespread issue of housing injustice to the forefront of the Choate community’s attention. “A day like Community Service [Day] helps bring mindfulness to us and helps us realize what it really means to be a human, and [it] recenters our purpose here as students,” Tianworn said.

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Choate’s Latest Renovations



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

Hall and West Wing’s conjoined common room after being renovated.



Photo by Emily Ma '25/The Choate News

The Andrew Mellon Library’s Reading Room receives a makeover.

By **Ethan Zhang '26**
Copy Editor

Over the summer, the Facilities Department renovated some of Choate’s academic and living spaces, including the addition of fridges in the Lanphier Cafe, a revamp of the Andrew Mellon Library Reading Room, and the conjoining of dorms Hall and West Wing.

The Facilities Department was responsible for getting work bids from contractors and overseeing their work over the summer. They also assigned project managers to each renovation.

Multiple significant changes were made to the Library’s Reading Room. “It was fully painted — the ceiling, walls, everything. The most notable renovation is that the

into one, and the stairwell was renovated to accommodate the new, larger common area. A kitchenette and laundry machines were also added to the common room.

Chief Financial Officer Mr. Patrick Durbin believes that Hall and West Wing have needed renovations for a long time. “Hall and West Wing had two staircases right next to each other, and they were redundant. That was based on a renovation decades ago,” he said. “[Our goal] is to make the spaces we have stay in excellent quality.”

Down the hill, the Lanphier Cafe added two larger coolers, one used to sell food and the other to sell drinks for students on the go, which were branded with Lanphier Cafe logos. They also replaced the old bakery case with a new, smaller pastry holder and painted a large “Lanphier Cafe” design on the wall behind the register.

The goal of the Lanphier Cafe renovation was to meet the needs of a busy Choate student. Chief Communications Officer Mrs. Alison Cady said, “Now that [the cafe] is so popular, the staff wants to make sure the flow-through is as smooth as possible, so students can get in and out as quickly as possible.”

From the upgraded Reading Room to the refreshed Lanphier Cafe, many renovations were made to Choate over the summer. These renovations were necessary to accommodate the student body. As Mr. Durbin said, the Facilities Department and Choate are constantly guided by one question: “How can we best serve our students’ needs?”

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WELCOME BACK, DR. CURTIS!

By **Eliana Li '26**
Copy Editor

On October 1, the Choate community warmly welcomed the Head of School, Dr. Alex Curtis, back to campus during School Meeting, marking the end of his medical leave. During his absence, Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Jenny Elliott stepped in as Acting Head of School to ensure smooth operations and a seamless return from summer break. Following a successful surgery and steady recovery, Dr. Curtis has resumed his role as Choate’s Head of School.

Dr. Curtis’s medical leave followed an emergency during a family vacation over the summer, which required him to be hospitalized for three days and undergo surgery. In a reassuring message to the Choate community, Dr. Curtis expressed confidence in his recovery: “I have been assured by a wonderful team of doctors that my condition is treatable and that my prognosis is excellent.” Still, his six-week recovery period kept him from school at the start of the academic year, leading to the temporary shift in leadership.

Selecting Ms. Elliott as the Acting Head of School was an easy choice for Dr. Curtis. “I knew that she would be able to handle that, as she always does, and keep everything going forward,” he said. The transition was smooth, thanks to the pre-existing relationship between Dr. Curtis and Ms. Elliott. “We have a strong working connection and relationship, so it was actually quite seamless in a lot of ways,” Ms. Elliott said. “The [rest of the Administration also] stepped



Photo courtesy of choate.edu

Choate welcomes Head of School, Dr. Alex Curtis, back to campus. up and absolutely pitched in like a team to figure out how to do all the things we needed to be doing.”

For Ms. Elliott, however, juggling being a U.S. History teacher, the Head of Student and Academic Life, and Acting Head of School was no easy feat. “Some days I feel better at managing it than others,” she admitted. “But my husband is my partner and best friend, and he picks up the pieces.” Dr. Curtis commended her leadership: “She carried it off brilliantly. I just think she did a magnificent job,” he said.

Despite being away, Dr. Curtis felt the community’s overwhelming support through well-wishes, emails, and flowers. “It raises your spirits when you’re sitting in a hospital bed, knowing people are thinking of you,” he said. “It’s those little things that make a big, big difference.”

As Dr. Curtis slowly rejoined campus life, he recalled feeling warmth and energy from the community. “I do think part of recovery

is getting positive encouragement and good energy from everybody else. So, I have to say, I feel a lot better coming back on campus,” Dr. Curtis said. His recovery process also reminded him of the importance of savoring the present and taking life one day at a time. “We take these [moments] for granted, and when you get a moment to reflect, you realize you need to enjoy the small moments for yourself. It’s the dining hall, it’s the conversation walking up to School Meeting, it’s the conversations that really matter,” he said. “So, I’m looking forward to being able to have those again after missing out on them for what seems like a long time.”

Dr. Curtis is grateful to be back in a place that truly feels like home. “It’s made me realize that this is the place that I love, this is the community that’s just incredible,” he said. “This is the community that is home.”

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Trash the Trash Talk

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Evelyn Kim '25, Rielle Reyes '27, photos.choate.edu, and @choateathletics on Instagram.

Shark Tank Competition WOMEN IN BUSINESS

inspiring female entrepreneurs!



WHAT - PITCH YOUR PRODUCT FOR PRIZES!
WHEN - OCTOBER 16TH AT 6:30PM
WHERE - SAC PROJECT ROOM
FOOD - PIZZA

ALUMNI LEAD SECOND ANNUAL CAREER FAIR

By **Ethan Zhang '26**
Copy Editor

On September 29, Choate's Alumni Relations Office hosted its second annual Career Fair in Lanphier Center.

The purpose of Career Fair is to highlight Choate alumni and provide students with insight into how they can pursue different fields after graduating as well as networking opportunities. Students could choose to attend up to two sessions, where alumni would share about their careers after Choate in a variety of different disciplines, including business, education, environment, finance, law, and more.

This year, Choate hosted nine alumni, fewer than the 15 who attended last year, but this smaller turnout allowed for more focused and productive discussions.

Student co-organizer Xiu Lim '25 discussed the significance of Career Fair. "It's a valuable opportunity to see how a Choate diploma can be used ... and the realities of working in these industries beyond surface-level conception," Lim said.

The day kicked off at 9:30 a.m. in the Lanphier Center lobby, where students, dressed in special academic attire, checked in and enjoyed the snacks and beverages provided. From 10:00 a.m. to 11:45



Photo by Finn Wikstrom '26/The Choate News

Choate alumni gather for second annual Career Fair.

a.m., students participated in two self-selected alumni-led discussions and presentations about their respective fields. At 11:45 a.m., the groups dispersed, and brunch was provided for all attendees, allowing students to ask questions and converse with the alumni more casually and individually.

Zaki Shamsi '26 attended the finance and law sessions and found the conversational approach of the Career Fair to be extremely helpful. He said, "Being able to ask questions in a casual and approachable setting helped me understand both the technical aspects of these careers and the personal journeys behind them."

Student co-organizer Jeremiah Olubowale '25 attended the psychology and engineering sessions and appreciated the diversity of the alumni he spoke with. "Talking to someone who's a minority like I am was an insightful experience into what the software engineering field is like," he said.

Planning for Career Fair began in early summer when Assistant Director of Alumni Relations Ms. Hattie Briggs and the Alumni Relations Office reached out to alumni, booked spaces in the Lanphier Center, and created registration forms. In determining which alumni to recruit, Ms. Briggs said, "We look at compa-

nies that are going to catch people's eye because that's helpful in garnering interest." In addition to recognizable companies, they also "try to build a diverse panel of genders, backgrounds, ages, and racial diversity," she said.

As this was only the second-ever Career Fair, both attendees and organizers had suggestions for how the event could be improved in the future. A frustration Ms. Briggs and the Alumni Relations Office experienced was the number of no-show students. She said, "We're working on how we can create more accountability as we don't want to invite alumni to campus and have a disappointing turnout — perhaps if we need more reminders for students or more posters, it's really about following through with the commitment to show up." Lim also believes having more alumni at the event would bolster student interest.

While the Alumni Relations Office continues to brainstorm ideas to improve next year's Career Fair, the experience proved to be valuable to many attendees. Shamsi said in summary, "We saw firsthand how professionals have navigated the same questions we have now and how their paths unfolded, helping guide us in the future."

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Fall TEEs Return After Five Years



Graphic by Kate Park '27/The Choate News

By **Hiyab Mebrahtu '27**
Reporter

For the first time in five years, fall term-end experiences (TEE) are back: a big surprise to students. TEEs are two-hour class sessions that conclude the term, consisting of exams or culminating projects. While traditionally reserved for the winter and spring terms, the Administration decided to reintroduce them this fall.

Every year, Labor Day occurs on the first Monday of September and Thanksgiving occurs on the fourth Thursday of November. Depending on the placement of these holidays, this may permit a TEE period. "For the last few years, the spacing between Labor Day and Thanksgiving has been shorter, which has only given us 11 weeks in the term before it is time for Thanksgiving break," Director of Studies Ms. Ellen Devine said. "When there are 12 weeks between Labor Day and Thanksgiving, we have a TEE."

The decision has generated mixed responses from students, with some expressing concern over increased stress during the final week of the term. "In my last three years [at Choate], I haven't had a fall TEE, so it definitely caught me off guard when I learned that there was going to be one this term," Leanna Robie '25 said. "I'll definitely be a bit stressful, but if I budget my time with my extracurriculars, it should be okay."

This change requires not only students but also teachers to adapt. Depending on the teacher and the subject, a student's experience during TEEs can vary. Chemistry teacher Ms. Kit Stone mentioned that she uses it "for something more assessment-heavy like a lab or test." Ms. Devine, an English teacher, has a different approach, preferring something more reflective. She explained, "We might write essays or watch a movie related to our readings. It's about tying everything together without the high pressure of exams." History teacher Ms. Courtney DeStefano emphasized integrating creativity into her TEE curriculum: "I've done things like town hall meetings or have students create board games to help [them] reflect in interactive ways," she said.

As TEEs approach, it is even more important that students and teachers balance academic work and other activities. "I just want to reassure everyone that this isn't some terrible, oppressive act that is something to bum people out," Ms. Devine said. "My real, genuine hope is that it actually gives people a little breathing room and a chance to focus and complete one task before moving on to the next." While fall TEEs may seem like a drastic change, the Administration hopes students will gain something valuable from them.

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TEMPORARY DINING, LASTING IMPACT

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Reporter

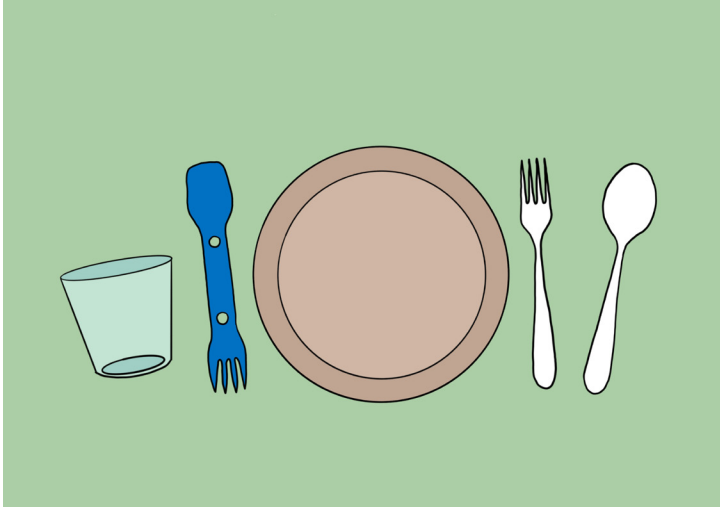
While the Hill House dining hall undergoes renovation, the School is using a temporary dining facility in the old Student Activities Center (SAC). Director of Sustainability Ms. Katrina Linthorst Homan highlighted the logistical challenges the space presents, particularly "the inability to move and wash all the dishes and silverware." To address the situation, the dining hall has introduced compostable utensils, plates, and bowls. Head C-Proctor Emma Catherine Bowles '25 described this shift as "a great way to cut down the environmental cost over plastics when there isn't much choice."

Despite the constraints of the temporary setup, introducing compostable cutlery has successfully reduced plastic waste. These eco-friendly items are designed to break down naturally, helping to divert waste from landfills. To ensure proper disposal, the

School has implemented clear signage and designated bins throughout the dining area. The compostable waste is managed by Blue Earth Compost, a company responsible for processing and sorting the materials.

In addition to compostable utensils, the School has provided free sporks made from recycled materials. Ms. Homan explained that "even if [the dishware is] compostable, it's still disposable after one use. So, [the School] went with the idea of offering sporks for people who wanted to have a reusable utensil." The sporks were advertised at a School Meeting, and more than 100 people placed orders.

Looking ahead, Choate's commitment to sustainability will extend beyond the temporary dining hall to the Hill House dining hall. Once renovations are complete, the new dining hall will feature energy-efficient upgrades designed to further reduce the School's environmental impact. The School is also continuous-



Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

ly exploring ways to source food more sustainably, focusing on reducing the carbon footprint of meals by prioritizing local and environmentally friendly options.

While the current setup may be temporary, these sustainability efforts reflect Choate's broader goals of fostering an environmentally conscious campus, even under challenging circumstances. Ms. Homan said that she and

the C-Proctors "hope that the people who got [sporks] remember them and use them when they're eating their meals in the dining hall." She also reminded the community to be mindful of "how impactful our personal choices are in the realm of food and waste sustainability."

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AI'S NEW ROLE IN CLASSROOMS

By **Sophie Chung '27**
Reporter

You have probably been wondering about the multitude of artificial intelligence (AI) posters pinned on campus bulletin boards this year. These signs advertise Choate's newest guidelines for using AI in academic settings. HPRSS Department Chair Ms. Kyra Jenney explained that the posters were distributed in response to the School's outcry for guidance: "[The] chart was creat-

ed to help teachers delineate the different ways in which AI can be used in the classroom," she said.

Over the summer and fall, Choate decided to outline clear standards for AI to help enhance students' learning, and several on-campus committees and groups have dedicated their time to creating these new standards. Ms. Ellen Devine, the Chair of the Generative AI Steering Group and the Director of Studies, discussed the feedback she received from students. "They really wanted

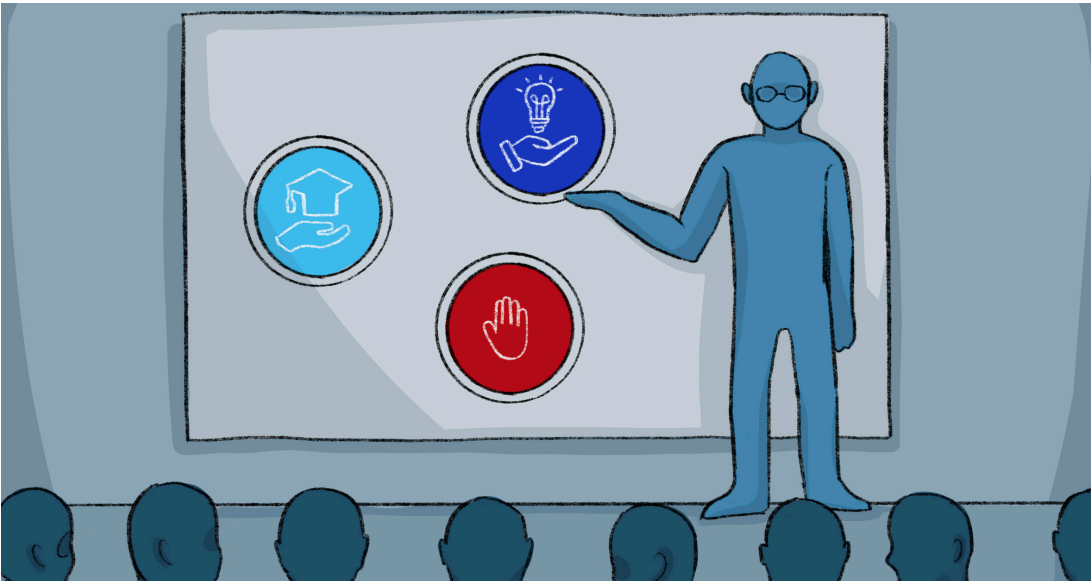
guidance because they felt like it was this elephant in the room, this thing that existed that they didn't know how to interact with ethically," she said. Unlike last year, when Choate's policy prohibited any use of AI, it now welcomes it under specific circumstances. "What we shifted to was asking teachers to articulate on every assignment what level of use of AI is acceptable," Ms. Devine said.

By recognizing the power of AI as a tool to enhance students' learning, the rules on AI are no

longer one-size-fits-all. These new AI standards at Choate will allow for clearer communication between students and teachers. The AI steering team listened to many teachers' and students' feedback to decide what to do, even using other schools' policies as references. "The American School in Japan had published their report on the use of AI at their school," Ms. Devine explained. "We didn't end up modeling everything we did on the way they did it, but just seeing their approach helped us think through what would an equivalent Choate-specific approach be."

Ultimately, the School hopes these new standards will promote ethical and responsible use of AI. Teachers can now communicate specific expectations for AI use, providing students with a clearer understanding of how to incorporate modern technology without compromising academic integrity. Choate's updated approach marks a new chapter in the School's ongoing conversation about AI and its role in the classroom.

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Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

PROTESTS OVER JEBRELL CONLEY’S CONTROVERSIAL DEATH

By **Steven Kee '27**
Copy Editor

Protests have erupted across the city of New Haven following the September 19 shooting of Mr. Jebrell Conley at a Splash Car Wash in West Haven. The protestors ranged from Mr. Conley’s family members to others who were simply outraged by the event.

At the time of his death, Mr. Conley had a warrant for his arrest on federal robbery and firearm-related charges. He had previously been sentenced to five years in prison on federal narcotics charges. Two of the officers involved in the shooting were from the New Haven Police Department (NHPD) Violent Crime Task Force, while one was from the Connecticut State Police. According to police body camera footage, when the officers attempted to apprehend Mr. Conley in his car, he appeared to open fire, shattering the driver’s side window. The three officers returned fire, striking Mr. Conley multiple times. The officers attempted to provide Mr. Conley with medical aid before he was transported to Yale New Haven Hospital, where he later passed away.

The officers at the scene remained physically unharmed, and the two NHPD officers are currently on paid administrative leave. After the incident, officers recovered a stolen high-capacity handgun that Mr. Conley allegedly fired during the encounter. The Connecticut Inspector General’s Office is currently investigating the shooting.

According to News 8 WTNH, the protestors expressed skepticism about the police’s claim that

Mr. Conley fired at the officers first, and they believed the police escalated the situation. Demonstrators also argued that the “edited body camera video” did not reflect the full, accurate story.

Community Organizer Ms. Kerry Ellington told the Yale Daily News that Mr. Conley’s rights to due process were “irrevocably denied” and that he was “executed” in a “mob-style” killing by the NHPD. “Nothing justifies the police killing Jebrell. Nothing justifies their recklessness and the violence that they engineered last week,” Ms. Ellington said.

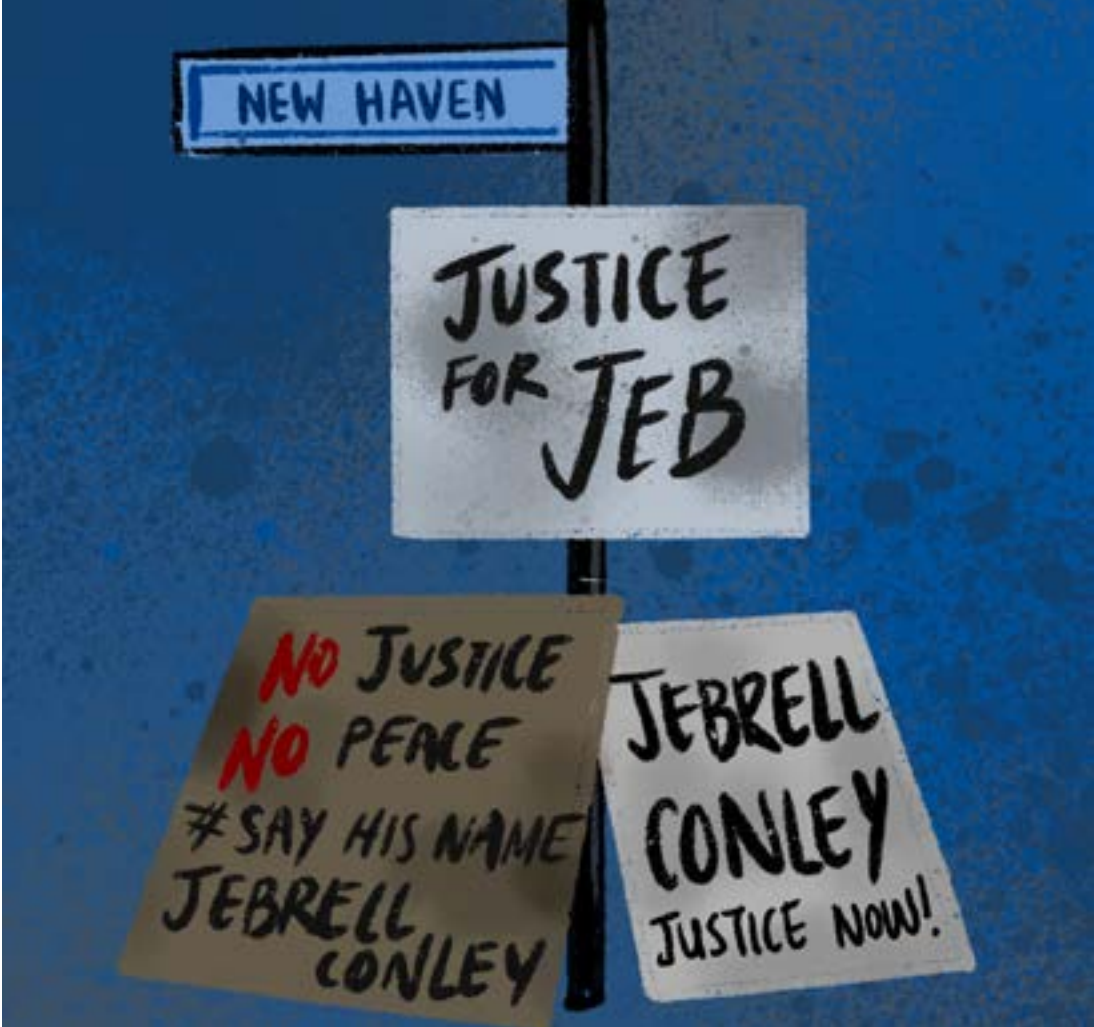
Additional protests were held in front of the NHPD Station on Union Avenue and near Mr. Conley’s childhood home.

At a press conference addressing the shooting, New Haven Mayor Mr. Justin Elicker said, “It appears to me that the officers used appropriate force. It appears to me that Mr. Conley fired first. It appears that the officers’ lives were in danger.” He also emphasized the success of the Violent Crimes Task Force and its role in safeguarding the New Haven community. At the same press conference, New Haven Chief of Police Mr. Karl R. Jacobson said,

“The officers had to do what they had to do, and we support them.”

The shooting of Mr. Conley came as a shock to many in the New Haven community. For the NHPD, this was the first deadly officer-involved shooting in 20 years. Controversies surrounding Mr. Conley’s death and the actions of the law enforcement officers involved continue; The Connecticut Inspector General’s Office has yet to publish a final report on the investigating the shooting.

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Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

LUX FOR LESS: ELITE CONSIGNMENT EXCHANGE



Outside view of Elite Consignment Exchange.

By **Ben Lee '27**
Reporter

A new thrift shopping destination, Elite Consignment Exchange has recently opened in Wallingford. An eight-minute walk from Choate, one can pass by Za-Onn, La Piazza, and Cositas Ricas to find the store located in front of the railroad. This new addition is already bringing changes to the town’s wardrobes and economy.

Elite Consignment Exchange offers some familiar luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Canada Goose. The store is divided into four sections: clothes, shoes, bags, and accessories.

Ms. Alana Arryo, the store manager, discussed the original vision of the store owners, Mr. Dave Costanzo and Mr. Wayne Patterson. “They always had an interest in design, and they wanted to open up a new business in something they thought would flourish in everything — consignment and second-hand. In that way, you can buy designer items for half of the cost,” she said.

The Elite Consignment Exchange buys and resells vintage clothing items from Wallingford residents. The store makes sure that the products they receive are authentic us-

ing a device called “Entrupy,” which zooms in on and scans the product with a camera.

The camera also shows the product’s microscopic details. By combining artificial intelligence with microscopy, Entrupy scans the item against common authentic and counterfeit ones, thus determining if the user’s product is real. Elite Consignment Exchange then validates the items that they are either buying or reselling.

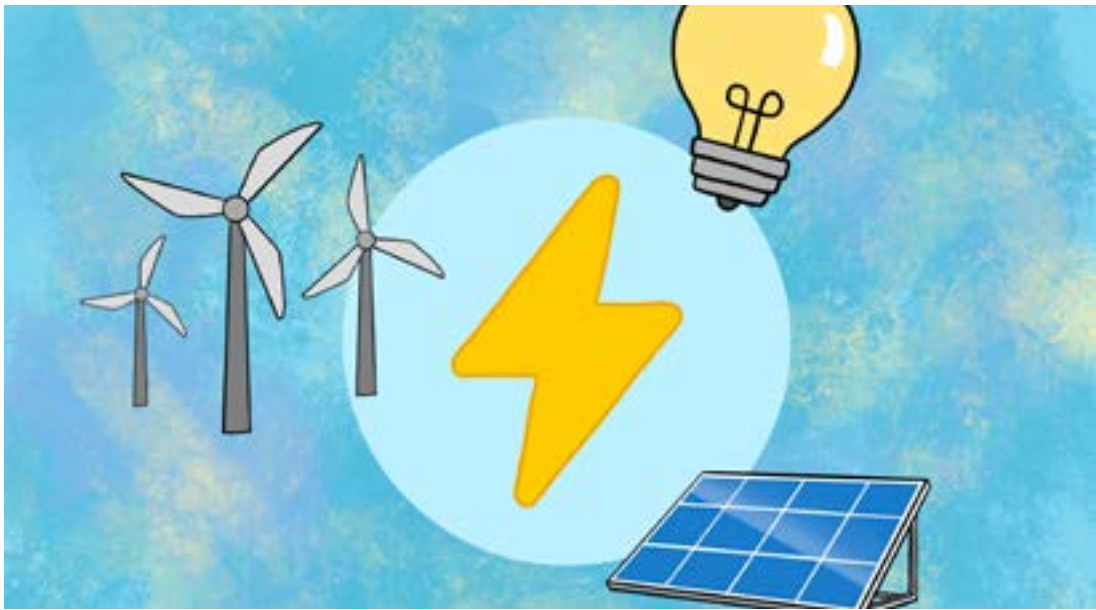
Ms. Arryo shared her excitement about the store’s opening. She said, “Residents are excited to see what kind of new stuff we get and excited for Wallingford to get a store like this.”

Wallingford residents have been quick to embrace the store. Ms. Venessa Avila, who owns the restaurant Rivas Taqueria, said, “I went there once; it is pretty good and clean. They just opened, and people like it.”

Ms. Arryo said, “My goal is just to make people’s days brighter. I want to have something that is unique and products that are not made anymore. I want designers to be accessible to all.”

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WALLINGFORD ELECTRIC: AN AFFORDABLE ALTERNATIVE



Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

By **Liana Alkhayer '28**
Reporter

Connecticut faces rising electricity bills and, as a result, growing frustration among residents. “It’s absolutely insane. It’s more than most people’s mortgages,” Scott Pearson, a Connecticut resident, said during an interview with News 8 WTNH. Amid this turmoil, Wallingford Electric stands out by offering competitive rates and town-controlled solutions aimed at easing the burden on households and businesses.

Unlike most Connecticut towns, whose electricity comes from major companies like Eversource and the United Illuminating Company (owned by Avangrid), Wallingford Electric is a town-run utility. Founded in 1899 following anger over the cost of gas-fired street lamps in Wallingford, electricity has been administered by Wallingford’s Public Utilities Commission ever since. Other towns never made the switch and have become reliant on outside providers. This unique structure allows Wallingford Electric to prioritize

community needs over profit. As a public utility, it reinvests revenue back into local infrastructure, focusing on customer satisfaction and transparency, while larger providers are often criticized for hidden fees.

Wallingford Electric’s residential rates range from ¢12.32 to ¢12.93 per kilowatt-hour, allowing homeowners to select plans tailored to their needs. On the other hand, prices from Connecticut’s larger electric companies rose up to ¢24.172 per kilowatt-hour in 2023.

Shawn Reilly, co-owner of golf course and restaurant Back 9 Social in Wallingford, highlighted the significant impact of Wallingford Electric’s competitive rates on local businesses. “It’s not just a little bit cheaper; it’s considerably cheaper than other areas for sure,” he said.

Flexible commercial rates help businesses effectively meet their energy demands. A standout feature of the company is Wallingford Electric’s Power Cost Adjustment (PCA), which allows for periodic billing adjustments based on market conditions, keeping customers informed and engaged. Wallingford Elec-

tric also offers a variety of energy-saving incentives, including programs that encourage energy-efficient choices and free home evaluations with electric heating, helping residents identify areas for improvement.

Beyond traditional efficiency measures, Wallingford Electric also promotes renewable energy initiatives, offering financial support for solar panels and geothermal heat pumps. Their annual free compact fluorescent light bulb distribution fosters an environmentally friendly community.

“We have a lot of electricity that goes into the building, and ... we were getting a good price for the electricity,” Mr. Reilly said.

As Wallingford Electric navigates the evolving energy landscape, its focus on affordability, transparency, and community engagement positions it as a trusted partner for residents facing economic challenges. By prioritizing customer needs, Wallingford Electric distinguishes itself as a model of effective public utility management.

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HIT THE BOOKS IN WALLINGFORD’S BEST NOOKS

By **Alexis Lee '28**
Reporter

As students juggle academics, sports, and social commitments, finding the perfect place to study can be challenging. Despite the variety of workspaces Choate’s campus offers, escaping familiar surroundings and enjoying a change of scenery can sometimes be helpful.

One popular off-campus spot for studying is the Wallingford Public Library. Leah Han ’27 often goes there with friends when she’s looking for a quiet place to study. She explained, “Since it’s not on campus, there are fewer interactions with other Choate students, which makes it easier to focus.”

Sara McLaughlin ’26, who also frequents the public library, added, “It’s really quiet, and you can find a little isolated spot in the corner.” She appreciates the calm environment, which is ideal for long study sessions. For students who prefer spacious and quiet study environments, the Wallingford Public Library is an excellent option. Additionally, it is right across the street from campus.

While the Wallingford Public Library is ideal for silent studying, cafés offer a more casual and flexible atmosphere. Han mentioned that cafés can sometimes be noisy and crowded, yet they remain popular among Choate students. McLaughlin agreed, also noting that being able to grab a drink or a snack while studying is a major benefit. “Choate students like to go to cafes [to study] because Choate students like food,” McLaughlin explained.

In Wallingford, two cafes have stood out for their cozy, welcoming vibes: Green Kettle Coffee and Café Luca Belle. Mariana Verdi ’25, a regular

at Green Kettle, shared, “It’s peaceful, small, and nearby.” She also highlighted the café’s distinct green interior, which enhances the relaxed atmosphere. Green Kettle Coffee offers a range of drinks, including espresso, tea, and seasonal beverages.

Similarly, Leanna Robie ’25 enjoys Café Luca Belle for its warm, comforting feel. “The positive atmosphere of the coffee shop makes it a great space to study,” she said. Robie enjoys their wide selection of drinks, and Ming Qin ’25 often orders caffeinated drinks to help him stay focused during study sessions. Qin also recommends Café Luca Belle for its “really nice bagel selection.”

For those seeking a larger space, Qin suggests Le Jardin Café, known for its fun drinks and pastries. Qin shared, “When I’m mentally locked down into studying, I prefer somewhere snug. But when I’m brainstorming, I like the open space at Le Jardin.”

Despite the advantages of studying in cafes, there are some potential drawbacks — certain locations are farther away, and space can be limited. Nevertheless, Qin pointed out that having food or some-

thing to drink, combined with the dynamic change in environment, helps him work more effectively. “When I spend too much time in one place, my brain slows down,” he explained. The variety of cafes in town offers students a refreshing break from campus and the flexibility to choose distinct study environments based on their preferences and needs.

Although many students enjoy studying off campus on the weekends, they often prefer on-campus study spaces during the week. Han and Verdi, for example, frequently use the Andrew Mellon Library or the St. John Hall study rooms after sports or during free blocks. While the public library and cafés are great for individual work, these on-campus spaces are convenient and offer large tables, making them ideal for group projects. Their close locations are also more accessible for fitting in quick study sessions. On weekends, however, exploring the town and visiting local cafés with friends can provide a much-needed break, allowing students to recharge while still staying productive.

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Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/The Choate News

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TRASH TALK VS. TEAM SPIRIT



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

By **Alisha Gashu '27** and **CJ Lord '27**
Opinions Writers

At Choate, there is ongoing debate surrounding trash talk and abrasive language in sports. Many consider trash-talking a key component of friendly competition, seeing it as a factor to boost energy, intimidate opponents, and “hype up” teammates. However, the use of trash talk and abrasive language may also have negative effects on athletes by creating anxiety and pressure, therefore interfering with their focus and confidence during a game. Choate’s regulation of these behaviors serves the

goal of creating a civil and inclusive environment that aligns with the School’s values of integrity, compassion, and respect. As such, limiting trash talk is beneficial in creating a healthy and encouraging environment for athletes.

While the Choate Student Handbook does not explicitly provide written rules regarding trash talk, Director of Athletics Mr. Thomas White emphasized the School’s focus on cheering for our teammates instead of bringing down our opponents. “We don’t need to tear other people down to lift up our people,” he said. Instead of undermining our opponents, healthy and respectful empower-

ment of Choate’s athletes plays a crucial role in achieving the goals of athletic competition. “Cheering for players when they make a great play, whether that’s a goal or faking someone out. These are the ‘oohs’ or the ‘ahhs’ that can be the good,” he added.

Additionally, restricting trash talk is imperative to help athletes foster a sense of respect, sportsmanship, and kindness in their sport. These values create an environment of inclusivity for less experienced athletes who may not be compatible with the high pressure of interscholastic sports. Those on Junior Varsity teams or new players to a sport may find intense competition to be overwhelming, and aggressive trash talk could further undermine their confidence.

Limiting trash talk also helps Choate athletes focus on their own athletic performance and collaboration with their teammates, rather than the other team. In the absence of this abrasive language, athletes are not burdened with what other people are say-

ing about them. Trash-talking can lead to harsh self-criticism and self-doubt: thoughts that can damage one’s play.

We must recognize the significant distinction between speech that empowers Choate athletes and speech that solely insults the other team. For many athletes, empowering and respectful trash-talking is a way to get into the competitive spirit. Some athletes elevate their performance in the presence of trash talk.

While there is a space for trash talk in professional sports, limiting trash talk is ideal for Choate’s athletic environment. This way, we are able to form a respectful space for athletes that balances competitiveness and sportsmanship, limits self-doubt and insecurity, and fosters a focused and positive environment.

Alisha Gashu and CJ Lord are fourth-formers from Dubai, UAE, and Chicago, IL. They may be reached at agashu27@choate.edu and clord27@choate.edu.

ELECTIVE RESTRICTIONS: UNPOPULAR BUT NECESSARY

By **Harry Kim '28**
Opinions Writer

Every year, upon receiving acceptance letters from Choate, many prospective students eagerly fill out their course and athletics request forms. However, as they scroll through all the possible electives provided for students, they often find that numerous courses are unavailable to them.

At Choate, most electives are open exclusively to upperclassmen or students who have taken the course’s prerequisites, reducing underformers’ freedom to take subject-focused courses. Consequently, many underclassmen, without fully understanding why Choate implemented the current elective course policy, want reform. However, the current policy is legitimate, and Choate should not increase the availability of electives to underclassmen but should instead consider creating elective courses specifically for underclassmen.

The current policies were created to group students according to maturity and age. Most freshman underclassmen range between 14 and 16 years old and thus lack the experience of an upperclassman. Juniors and seniors, who are currently taking harder electives, have already developed their writing, reading, and research skills. Underclassmen might lack these foundational skills, which

high-level electives expect students to already possess. For instance, many Economics classes offered require students to have taken Macroeconomics 400, where they learn important skills required for higher-level Economic classes. Therefore, it is imperative that new students learn these skills before actually taking harder courses.

However, many underclassmen repeat a year, and some even take harder non-elective courses than upperclassmen. So why wouldn’t Choate allow qualified underformers to explore all the electives?

The biggest obstacle is in Choate’s current elective course system. According to Humanities teacher Mr. James Stanley, “Choate’s current elective course systems are designed to be sequential.” For example, taking Constitutional Law before U.S. History would make it much harder for a student to understand the class. Hence, many students take political science classes concurrently with, or directly following U.S. History classes. Moreover, even if a student has self-studied and has achieved proficiency in a particular subject, without the proof and record from previous schools or organizations, they will still be unable to take high-level courses in their third and fourth-form years.

Increasing the availability of currently fifth- and sixth-form-only electives to underformers can

also burden them significantly. Many new underclassmen need time to adjust to life at Choate — homesickness, rigorous academic courses, and forming relationships with both faculty members and friend groups are extremely mentally demanding. With these adjustments before them, taking harder elective courses would only create more stress.

All in all, while the current policy prohibiting underclassmen from taking certain electives is reasonable, there is room for improvement. Introducing dedicated elective courses for underclassmen can equip students with essential skills before they take challenging courses. If the School initiates new elective courses for underclassmen, the discontent of not being able to take various elective courses would subside, and hopefully, underclassmen are better prepared for future academic courses.

Choate should not increase the availability of current electives to underclassmen; rather, they can create new elective courses dedicated to them. Luckily, in the current system, a new underclassman who really wants to pursue and dive deeper into certain subjects can always join clubs run by Choate students and, as active members, expand their knowledge.

Harry Kim is a third-former from Seoul, South Korea. He may be reached at hkim28@choate.edu.

AGE DISPARITIES BRING ACADEMIC CLARITIES

By **Ethan Zhang '26**
Copy Editor

Picture this: a 19-year-old 6’4 football recruit hunched over the iPad of a 13-year-old math enthusiast; they’re collaborating on a calculus problem. Should these two people, with their drastically different backgrounds and priorities, be in the same class, let alone work together? My answer is an absolute, resounding yes.

Choate boasts its diversity, specifically in the student body’s wide range of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Classrooms are filled with students from all over the world, which is why in-class discussions and group projects are so significant. At its core, the reason why diversity fosters meaningful discussion and collaboration is because different perspectives contribute to a more nuanced, comprehensive understanding of academic material. These distinctions in perspective often come from differences in ethnic or cultural backgrounds; however, age disparities provide the same effect.

Collaboration between students is crucial in different types of academic spaces: Humanities classes, where discussion is critical to interpreting and analyzing a text, and STEM classes, where students often work together on group projects and hands-on lab reports.

Large age gaps between peers in academic spaces may seem counterintuitive — to have valuable discourse and collaboration, shouldn’t we be at similar maturity levels? Not necessarily. There is benefit for both sides, younger and older, when collaborating in an academic space.

When I think back to my freshman year, reflecting on my beliefs and approach to academics, it’s hard to grasp just how much I’ve changed. Your high school years are some of the most formative



Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/The Choate News

years of your life; therefore, the growth you undergo during that time is quite significant.

Some of my most impressive and essential moments at Choate have been from experiences with those older than me. Learning how to weld jewelry in my freshman year with a postgraduate student, navigating pre-calculus in my sophomore year with seniors, and colluding in the microeconomics market simulation as a sophomore with a senior — these academic experiences have shaped who I am. As an impressive underclassman, juniors and seniors are figures you look up to. Healthy study habits, how to manage large workloads, which electives to take and maybe which ones to stay from — are a few things I learned from those older and more experienced than me.

Now, as an upperclassman, it would be arrogant and simply incorrect for me to believe that there isn’t value in the ideas that those younger than me produce. In fact, many of the younger students in my class seem to be very passionate and resourceful. If a younger student is placed in a more advanced class, they likely belong there and intentionally worked hard to be there.

It is absolutely true that our age shapes the media we con-

sume, the activities we enjoy, and the people we interact with, all of which affect the academic perspective that we bring to class. However, while younger students do learn and take after their older peers, they also provide their nuanced perspectives, making the relationship between them mutually beneficial. For example, students’ approaches to interpreting English literature and solving math problems may be drastically different a few years ago than they are now. What’s key is that younger students’ perspectives are fundamentally different, not necessarily inherently inferior.

So, while it is essential for students to collaborate with peers their own age, they can and should find value in the diverse set of ideas from those older and younger than them. By fostering unique relationships through class discussions and group projects, students are expanding their worldview. If cultural differences and unique ethnic backgrounds contribute so much to diversity and nuanced perspectives, why can’t age contribute to nurturing a diverse academic space as well?

Ethan Zhang is a fifth-former from Acton, MA. He may be reached at ezhang26@choate.edu.



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

RETHINKING THE REWARD: COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY

By **Maia Shah '27**
Opinions Writer

As I looked around School Meeting on September 23, I saw many students napping, listening to music, and showing indignation towards the endless list of announcements. However, the energy in the room shifted as Director of Community Service Ms. Melissa Koomson made an unanticipated announcement: following Community Service Day on September 28, all participating students would be eligible to receive two credit hours counted towards the annual requirement of ten community service hours. Suddenly, everyone was

awake. In light of this change, members of the community must reflect further on the purpose of community service as an act in the spirit of kindness, not compensation.

Like many others, I immediately filled out a reflection to receive my two hours of credit after Community Service Day. However, despite my initial enthusiasm, I can’t help but feel that the introduction of credit detracts from the spirit of Community Service Day.

The goal of the change, according to Ms. Koomson, was “to provide more opportunity for students to engage with Service BOARD also to provide an opportunity for folks to get a jumpstart or, in some



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

cases, catch up on what they haven’t done.” Community service, she added, becomes burdensome when students approach it with a

negative attitude. By offering an incentive, Ms. Koomson hopes that students will approach serving their community with a more

positive mindset. However, we must still consider the implications of this change.

For Community Service Day, my advisory visited Davenport-Dunbar, a residence for elderly individuals. The residents seemed delighted to welcome us to their home, and I could tell they genuinely enjoyed the trivia and bingo we played together. As I wrote my reflection on the day’s events, one conversation stuck with me. A resident asked, “Do you students get credit for being here?” The question made me pause, and I hesitated to admit that, yes, we would be compensated for our time.

I struggled to answer the resident because I felt guilty:

introducing compensation for a day devoted to helping others seems counterintuitive, especially at a school with such privilege. There is a clear distinction between students completing individual projects and the entire community coming together in the spirit of service. Offering credit can come in the way of understanding this. I don’t think we should be ashamed for celebrating this recent introduction, or even taking credit for our time, but I do urge us to reconsider the reasoning behind this “blessing.”

Maia Shah is a fourth-former from Darien, CT. She may be reached at mshah27@choate.edu.

A TALE OF TWO TICKETS: ON THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Democrat

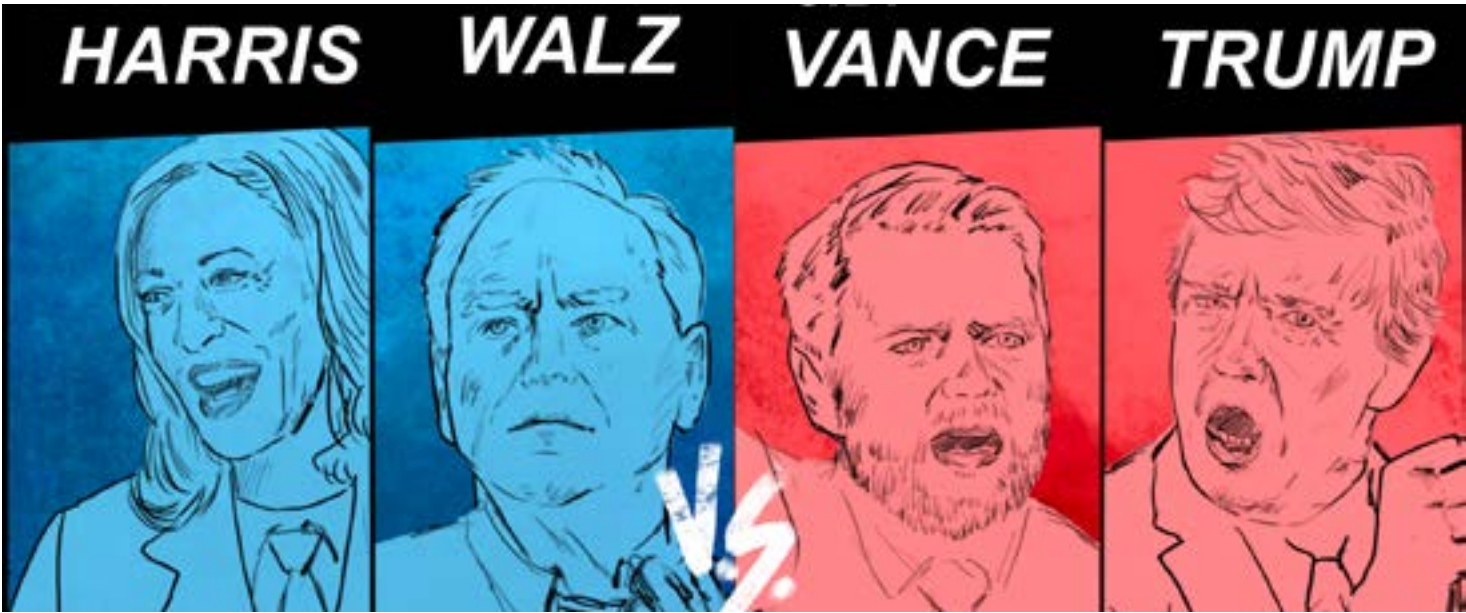
Republican

By **Andy Stahlman '26**
Opinions Writer

In both the presidential debate on September 10 and the vice-presidential debate on October 1, we witnessed two heated discussions with distinct contents but similar patterns. Former President Donald Trump P'oo relies on feeding fear and anger. On the contrary, the Democrats have consistently shown in their debate performances that the best way to fight Trump's fear-driven approach is to inspire hope.

Following the vice presidential debate, it was clear that Republican vice presidential candidate Ohio Senator JD Vance is highly conservative and supports policies that will severely harm American citizens. Still, he appeared to be more genuine than Trump in his recent public appearances. In a touching moment of human empathy after Democratic vice presidential candidate and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz said his son witnessed a shooting at a community center, Vance said, "Tim, first of all, I didn't know that your 17-year-old witnessed a shooting, and I'm sorry about that."

This debate contained significantly more policy talk, something most people felt was missing from the presidential debate. Despite these positives, we saw the Trump cult mentality polluting the debate, particularly when Vance was unable to give a concrete answer on whether Trump lost the 2020 election. In response, Walz asked during the debate, "Who's going to honor that democracy, and who's going to honor Donald Trump?" This quote sums up the problem with Vance: he adapts to exactly what Trump needs him to be, even if it strays from what's needed from a Vice President.



Graphic by Evelyn Kim '25/The Choate News

Moreover, this debate was never about the vice presidents; it was always about Trump. Trump as a figure has evolved beyond just being a typical candidate; instead, he represents a movement that doesn't have an end goal. The "Make America Great Again" movement is a population that must to change how they interact with politics. Trump can no longer rely on attacking President Joe Biden's age; instead, he must actually fight back against a campaign riding on building momentum. However, this "fighting back" will become much more strenuous now that Harris has figured out exactly how to push Trump over the edge. In Trump's infamous quote from the presidential debate, "In Springfield, they are eating the dogs. The people that came in, they are eating the cats," there is a blatant use of intense imagery to spark fear. In response, Harris did something that made her more relatable than any organized argument could have ever done; she made the same face millions of Americans made, wincing at the extraor-

dinarily outrageous statement. Trump's web of lies is unraveling, revealing a less-than-pretty truth.

Overall, these two debates gave us a better glimpse into the Republican ticket than the Democratic one, but this is of little surprise. Trump has been the looming specter of politics from the early days of the Republican primary and this election has been about him since then. With the help of Harris identifying and pushing on Trump's pressure points and Walz hitting strongly on the main point of democracy, the Democrats have proven that Trump is little more than a fearmonger. To use Vance's own words from when he was a "never Trump-er" back in a 2016 interview: "One of the biggest drivers of Trump support, and one of the things that's most predictive of Trump support, is that you express cynicism about the future." Harris has taken advantage of this remark and used the vital tool of hope in the face of adversity.

Andy Stahlman is a fifth-former from Austin, TX. He may be reached at astahlman26@choate.edu.

By **Thomas Lovse '27**
Opinions Writer

Vice President Kamala Harris has a big problem: nobody knows what she stands for. She explained that her values haven't changed, yet she flip-flopped on all major policy positions she held over the last 20 years. The Presidential debate on September 10 should've served as an opportunity for a further glimpse into Harris, yet it only enabled her to remain ambiguous.

From the start of her campaign, Harris took very few questions from the press and only participated in a handful of interviews, all of which were rehearsed. Voters such as myself aren't sure what a Harris presidency would entail, and her radical yet convenient policy changes aren't doing her any favors.

The debate was moderated by ABC News, the only platform the Biden-Harris administration would agree for Harris to appear on. In this advantageous setting, Harris was able to have a powerful debate performance due to the lack of restraints placed on her. It was

a complete disappointment; the moderators were entirely biased against Former President Donald Trump P'oo. During the debate, they consistently interrupted and pressed him to follow up, but failed to fact-check Harris even once despite her false claims. For instance, Harris claimed falsehoods such as, "Trump will sign a national abortion ban" or "Trump is against IVF treatments," despite these being issues Trump has disavowed. Both candidates made false and misleading statements during the debate, but Harris was allowed to get away with them every time, reflecting an abhorrent failure of the moderators to keep a neutral environment.

Trump failed to accomplish his mission of rightfully pinning the tribulations of America on the current Biden administration and exposing the potential risks of a Harris presidency. Trump allowed Harris to bait him, such as when he was put on the defensive when asked about his rally crowd sizes.

The candidates' running mates, Ohio Senator JD Vance and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, faced off in the vice-pres-

idential debate on October 1. I perceived it as such that each candidate had their own separate objectives: Vance to humanize Trump and reassure voters of his fitness to hold the position of President, and Walz to make the Trump-Vance ticket seem weird, dangerous, and out of touch with American voters. Walz opened the debate with a shaky tone and stumpled over his words, mixing up Iran and Israel twice. On the contrary, Vance gave numerous responses that revealed him as knowledgeable, mannered, articulated, and calm. He slammed Harris on her inability to fulfill her promises as the current Vice President. Similar to the previous debate, the moderators were abysmal. The official rules were that the moderators would not fact-check candidates, yet they interrupted Vance numerous times. Nevertheless, Vance stood his ground, calling out the moderators and debunking their false fact checks.

Vance performed very well and succeeded in his goal of making a second Trump term seem palatable to voters. However, Walz failed to paint the Trump-Vance campaign as radical and dangerous, as he and Vance found a lot of common ground over certain topics. Walz did nothing to make the Harris administration palatable, leaving the concept of a Harris presidency as enigmatic as before.

These debates have allowed Harris and Walz to remain as much of an enigma as before, while Trump and Vance squandered a golden chance to criticize Harris' dismal record as Vice President.

Thomas Lovse is a fourth-former from Naples, FL. He may be reached at tlovse27@choate.edu.

Marcellus Williams: A Victim of Racial Injustice

By **Rachel Fan '27**
Copy Editor

Is the purpose of "justice" in the American court system to uncover the truth, or is it purely to determine a scapegoat to arrive at some form of result? Wrongful convictions are an American nightmare. According to the National Registry of Exonerations, innocent Black people are seven times more likely to be falsely convicted of murder than white people.

Given the measures taken in recent years to sustain the increasingly diverse community such as Equity Action Plans, you would think that there would be fre cases of undue death sentences as a result of racial bigotry. On the contrary, the same stodgy racial mindset has persisted.

I opened YouTube last week and came across video after video on the execution of Marcellus Williams, a 55-year-old Black man from Bonne Terre, Missouri. Williams was executed by lethal injection on September 24, having been sentenced to death in 2001 for the alleged 1998 murder of reporter Felicia Gayle. William's mugshot was pinned in the forefront of every video, paired with large, bold fonts depicting phrases like "EXECUTED WITH DERISION," "DISGUSTING INJUSTICE," and "OUR COUNTRY FAILED HIM."

Indeed, much evidence has supported his innocence in the 23 years spanning from conviction to execution. The current St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney admitted that trial prosecutors had initially mishandled the murder weapon and that criminal DNA belonging to someone other than Williams was found at the crime scene — which, typically, clearly indicates an exoneration to be pursued. Still, prosecutors used peremptory strikes to purposefully exclude Black jurors



Graphic by Leah Han '27/The Choate News

from the trial based on race, which further contributed to the wrongful conviction; the United States Supreme Court, one of the last bodies that could have overturned Williams' death sentence, declined to intervene the day before twwhe scheduled execution.

How does Williams' case highlight the flaws of the modern incarceration system? Our appellate system is not designed to uncover factual errors, lies, and legal misconduct. Duke University Legal scholar Brandon Garrett explained that individuals proven wrongfully convicted through DNA testing often struggle to obtain relief. In rare cases where the defendant is offered freedom, it is at the cost of giving up legitimate legal claims. Such deals force the innocent to choose between falsely admitting guilt and facing more years in prison. Last month, in a bid to avoid execution, Williams accepted a plea for a life sentence without parole while maintaining his innocence, but the Missouri Supreme Court rejected it.

To address the deep flaws in our incarceration system, we need reforms that prioritize justice over convenience. Racial bias in jury selection, as seen in Williams' case, must end; stricter oversight should prevent ex-

cluding jurors based on their race. Prosecutors should be held accountable for misconduct, and independent reviews must ensure that post-conviction relief is accessible, especially in cases where DNA evidence exonerates wrongfully convicted defendants. Additionally, plea deals that force innocent people to admit guilt must be curbed. Real accountability and transparency in the justice system are crucial to preventing more wrongful convictions.

The case of Marcellus Williams reveals a system marred by racial bias, legal misconduct, and a lack of accountability. Innocent lives, especially those of Black individuals, are destroyed by our system that prioritizes convictions over truth. By eliminating racial discrimination in trials, holding prosecutors accountable, and creating real pathways to exoneration, our legal process no longer perpetuate injustice. So, let me ask this question again: is "justice" a beam of irreversible, harsh "righteousness," or is it a word coined to shroud violence built on ideals of bigotry?

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

Chappell Roan's Rise, Fall, and Fan Fallout

By **Francesca Howard '26**
Copy Editor

A year ago, Chappell Roan was just another name you'd scroll past on your Spotify playlist. But after her electric Coachella performance in April 2024, her catchy single "Good Luck, Babe!" and debut album *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* blowing up the charts, it seems like she has it all. However, over the past month, her erratic behavior has fans wondering if the self-proclaimed Midwest Princess is worthy of her crown.

On September 27, the day before she was scheduled to take the stage at the All Things Go Music Festival's New York City and Washington D.C. shows, Roan broke the news to her fans that she was canceling her show: "Things have gotten overwhelming over the past few weeks, and I am really feeling it." Roan explained on Instagram that she needed to "prioritize [her] health" and thanked ticket holders for their understanding.

But here's the thing: most of her fans didn't take kindly to how she handled the situation. As one Instagram user commented, "If I had thousands of dollars spent on flights etc, and my fav came out saying 'I'll be back xoxo' like some gossip girl revival, you best believe I'm never paying for a ticket to their show again." Another put it more bluntly: "Get over yourself."

Roan's biggest hit might be the one she's taking to her reputation, and her critics have a solid point. Her fans have spent large amounts of money on tickets, hotel rooms, and transportation, hoping to catch a glimpse of their favorite artist.

There's no denying Roan's meteoric rise to stardom or the immense pressures that come with it. Roan went from being an underground artist to headlining festivals and sharing stages with

pop superstar Olivia Rodrigo. Anyone would find that overwhelming. Mental health should always come first, and it's commendable that these artists feel comfortable sharing their struggles. Nonetheless, it's difficult to sympathize with Roan when this isn't the first time she disappointed her fans by backing out of a show at the last minute.

Canceling gigs with practically zero notice demonstrates Roan's complete lack of respect for those who keep her career afloat. More established stars like Billie Eilish, who openly discuss their struggles with mental health, manage to handle their commitments with a level of professionalism. No one is asking Roan to work herself to death. What fans want is simple: transparency, consistency, and, above all, respect. If she needs to take time off, let her team communicate it clearly and well in advance. Roan can't just flake on commitments whenever she feels like it. Most people can't afford to clock out of work because they are tired or overwhelmed. Roan is very privileged to have the ability to make these kinds of capricious decisions without considering their consequences.

Even more baffling is Roan's general attitude towards her fans. While performing at a show earlier this year, she expressed dis-

comfort with admirers asking for photos, calling the behavior "weird." She even went to the extent of comparing fan behavior to that of "an abusive ex-husband." Setting boundaries is healthy, but labeling supporters as "abusive" for wanting a keepsake of the artist they admire is excessive. For an artist whose brand prioritizes an artist-audience relationship, these incidents are out of tune with the image she has tried to cultivate.

Roan wants to live in a world where she can pick and choose when to be famous. However, if she wants to continue reaping the rewards of life in the spotlight such as record deals, brand endorsements, and the adoration of thousands, then she needs to show up. Chappell Roan may want to rethink what it means to be in the public eye. Being a music star is not just about making music. It's about being approachable, relatable, and, at the very least, grateful towards your supporters. If she fails to do this, Roan might just find herself with all the time in the world for self-care — because no one will be lining up to see her. Good luck, babe.

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



Graphic by Rielle Reyes '27/The Choate News

FOREVER TRUE: FACULTY REFLECT ON THEIR CHOATE EXPERIENCE

By **Teya Tejavibulya '28**
Reporter

Choate Rosemary Hall’s faculty alumni cherished their student years at our school upon the hillside. Though their times at the School span decades, with some of their graduating classes roughly 30 years apart, each Choate alumnus can recall unique snapshots of their time as a student. Here’s what a few of them remember.

Debbie Carpenter ’85

Ms. Debbie Carpenter ’85 currently serves as the Office Coordinator for the Choate Programs. As a proud alumna of the School, she loves discussing her time at Choate with current students.

Of the many events Choate hosts, Ms. Carpenter specifically recalls her love for Garden Party; “It was a tea party. I just love how it was one of the final events of my Choate career. It was so nice to see everyone and look back at how much we’d grown together over the years,” she said.

Ms. Carpenter believes that making life-long friendships is the key to happiness and success at Choate. “I feel like every city and place that I go to, if I put that name of Choate out there, I could probably connect with someone,” she shared.

By coordinating Choate’s summer program, she aims to motivate prospective students to value their time here and form enduring connections with their peers.

Will Gilyard ’98

Dean of Students Mr. Will Gilyard ’98 shared some highlights from his four-year journey as a Choate boarding student.



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Some of Choate’s alumni-turned-faculty pose for a photo before Matriculation this past September.

He described high school as the “golden years,” considering it one of the best periods of his life.

Mr. Gilyard found his classes at Choate especially memorable due to his incredible teachers. He recalls one familiar face in particular: “I can remember, vividly, my physics class freshman year, and my teacher [was] a woman named Fran O’Donoghue.” Though they are colleagues now, he can still recall the joy he felt when “she used to jump on the tables and just [bring] physics to life. It was amazing.”

In discussing the transformations that Choate has undergone over the years, Mr. Gilyard specifically recalls the notable changes to dorm life. One tradition that he would like to relive is the break

during study hours, in which local vendors would come to Memorial Circle. During that time, Mr. Gilyard and his friends would hang out and eat delicious food from restaurants around Wallingford. It was these little moments that made him realize the importance of friendship, as it provided support during hard times and a sense of belonging that enriched his life in innumerable ways.

Michelle Rittler ’98

Senior Associate Director of Parent Giving Mrs. Michelle Rittler ’98 was classmates with Mr. Gilyard. She has lived in Wallingford since her childhood and attended Choate as a day student.

Mrs. Rittler recognizes the many changes to the School over the years, including how our concept of “main campus” has shifted. For many years, multiple classes, such as English, were held in Brownell. More recently, an “intentional redirecting of foot traffic,” according to Mrs. Rittler, has occurred. “The fact that there aren’t classes on the upper campus, [as well as] having the upper campus basically closed to students, is new,” she said. However, the shift in student density across campus shows the ever-changing nature of Choate life; what may seem normal to us will be foreign to the Choate students that come

here even 10 years down the line (for context, construction for Lanphier was completed in 2015, the Student Activities Center in 2017, and Colony Hall in 2019).

Reflecting on our School’s recent sustainability efforts, Mrs. Rittler mentioned the School’s implementation of the Environmental Immersion Signature Program (EIP). She expressed her admiration for this change and hopes that it will be a long-term commitment for the future.

In her time as a student, Mrs. Rittler felt she gained valuable life lessons that stayed with her after graduation. As she put it, “I didn’t understand the fact that you didn’t need a [perfect]

GPA or whatever to be successful here; it’s not the end of the world. You’re among some of the smartest students of your generation. Be proud of that.”

Chris Aguiar ’11

Mr. Chris Aguiar ’11’s involvement in STEM began at Choate, and he continues to pursue his passion today by working as a biology teacher. His favorite project during his four years here was his “SRP [Science Research Program] research paper, where [he] worked in a genetics lab at Yale.” Mr. Aguiar regards this opportunity as a pivotal moment in his academic journey and in deciding to pursue the study of genetics.

Mr. Aguiar also stated that he values the real-world lessons Choate has taught him. “[The School] prepares you. I think Choate prepared me really well in terms of time management ... I knew what I needed to do for myself to succeed, which I think a lot of kids who I went to college with were still figuring out,” he said.

Looking back, he recognizes that his high school experience laid the foundation for his future and the person he is today.

Choate has made a mark on its faculty alumni, with memories ranging from physics classes brought to life to the ever-familiar pain of a long trek to class. These students-turned-faculty continue to inspire today’s students, proving that while its campus and traditions may change, the heart of Choate — its supportive community — remains timeless.

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Choate Students Reimagine the Course Catalogue

By **Kaitlyn Yu ’27**
Reporter

If there’s one thing students should admire about Choate, it’s all of the opportunities we are given to reach our full potential. With access to over 300 courses, eight Signature Programs, and a plethora of afternoon activities, everyone is encouraged to cultivate their passions and explore new paths. Even so, there are always ways we can improve our School and its offerings, and some students have suggestions as to how the School could expand the course catalogue.

Though Ella Morris ’25 enjoys the variety of courses offered at Choate, she wishes that there was a “What If?” history class. Citing her American Studies cohort last year and their History teacher, Mr. Thomas White, as co-creators, the “What If?” class would allow students to pose questions considering the impacts of altering, creating, or erasing historical events. “I don’t remember exactly how we thought of the idea, but we would always ask the craziest questions and go on the strangest historical

tangents that it felt like a natural continuation of our class dynamic,” Morris said. Such a class would encourage students to think critically about the impact of individual actions while engaging in creative thinking and academic curiosity.

Brayden Bratti ’27 believes that there should be more mandatory classes to widen students’ world view. Bratti said that a required geography class would benefit the student body, some of whom have never left the United States. He also expressed interest in a “broader range of global studies programs,” like an Afro-Eurasian history course. Especially in the context of a global school, learning geography and cultural studies would help broaden the horizons of all students.

Andy Stahlman ’26, a debater and mock trial aficionado, hopes to see Mock Trial offered as an afternoon activity and classes like Criminal Law in future iterations of the course catalogue. Especially since many Choate students are politically active or of voting age, understanding the American judicial system is essential.

Similarly, Ava Hult-Falk ’27 suggested that there be “more

things geared towards people that ‘don’t want to be sweaty’” in the afternoon. Meditation activities, for example, could allow students to disconnect from their electronics, a practice the Administration is encouraging, and take time to reflect and relax.

On the other hand, Leanne Parks ’25 suggested acrobatics-related afternoon activities. As a dancer and theater savant, Parks believes that a gymnastics and circus tricks evening option, in which students might learn skills like unicycle-riding and tumbling skills, would offer another opportunity for students to be undefinable in combining the arts and athletics.

What courses and afternoon activities would you like to see at school? Whether it’s a niche subject or a sweaty afternoon activity, your input could inspire new passions for others. After all, students are always brimming with creative ideas to make the most of their time here, and your suggestion might just be the next big hit!

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SAGE SERVES UP SUCCESS IN THE TEMPORARY DINING HALL



Photo by Harry Kim ’28/The Choate News

SAGE Dining Services pose for a photo behind the food bar.

By **Claire Liu ’28**
Reporter

Feeding hundreds of students three meals a day is no easy feat, and the renovation of the Hill House Dining Hall has added another layer of difficulty to this difficult task. Until the spring of 2025, SAGE Dining Services (SAGE) staff face the challenge of preparing meals in a temporary kitchen adjacent to the transitory dining hall.

Many staff have recognized the difficulty of preparing a similar variety and quantity of food in the limited space of the makeshift kitchen. Mr. Aaron Vertucci, a prep cook, said, “It’s a little harder because it is a temporary kitchen, so we don’t have as many resources.”

The SAGE staff also have to move more frequently for meals than before because the temporary dining hall is farther from other locations on campus that need to be supplied with food, such as the Tuck Shop or Lanphier Cafe. Ms. Katelyn Testa, a cook and prep server, agreed with Mr. Vertucci. She said, “The spaces that we have to cook in are limited, ... [and] the fact that we have to run across buildings is one of the [biggest] challenges.”

The location of the temporary dining hall adds another level of complexity in the form of managing logistics. Mr. Andrew Welles, the Assistant Food Service Director, said, “There’s a lot of moving parts, stuff coming from different places, baking in different places,” thus rendering the act of getting food where it needs to go more difficult.

Despite the hurdles the temporary dining hall poses, the SAGE crew has worked hard to prepare the best meals possible. Ms. Testa said, “We are ... there for each other and helping each other out when we’re stressed out.” Mr. Thomas Cricco, a cook, elaborated, “We’ve been together for a long time, so we work together as friends. We try our best to help each other out where we can and when we can.”

Mr. Antonio Lopez Arcos, arguably SAGE’s most famous grill cook and runner among students as well as the head of the infamous “Antonio’s Angels,” said, “I [go] out of my way to help everybody, and that makes me happy.” His enthusiasm inspires both his co-workers and the wider School community: “I have been doing this for 10 years, ... and I love

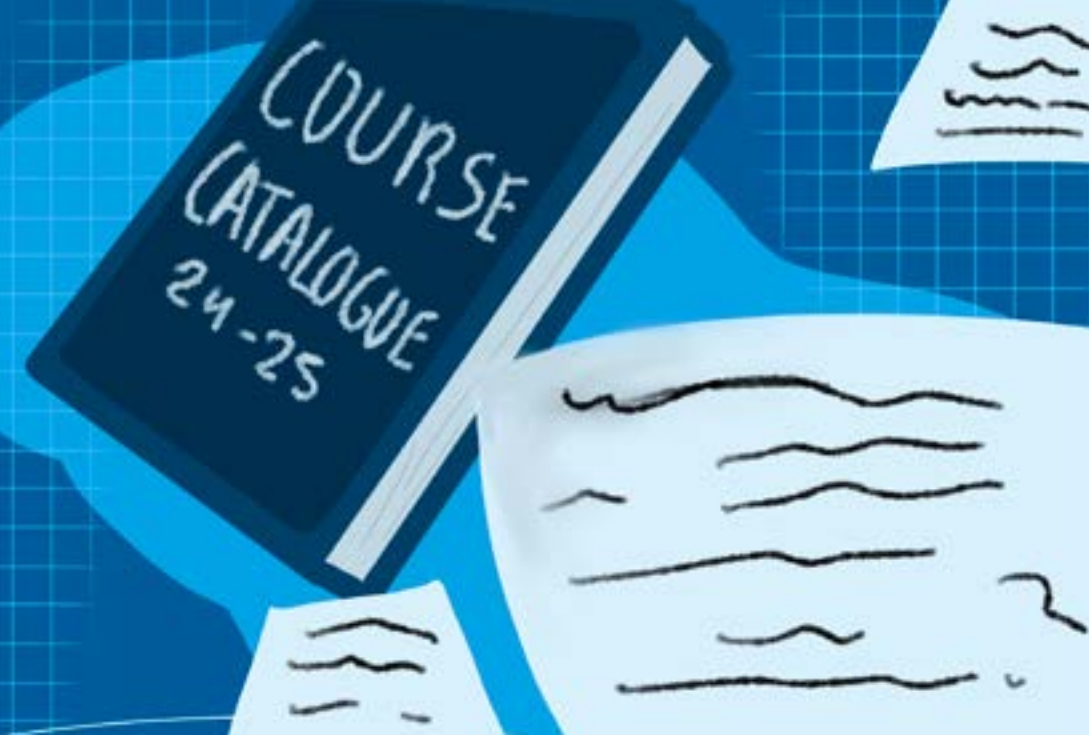
[it] because I love what I do. It is not a job; this is my life, and I enjoy it.”

The Hill House dining hall is slated to have its grand re-opening in the spring of 2025, and the SAGE crew is excited to work in their newly renovated space. Over three times its original size (from 1,600 to 4,850 square feet), the servery will be more accessible and efficient for SAGE staff and dining hall frequenters alike.

SAGE staff are looking forward to seeing the new space. Mr. Roshan Hargrove, a new prep cook and server, said, “I’m definitely excited for it; I want to see what it looks like because this [the temporary dining hall] is the only place I’ve known.” Mr. Cricco added, “The old equipment was breaking very easily up in Hill House; it was really outdated. So, I’m very excited.”

The next time you are in the dining hall, take a moment to savor the food prepared for you; the incredibly resilient SAGE team has gone above and beyond to ensure that our stomachs are full and our hearts are happy!

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Graphic by Rielle Reyes ’27/The Choate News

BACK TO SCHOOL IN PHOTOS

By **Chloe Yeung '28**
Reporter



Steel Beam in Carr Hall

On September 6, the Class of 2025 signed a steel “L” beam, physically cementing their legacy in the foundations of Carr Hall, Choate’s up-and-coming Admis-

sions office. The beam will be built into the framework of the building. Adorned in the unique handwriting of each student, this bold memorabilia marks the beginning of the seniors’ last year at Choate.



Smells Like Team Spirit

After weeks of hard work, determination, and resilience during the first weeks of Fall term, student-athletes have strengthened and refined their skills, all while bonding with teammates over fun practices, light-hearted team dinners, and

intense interscholastic competitions. A popular student pastime is watching the Wild Boars compete on weekends and weekdays against opposing teams. Spectators are decked out in Blue and Gold spirit and electrify the atmosphere with their enthusiastic cheers.



Fall Foliage

With summer ending, the weather no longer allows for a tranquil swim under the sun. Instead, students are greeted with a classic New England autumn breeze, signaling the changing

of seasons and the start of a new school year. Trees continue to fade into a palette of crimson and pumpkin, offering a perfect shade to sit under while socializing with friends. The fall foliage sets the tone for a memorable fall.



Temporary Dining Hall

An essential part of the school day, the temporary dining hall is much more than just a place to grab a healthy and delicious meal. While students wait for the Hill House dining hall to be renovated, the old student activities cen-

ter is serving them well. With its variety of dishes and open atmosphere, students get to immerse themselves in various cultures. Students can also meet new friends across different forms and backgrounds and have an opportunity to relax, destress, and socialize.



Studying Together

The start of the academic school year means new concepts, study environments, and academic expectations. To deal with mounting course load and challenging course content, students have developed effective study habits to

smoothly guide their transition back to school. Students are utilizing the new renovations to accomplish work. These habits include making use of free time, going to the Andrew Mellon Library to access study resources, and actively communicating with teachers.



Dorm Hangouts

Dorm connections are crucial in getting students acclimated to the Choate environment, especially for freshmen. Dorm activities like birthday celebrations, mug nights, and even casual common room conversations build camaraderie that extend

beyond the dorm, helping students start off the academic year on a positive note. Students in the same dorm socialize in a myriad of ways, from games of mahjong to movie nights to karaoke.

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A HISTORY OF THE PMAC

By **Sophie Park '27** and **Bridget Rivard '28**
Reporters

The modern and seemingly solitary Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) stands at the far corner of Choate campus. Its new-age architecture and simplicity differ from the traditional Georgian and Jeffersonian architecture styles that mark many of Choate’s other buildings, such as St. John Hall and the Paul Mellon Humanities building. Today, the PMAC plays an integral role in the school community, hosting events such as plays, musicals, and concerts. However, beneath all of the beige concrete and glass, the PMAC hides some captivating secrets.

Starting as a vague idea in 1951 and receiving skepticism from many students, the building soon roped in famous architects and important benefactors to aid in its construction, allowing it to serve its crucial role in the Choate community today.

Almost 15 years prior to the construction of the PMAC, ideas for an arts center on the Choate campus had been briefly discussed by the Board of

Trustees but had never been acted upon. That is, until Class of 1925 alumnus Paul Mellon made a generous donation of \$1.5 million to the School in 1966. Mellon was born in 1907 to one of the wealthiest men in America in 1907, Andrew W. Mellon. After Paul Mellon’s Choate education, he went on to study a number of topics, including art, at Yale University. He dedicated his life to spreading his love of the humanities and the arts. With his generous gift, the idea of an arts building became a reality.

The exquisite structure of the PMAC was designed by award-winning architect I.M. Pei in 1972, who is celebrated for his unique designs of the Louvre Pyramid, the World Trade Center, and Mesa Laboratory. HPRSS teacher Mr. Jim Davidson recalled that “the [PMAC] ended up being for [Pei], the preliminary model for the National Gallery [of Art] in Washington, D.C.,” pointing out Pei’s prevalent angular architectural designs of “concrete, sharp edge, modernist, almost brutalist structure.” The PMAC is designed with two different wings, consisting of the Theater Wing

and the Triangle Wing, which is connected by the underground Black Box theater.

During the time of the PMAC’s construction, Rosemary Hall, the all-girls school, had recently moved back to its Wallingford campus from Greenwich and was situated next to the Choate School, the all-boys school. Located between the two campuses, the PMAC was meant to serve as a bridge between the two schools. According to the Society of Architectural Historians, “Pei referred to the space as a trap, designed to lure the boys and girls to each other and to art.”

A common theme throughout the project was the importance of the arts, shown in Pei’s goal of using the arts to bring students together and Paul Mellon’s emphasis on the arts’ importance in school culture. However, this new idea was not received well by some students on campus. Joining the Choate community shortly after the construction of the PMAC, Mr. Davidson remembers resistance from male theater groups on using the PMAC. They believed that performing and rehearsing in the basement of the St. John Chapel was sufficient.

In addition, Mr. Davidson noted that “as a school, there was a question mark about where the arts would fit into the curriculum.” Prior to the construction of an arts building, such courses were mostly adjunct, and community members were hesitant as to how serious the arts would become in future years.

In the early years, the new arts center was home to classic musicals such as *Oklahoma!* and *West Side Story*, allowing for more elaborate performances with the addition of a larger set space and an orchestra pit. 50 years later, the PMAC continues to provide a practical space for Choate arts students and a cultural gathering space for the community. Now, there are photography exhibitions and concerts, and the PMAC will host this term’s theater production: *Eurydice*.

The Paul Mellon Arts Center represents a new age of the arts, and its role in bringing our community together has been crucial. Throughout its diverse history, the PMAC brought in one of the most famous names in architecture, served a deeper meaning to Choate Rosemary Hall, and cost a grand total of \$6.6 million, all paid for by Paul Mellon. Although causing some tension and hesitance during its earliest days, the PMAC has now stood for over 50 years as a powerful symbol of the arts. Since its inception, The PMAC has impacted every Choate student’s life significantly. Former Headmaster Seymour St. John stated it perfectly: “No student will leave our campus without having been touched by the arts in a way that will have a carryover throughout his entire life.”

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Choate Updates Its Music Lesson Policies



Photo by Harry Kim '28 / The Choate News

A cello student engages in his music lesson.

By **Ellie Porter '25**
Reporter

Why workout when you can rock out? This year, the Arts Department says you don’t have to. They have made two significant changes to their programming: students can now take weekend music lessons and pursue music practice as an afternoon activity.

In the past, music lessons were limited to weekdays as Choate classified them as an academic pursuit. However, dialogue between students and faculty regarding the difficulties of incorporating music lessons into a class schedule has prompted Choate to reconsider this policy. Farrah McQueen ’25 expressed how tough it can be to have weekday music lessons. “If you are taking six classes, you have three free blocks per week, and two of those are lessons,” she said.

However, there are a few caveats to this new opportunity. The first is the logistics of scheduling with an instructor for weekend lessons. Head of the Arts Department Mr. Matthew McLean stated that while weekend lessons are an excellent opportunity for students, “there has to be a teacher with a schedule that can accommodate a weekend lesson. If the teacher is not available on weekends, they are out of luck, I’m afraid.” Additionally, if it is

a Choate-mandated music lesson, it can only be scheduled on a Saturday when Choate hosts academic commitments such as sports and clubs.

In addition to the new weekend schedule opportunities, The Arts Department has created a new afternoon activity: music practice. Students must start the afternoon by meeting in groups to discuss practice strategies before finding a room in the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC) or Colony Hall for independent practice. Allowing students to rehearse after school has been helpful to boarding students especially, as they are unable to practice in their dorm without disrupting others. “Twhe response has been great,” Mr. McLean stated. “Students are already trying to figure out how they can take it in the winter and spring terms.”

Mr. McLean’s next step is to extend the policy that allows for students in the Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Chorus to qualify for weighted GPA credit. He is also currently finding a way to get a third hour of practice for students who play in other groups such as Jazz or Wind Ensemble. Mr. McLean hopes that with these changes, the music program will become more accessible to many more students.

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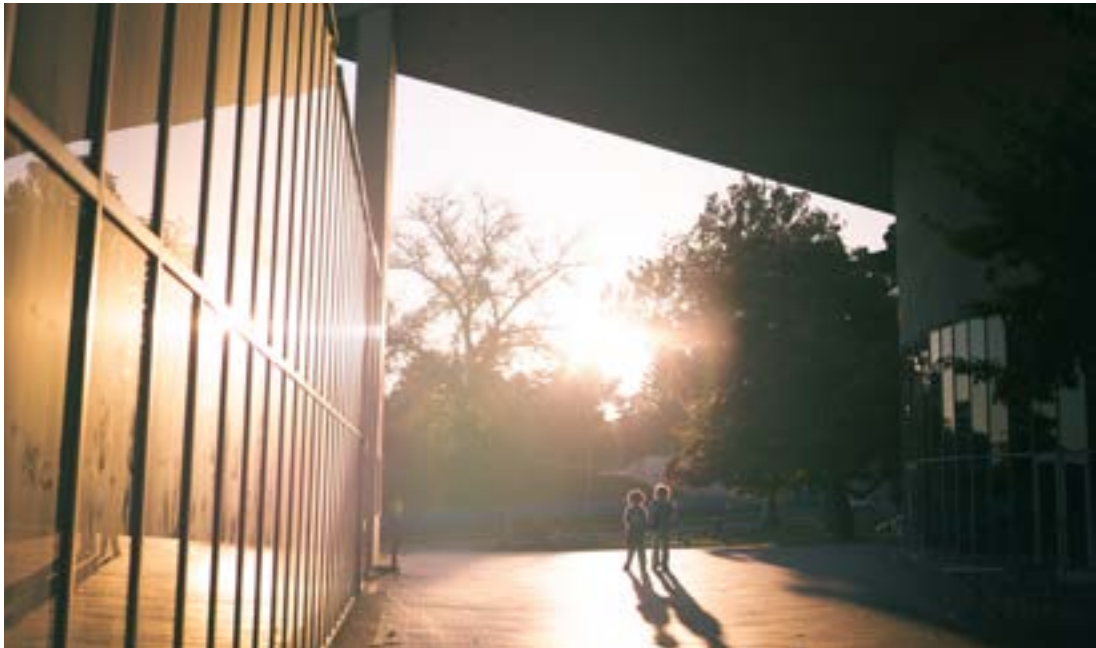


Photo by Kino Liu '26 / The Choate News

Students walk through the space between the two sections of the historic PMAC.

FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

55 - 27 - 8

Varsity Games

Football (3-0)
vs. Trinity-Pawling, 45-7

Girls' Volleyball (7-1)
vs. Andover, 3-0

Boys' Water Polo (5-2)
vs. Andover, 14-11

Girls' Soccer (7-0-2)
vs. Andover, 3-2

Boys' Soccer (6-2-1)
vs. Andover, 1-1

Girls' Field Hockey (2-5)
vs. Andover, 0-10

Boys' Cross Country (1-2)
vs. Andover, 15-46

Girls' Cross Country (0-2)
vs. Andover, 17-43

J.V. Games

Girls' Volleyball (4-1)
vs. Andover, 3-0

Boys' Water Polo (1-1)
vs. Andover, 11-10

Boys' Soccer (3-1)
vs. Andover, 1-3

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

BOARS ON BILLBOARDS:
A TOP 10 MASCOT

By Eliza O'Neill '27
Reporter

It is an exciting time to be a Wild Boar, as Choate's beloved mascot has earned a spot on the list of Top 10 Connecticut High School Mascots, coming in at number eight. This recognition highlights our Boar's unique character and celebrates the Choate community's vibrant school spirit.

The Wild Boar's path to recognition involved a comprehensive evaluation by Sports Illustrated, which sought out mascots that embody school spirit and foster a strong sense of community. Assistant Athletics Director Mr. Nolan Silbernagel expressed gratitude for Choate's selection. "We were fortunate enough to be chosen by Sports Illustrated, which is looking for the best mascots in the country. That speaks volumes," he said. He emphasized that this honor arose not from self-promotion but from the mascot's distinctiveness — the boar's uniqueness is what sets it apart. "You don't see many schools with boars," Isela Tolentino '26 said. Mr. Silbernagel echoed this, adding that boars are rarely represented, even at collegiate and professional levels. "There are plenty of falcons and eagles but not many wild boar mascots," he noted.

The School's current Boar debuted in the fall of 2023 after a redesign — the first since 1995. The updated mascot, who sports a bright yellow jersey and boasts a welcoming smile, has successfully renewed enthusiasm amongst the student body. Its realistic design enhances its appeal to fans, encouraging more genuine interactions between the boar and the crowd during athletic games and school-wide



Photo courtesy of @choateathletics on Instagram

The Choate Boar boasts eighth in the state for best high school mascot. Mr. Silbernagel emphasized, "[The boar is] a huge part of our culture." Tolentino, a Boar performer, highlighted the immersive experience the mascot brings. "When you're in the suit, it's almost like you're part of the crowd."

The boar has made its mark on and off the field, becoming a beloved figure at many school activities. "Our school has totally embraced it. Students love calling themselves Boars and enthusiastically saying 'Go Full Boar,'" Mr. Silbernagel said. He added that the mascot pays tribute to the School's history, reflecting the power and grit its athletes have displayed since Choate's inception. "I love that it displays our school shield, so it shows the history of [Choate] and that strength

THE FACES BEHIND
BOARPEN 2024

By Karolina Zaccareo '27
Reporter

BoarPen is coming in hot, bringing the energy to sports, arts, and campus life at Choate. This year, BoarPen is led by Michael Papaspyros '25, Chris Joseph '25, Rita Tunney '25, Nao Murata '25, Cawthra Burns '25, and Favour Olagunju '25.

Inspired by their predecessors, the current BoarPen aims to continue the group's legacy of enthusiasm. Olagunju's third-form prefect Dylan Allen '22, who was a member of BoarPen, left a lasting impression that influenced her decision to join the team. "She was really school-spirited and high energy... she was someone that I looked up to. Just seeing her go on stage and promote Choate spirit really made me want to do the same thing for younger kids," Olagunju said. Similarly, Joseph was inspired to join by former BoarPen member Damian Carano '22, who brought electric energy to Joseph's first JV Boys' Water Polo game when nobody else was there to support the team. "It really made me want to be there for the Choate community, no matter what sport you play, no matter what level you play, whether that's varsity or thirds," Joseph said.

BoarPen stresses the importance of students showing up for each other "because when we support each other, there's more

camaraderie, there's more fun," Olagunju said. Whether it's at a football game, a music concert, or a pep rally performance, the more students involve themselves with school life, the more "it opens up the rest of campus to them," Joseph said. BoarPen wants to "promote a diverse and inclusive space where everyone feels their activity, sport, and everything that they do on campus is represented," Olagunju added. They are open to any suggestions to help them achieve their goal of representing the whole Choate community.

With an aim to to bring the community together, BoarPen will continue hosting its famous spike ball, kickball, dodgeball, and P-Cup tournaments, as well as lip sync battles and many other events. They have plenty of tricks up their sleeves, so be on the lookout for live game updates on their Instagram, @boarpen, and School Meeting announcements.

Olagunju emphasized BoarPen's mission of fostering a greater sense of community, describing it as creating "one big family" and "painting the whole school with blue and gold." So let's come together to attend events, support our classmates, and get ready to go full boar this year!

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Photo courtesy of Nao Murata '25

The 2024-2025 BoarPen brings the hype to fall sports.

On the Water with Choate Intramural Kayaking

By Francesca Howard '26
Copy Editor

While some students are breaking a sweat in the gym or battling it out on the field, a few are happily paddling along the Quinnipiac River, soaking in all the natural beauty Connecticut has to offer. With no scoreboard, roaring crowd, or pressure to compete, Choate's intramural fall kayaking is a sport like no other. Led by Science teacher Mr. Ben Small and Chinese teacher Mr. Ian Wollman, this activity has become a cherished alternative for students looking to try something new. Meeting twice a week on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, the group heads out to a local river, lake, or stream, where they warm up, hop in their kayaks, and paddle for an hour or more.

When he first came to Choate eight years ago, Mr. Wollman was assigned this coaching position and has since come to see kayaking as more than just a sport. "The time away from cell phones, the time in nature, on the lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams of Connecticut is ... really valuable time that's hard to find elsewhere at Choate," he said. "The opportunity to get out into the natural world is excellent, but also getting to share that with students is even better." For Mr. Wollman, the program enables students to forge connections both with the environment and with each other. Given Choate's packed schedule, finding moments to unwind, have fun, and appreciate the world and people



Photo by Reinah Lee '26/The Choate News

Ada Tianworn '26 and Nicha Tongdee '26 share a kayak at Lighthouse Point Park.

around you is a rarity. "It's a pretty great way to spend an afternoon," he concluded.

Many participants share this sentiment. Reflecting on his first day on the water, Jamie Sherriff '27 said, "We were going out in the lake, and I got a little cocky. I jumped in the kayak, tried to go quickly, and flipped." Though this initial mishap could have been discouraging, Sherriff embraced the challenge and quickly developed a passion for kayaking. Part of the reason he loves it so much comes from the sense of tranquility he feels while paddling. "It was very serene, very calm — just reconnecting with nature," he said.

Sherriff also appreciates the flexibility that kayaking offers. He said, "You can socialize with the other people on the team if

you'd like, or you can just relax and not talk at all if that's what you want." Unlike other sports, there's no rigid playbook to follow and no intense pressure of competition. You get to set your own pace because kayaking adapts to you. Sherriff contrasts his experience on the water with his involvement in other athletic activities. "With some sports, sure, it's something that I enjoy, but there are days when you don't want to be at practice," he said, adding that the demanding nature of traditional sports can sometimes feel burdensome. However, he feels differently about kayaking. "That's something I don't experience with kayaking. Maybe it's because it's only twice a week, maybe it's because it's so chill and calm, but it's something I always look for-

ward to," he said. For Sherriff, kayaking is something he "gets" to do, rather than something he has to do.

Nicha Tongdee '26, a second-year kayaker, similarly appreciates how it offers a break from the intensity of other commitments. "I feel like a lot of activities like sports take up a lot of your time and energy, but this is just kind of something that is de-stressing," she said. Tongdee is particularly grateful for the coaches' support and encouragement. "They're so sweet and so supportive," she noted. Tongdee encourages newcomers to try their hand at kayaking. "Even for people who aren't in kayaking, if you do have a Monday or Wednesday off, just message Mr. Small or Mr. Wollman if you want to come on one kayak," she said.

But it's not all about floating along rivers and appreciating the fall foliage. Each kayaking session begins with the basics. Participants learn how to steer, balance, and even self-rescue if the kayak tips over. Though it may not be as intense as other sports, kayaking still offers paddlers a chance to push themselves. "The hard part is the stamina," Ada Tianworn '26, another veteran kayaker, said. "If you paddle for a while, your arms will get really tired."

Kayaking is far from a solo sport. In many ways, it operates like a team. "We get students who have a lot of experience with kayaking; we get students with no experience in kayaking," Mr. Wollman said. "We teach the same techniques no matter what." By pairing less experienced kayakers with returning participants, Mr. Small and Mr. Wollman ensure that everyone, regardless of skill level, feels confident on the water. Even if someone tips over, it's a team effort to help retrieve their paddle, get them back into their kayak, and pump the water out. With only a handful of participants, everyone gets to know each other quickly. This camaraderie makes kayaking less daunting of a pursuit than other sports might be. If you're willing to dip your toes (and occasionally more) into something new, kayaking might just be the sport for you.

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