The Choate News

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A Close-Up on the Capitol for Gov I

By **Sabrina Liu '28**
Local News Section Editor

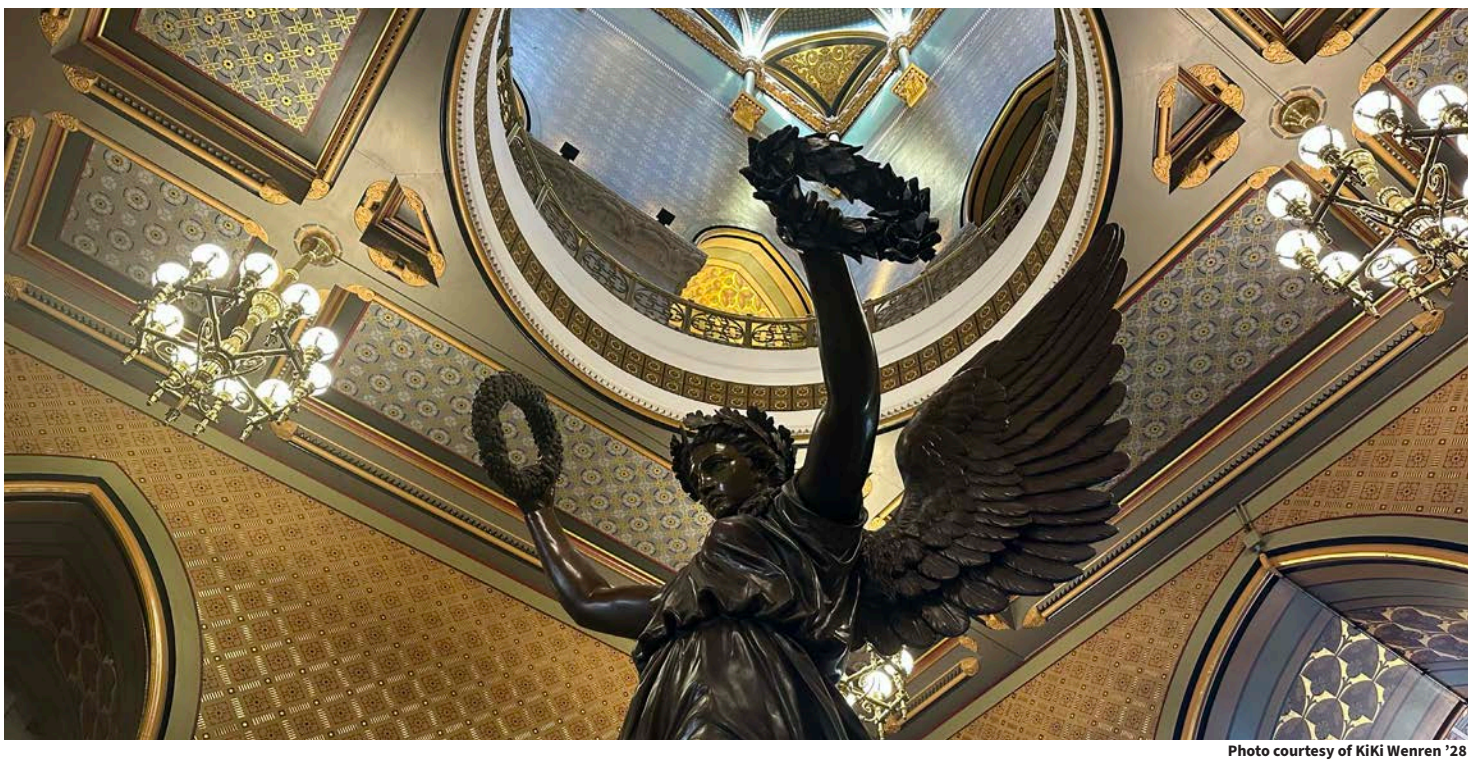


Photo courtesy of KiKi Wenren '28

An up-close view of "The Genius of Connecticut," a statue inside the rotunda of the Connecticut State Capitol.

Students in Choate's Government and Politics I class traveled to the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford on September 24 to see the state government in action. They met with the legal director of the House Democratic Caucus, Mr. David Desjardins '02, and State Representative Mary Mushinsky, learned how laws get passed, and toured the Capitol building.

The trip tied into the class's unit on federalism, how power is shared between the states and the national government. Director of the John F. Kennedy '35 Program in Government and Public Service (JFK Program) Mr. Ned Gallagher noted that the Capitol, which is about 30 minutes from campus, is an easy place to see that in action.

"It provides some hands-on experience with what actually goes on at that level of government," Mr. Gallagher said. He added that the visit is also "a bit of a preview" of the class's three-day trip to Washington, D.C., this winter.

At the Capitol, students first met with Mr. Desjardins, who shared how he got his job, what he does, and how a bill becomes law in Connecticut.

"Students asked a number of great questions around process and the bipartisan mentality of most CT legislators," Government teacher Mr. Jonas Akins said.

Next, the group met with Representative Mushinsky, who has represented Wallingford for 46 years, is currently the longest-serving representative in the State House, and will retire at the end of this session. "Talking with Representative Mushinsky, who has provided such a long stint of service to Wallingford, was particularly rewarding," Mr. Akins said. Representative Mushinsky discussed how she got into politics, how she balances her outside work with her job as a legislator, and some of her biggest accomplishments, including implementing environmental laws.

For Will Seery '28, the Senate chamber was the highlight. "My favorite part of the trip was visiting the Senate and seeing how voting behind the scenes works with the red or green buttons," he said. Seery also learned something he did not expect. "Something that surprised me was that many representatives in state government hold jobs outside their public service duties," he said.

Juju Iannace '27 was struck by the size of the legislature, and added that she enjoyed meeting the staff. "I think it's really interesting to actually go and meet these people because they have so much to share," she said. Iannace's advice for future Government students was to "ask as many questions as possible because everyone has different answers and different paths."

For Liana Alkhayer '28, a member of the JFK Program, the building itself was what stood out the most. "The most interesting part of [the trip] was kind of seeing that [the architecture and decorations of the building] was a hidden gem because I had never been inside the building; I never realized how beautiful it was," Alkhayer said.

Alkhayer also noted the impact of visiting the Capital in person. "You are forced to stay present and make eye contact and listen and absorb the information that you are given," she said. The visit gave her a new respect for the work behind the state government. "There is just so much time and energy that is put into the way that things run in this state," Alkhayer said.

Seery agreed that seeing the government firsthand helped him digest the information. "Trips like this are valuable because they put words into action," he said. "I believe it is sometimes hard to understand an idea without seeing it in motion."

Mr. Akins put it simply. "It's not a dry textbook reading; it's real life," he said. Mr. Gallagher echoed that visiting the Capitol for in-person learning was the whole point of the trip. "I just think it brings it to life. It takes it out of the pages of books," he said. To Mr. Gallagher, the people students meet and the stories they share matter most. "We don't just want to go on these trips to Hartford or Washington and be tourists and just look at buildings," he said. "We actually want to talk to people for whom this is their real day-to-day life."

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New Boars and Mentors!





By **Mary Higashi '29**
Copy Editor



Photo courtesy of Mr. George Aiello

Mr. George Aiello

Mr. George Aiello brings global experience to his role as Assistant Director of the Library. He has worked in Singapore, Paraguay, Hong Kong, and, most recently, at Cheshire Academy in Connecticut as a librarian, academic technology coordinator, and global studies teacher. What drew him to Choate was the library's central role in the community. He likes being in the library because of its impact on students and teachers. "You're there to support them in so many different ways ... every day is a little bit different," he said. He is eager to continue learning about Choate so he can best support the community in his new role.



Photo courtesy of Mr. James Garrett

Mr. James Garrett

For Mr. Garrett, "a classroom should be a place where people can laugh, be curious, ask questions, and feel comfortable being themselves." After teaching English and visual arts at St. Andrew's School in Delaware, he joined Choate's English department. He was captivated by Choate's community of educators "willing to push the boundaries of what an English classroom can be," and by the diverse student body. He is a "family man" who loves anime and cooking and brings genuine passion to his third- and fourth-form English classes. By extension, he hopes to "remain a student" himself, learning as much from his students and colleagues as they learn from him.



Photo courtesy of Mr. Jackson Ostrowsky

Mr. Jackson Ostrowsky

Mr. Ostrowsky is beginning his first full-time role since earning his Master's in Sport Management. He is a former Division II college football player and was nominated twice for the Harlon Hill Award, a recognition awarded to the most outstanding collegiate player. Now, having transitioned into the Athletics Department as an Athletics Fellow, Mr. Ostrowsky emphasized how "very proud to be a part of [the Choate community]" he is and was surprised by "how good the people are, and how much this community is close-knit." With his passion for athletics and optimism for the year ahead, he said, "Whether I'm here for a long time or a short time, I want to be remembered in a positive light."



Photo courtesy of Mr. Daniel Hartsoe

Mr. Daniel Hartsoe

Working at Choate is a homecoming for Mr. Daniel Hartsoe. He grew up on campus and graduated from Choate in 2009. Before returning, he taught economics and government at Northfield Mount Hermon in Massachusetts and Saddle River Day School in New Jersey, and coached ultimate frisbee in the D.C. area. The community found in the HPRSS Department, the opportunity to continue coaching ultimate frisbee, and the joy of being back on campus every day are just a few reasons why he has returned. "This place is filled with interesting, passionate people doing some really cool things," he said. He cherishes the random conversations found on Choate's paths — about books, frisbee, baseball, and even sandwiches from Vinny's.



Photo courtesy of Mr. Kevin Kim

Mr. Kevin Kim

Before arriving on campus, Mr. Kevin Kim taught math and computer science at Milton Academy. At Choate, he will continue to teach both, in addition to physics, Financial Algebra, and Machine Learning. Reflecting on what drew him to Choate, Mr. Kim said, "I really believe I'm working with the best youth in the world." His passions include Artificial Intelligence (AI), coding, and computational projects. "If students want help bringing ideas to life or implementing machine learning/AI to a project, I'm happy to collaborate," Mr. Kim said. He is eager to connect with students and colleagues through his experiences and technical skills.



Photo courtesy of Ms. Mary Leys

Ms. Mary Leys

Ms. Leys is settling into her first full-time teaching position at Choate after playing ice hockey for five years at Saint Michael's College in Vermont. She teaches in the English Department and coaches the Girls' Hockey and Lacrosse teams. "I could tell that the community here is just so welcoming and wants everyone to succeed," she said, reflecting on her interactions in the dining hall and around campus. As she settles in, she hopes to meet as many people as possible and grow alongside the Choate community.

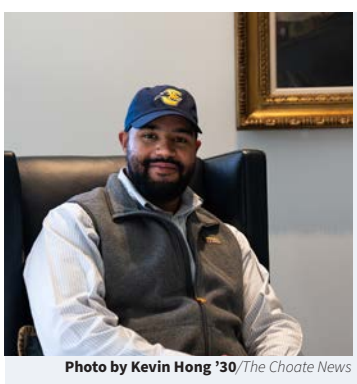


Photo by Kevin Hong '30/*The Choate News*

Mr. Julien Nicholas

Mr. Nicholas began his role in Carr Hall this year after three years working in admissions at Westminster School. Prior to boarding school, he worked in business development with the New York Yankees. From his first campus tour, he was surprised by the strong sense of community on campus; "Everyone was open, friendly, and outgoing," he said. "It was just an easy place to see myself," Nicholas noted in conversation. He is also a dorm mentor in Tenney House, and he hopes to be someone that students can approach anytime.

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Read it, then recycle it.

Visuals by Marianna Mata '27, Mariana Regalado '28, Wikimedia Commons, and @boarpen on Instagram.



Garden Party Returns to its Original Roots

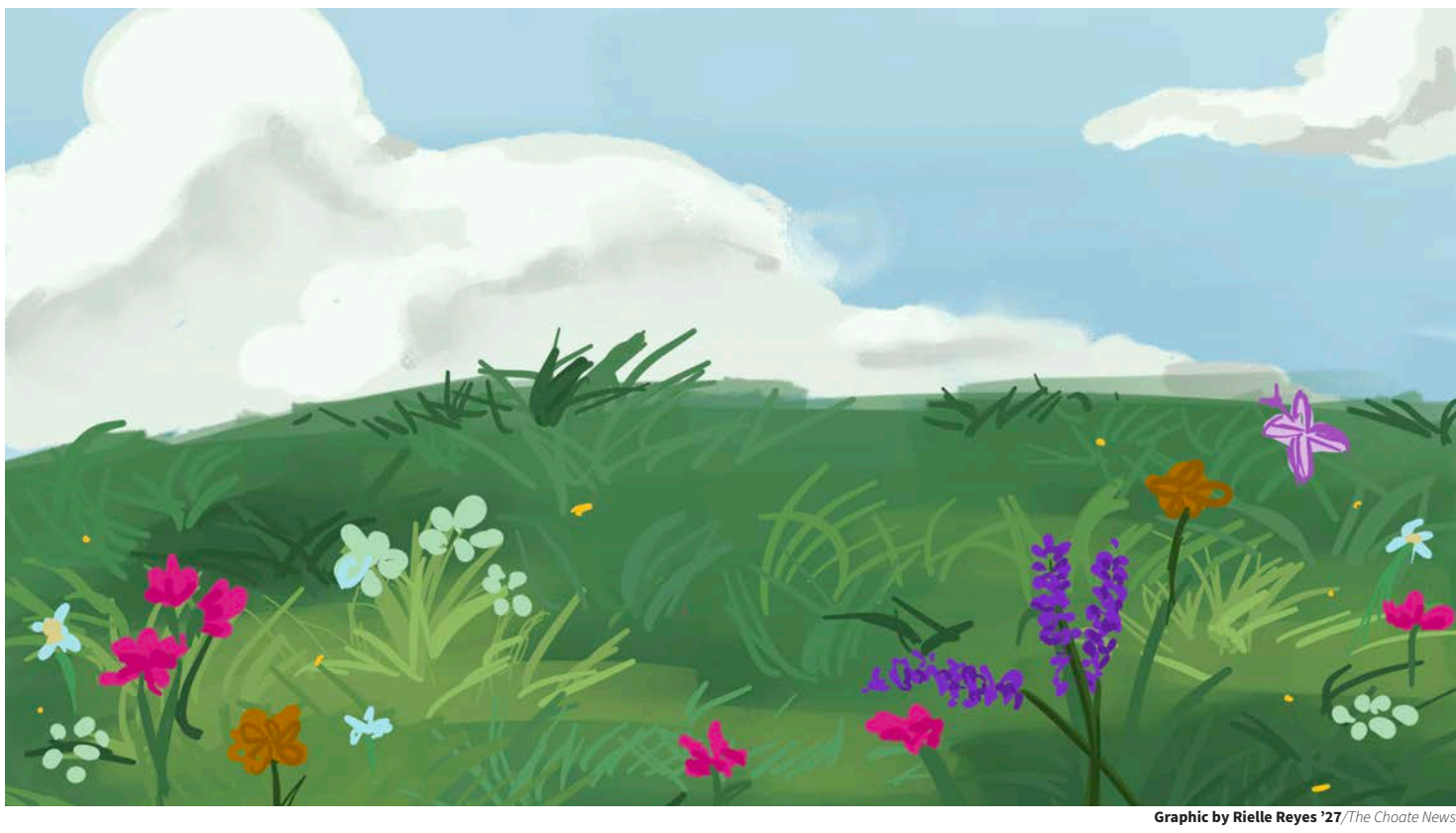
By **Taeyoung Kim '28**
Reporter

Friendships are always in full bloom at Garden Party, but starting this spring, flowers will be, too. Choate has begun construction on a garden outside of Steele Hall, where an oval lawn and walking path will be surrounded by flower beds, hedges, a circular terrace, and white arbors. The garden is expected to be completed in May 2027, in time for the Class of 2027's final Garden Party. While students today know Garden Party as an end-of-year celebration, the tradition began more literally: It was a Rosemary Hall tradition to pass a garden from one graduating class to the next.

Garden Party began in 1911, when Janet Ruutz-Rees, the mother of Rosemary Hall's founding headmistress, Caroline Ruutz-Rees, presented the sixth-form girls with a garden on the school's Greenwich campus. Later that year, around graduation, the garden was formally passed to the next sixth-form class with, according to the 1911 Rosemary Hall yearbook, "all due ceremony."

After Rosemary Hall merged with The Choate School in 1974, Garden Party became part of the traditions of the combined school. Director of Day Students and Latin teacher Ms. MaryLiz Williamson, who experienced Garden Party both as a Choate student and later as a teacher, also remembers the anticipation surrounding the tradition. "We did not have access to it as underformers," she said, recalling how students watched Prefects and House Mentors prepare for the event. Although Ms. Williamson said her perspective on Garden Party has not changed, she noted that "the shape of the tradition" has evolved. The school now provides the flowers, more musical groups have opportunities to perform, and the senior slideshow includes at least one appearance from every senior.

Today, Garden Party continues at Choate Rosemary Hall, but the construction of the new garden outside of Steele Hall will give the century-long tradition a new setting. Head of Student and Academic Life, Mr. Will Gilyard '98 P'29, said the project offers an opportunity to reconnect Garden Party with its original setting. "When you think about Choate and Rosemary Hall combining, it is one of the major traditions from Rosemary Hall that I think we wanted to make sure we kept to honor the Rosemaryians," Mr. Gilyard said. He also noted that the new garden will bring Garden Party closer to the way it was originally celebrated at Rosemary Hall. "Garden Party took place in a garden," he said. "[But] for so many years here, Garden Party did not take place in a garden." Beyond celebration, Mr. Gilyard said the new space will give students a place to relax, work, and spend time together throughout the year.



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

The new garden will be especially significant for the Class of 2027, who will be among the first students to experience Garden Party in the new space. Jordy Miller '27 said, "I am so excited for the garden because I think it will connect us back to the Rosemary Hall original tradition." Claudia Li '26, a recent Choate graduate, described Garden Party as a "sacred and beautiful event" that students looked forward to from their first year at Choate. Li especially remembered the celebration of women in the community and in Choate's history, featuring prizes and performances by acappella groups. Although Li is "jealous" that she will miss experiencing the new garden, she is excited for future classes to have the opportunity. Li said that some of her favorite memories at Choate were the moments she spent outdoors with friends and that she hopes the new garden will create similar opportunities for future generations of students.

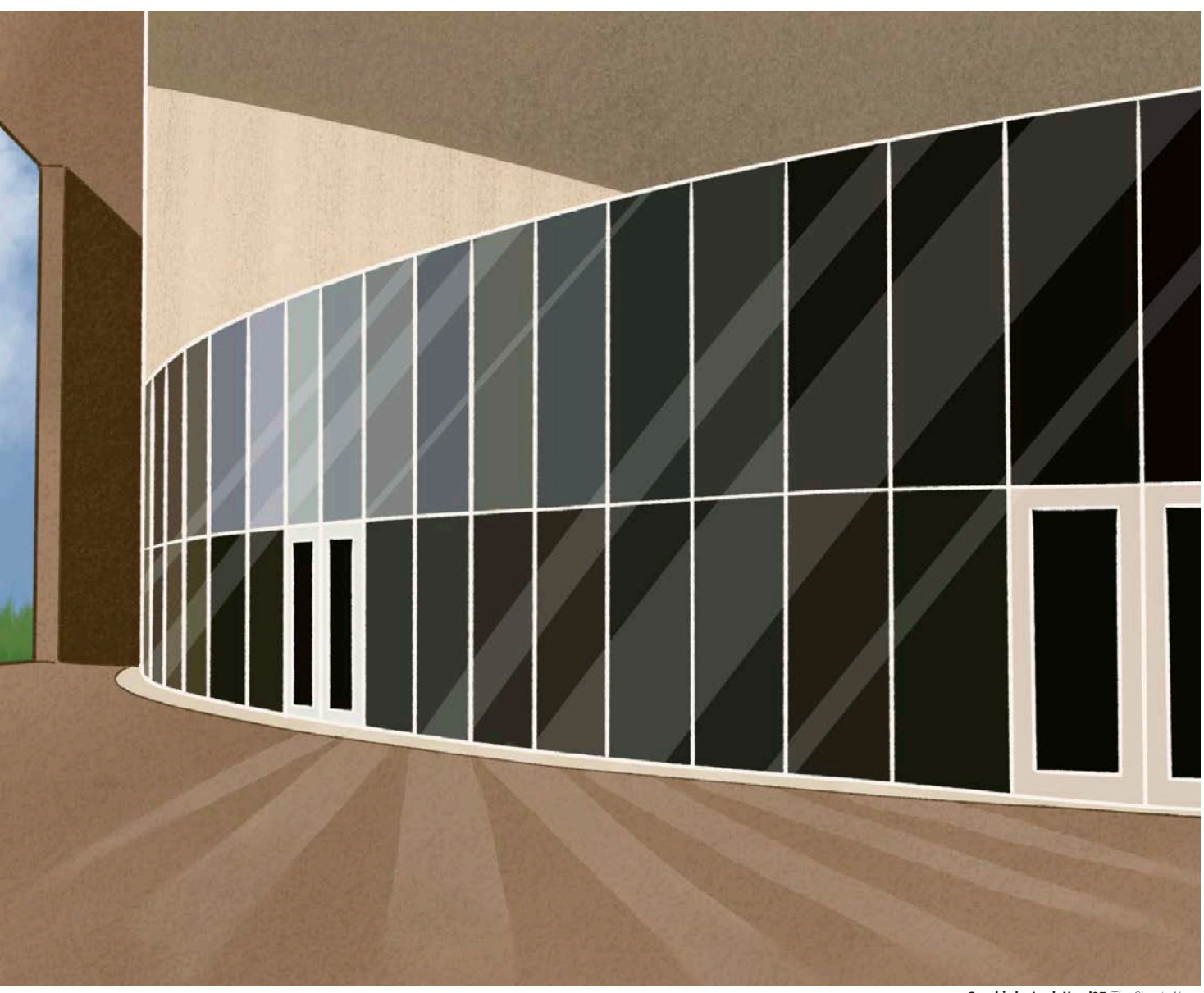
Taeyoung Kim *may be reached at tkim28@choate.edu.*

BOARDLE

Scan to play!

HINT: A song title where you'd normally find nurses and doctors.

THE CURTAINS RISE AGAIN ON THE LITTLE THEATER



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

By **Emily Chen '30**
Reporter

After months of anticipation and theater productions moved to various locations, the Little Theater is finally ready to raise the curtain and welcome back performers and audiences. With an expected grand opening on October 18, the renovation will bring theater, dance, and acting classes back to Choate's primary performance site. As the transition to the Theater begins, students and faculty are eager to see how the reopening can reshape performing arts on campus.

The building incorporated significant changes to its architecture. A newly installed elevator improved mobility between floors, while upgraded hallway entries were designed to block external light and noise during productions. To enhance audience viewability, seating capacity was adjusted to accommodate two new center aisles and added space between rows.

In addition to physical updates, the venue's production technology has become a lot stronger. The Little Theater can now support a fly system, trap doors, and improved lighting and sound systems. The control booth was relocated to a higher vantage point, giving technicians a clear line of sight to manage set lighting and audio. The renovation also brings back the use of critical performance spaces, including basement music classrooms, audio production suites, and the Black Box Theater.

Arts Department Head Mr. Matthew McLean looks forward to the opening as it will benefit not just mainstage theater productions but music, audio engineering, dance, and everyday classroom learning as well. Manager of Arts Center Operations Ms. Carol Jones emphasized that her goal for the venue is that it is welcoming to all. "Anybody can come on into this space and hopefully not feel intimidated by all the latest and greatest. Get your feet wet, let's play around, let's experiment," Ms. Jones said.

Beyond stage mechanics, the Little Theater will also serve as a setting where students build lasting relationships. "It's where we come together as a community and where we share information, ... our feelings [and] ideas, and so I believe that [the Little Theater is] truly the heart of campus," Ms. Jones said.

For Theater Director Mr. Bari Robinson (Bari), a performance venue is essential on a modern campus. "In a day and age right now where we are constantly on screens, having a space where live performance can happen and connect to an audience in a visceral way is vital," Bari said.

Student actor and member of the Arts Concentration Signature Program (Arts Con) Jordy Miller '27 reflected on the impact the Little Theater has made on her experience at Choate. "Some of my fondest memories with my show crew have actually been in the Little Theater, being a part of ArtsCon, and I made a lot of my close friendships through that space," Miller said.

As the countdown to October 18 ticks away, students and faculty are keenly waiting to step inside. With the modern renovations and a group of wonderful students and faculty, Choate's Little Theater is ready for its second act.

Emily Chen *may be reached at emchen30@choate.edu.*

Give Blood, Give Back

By **Kavya Mehendiratta '29**
Reporter

The difference between life and death can fit in a pint-sized bag. Donating blood is an opportunity to give back to one's community, and just one donation has the power to save multiple lives. On September 29, 2026, the Choate Chapter of the Red Cross hosted a blood drive in Ruutz-Rees. Many participants chose to sign up for a time to donate, and others contributed by walk-in appointments. Through these donations, participants from the Choate and broader Connecticut community helped provide a vital resource to patients in need.

The American Red Cross was founded in 1881 and has since become the largest blood donor network in the country, responsible for 40 percent of the nation's blood supply. Donating blood assists people facing severe trauma, surgeries, blood disorders, cancer treatments, and more. According to the American Red Cross, "a single car accident victim can require as many as 100 units of blood." Donors can also track which hospital their blood went to and see the impact they have made.

Throughout the event, donors checked in, completed health screenings, and donated blood with the help of Red Cross staff and volunteers. Potential donors who had recently traveled, contracted an illness, or undergone a medical procedure were unable to give blood to ensure blood safety. 37 participants arrived at the event, and 26 were able to donate. This Red Cross blood drive collected 28 pints of blood, which can help save up to 84 lives.

For many participants, the blood drive was a meaningful opportunity to give back to their community. Current President of the Choate Chapter of the Red Cross and four-year member Arushi Krishnan '27 reinforced how a single donation contributes to a larger effort to save patients across the nation. "Every two seconds in the U.S., somebody needs blood. When you hear things like that, it's striking how important blood donation is, and it's a great way to help other people who could be sick," Krishnan said.

Through their time and effort, volunteers and donors have made a small but meaningful difference in the ongoing need for blood donation. As Officer of the Choate Chapter of the Red Cross, Nana Winston Ashie '27 said: "It's nice to feel like a small part of something bigger when you're donating blood."

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Photo by Marianna Mata '27/*The Choate News*

Choate faculty donate their blood to the Red Cross.

A Rainy Return to the 106th Durham Fair

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

As the air begins to chill and fall foliage litters the ground, students race to submit their Reach requests to the neighboring town of Durham. Every year, crowds flood the town for a celebration of the region's agricultural traditions. The fair features farm exhibits, local vendors, carnival rides, and live entertainment. However, this year's 106th fair, held from September 24–27, was a little different: A rainy Nor'easter brought challenging weather that affected the fair's operations.

Durham Fair President Ms. Kim Terrill emphasized how the inclement weather made it challenging to put on such a big event. Some days had shortened hours, which resulted in lower attendance. Country music star Tyler Hubbard's main stage performance also had to be canceled as a result. "I am especially proud of how quickly our executive team came together to adapt to keep the fair open and safe," Ms. Terrill said.

Photo courtesy of Samia Mowafi '27

Students smile in front of rides at the Durham Fair.

Photo courtesy of Samia Mowafi '27

A layer of amber and purple clouds set over the fair's skyline.

Despite the wind and rain, the fair remained popular amongst students. Samia Mowafi '27 visited the fair for the first time this year with a group of friends. "When I was there, I was thinking: oh my god, this is so fun, but how fun would this be if it wasn't raining? It really showed how the community was able to [say] the show must go on," Mowafi said.

Visitors on September 25 also enjoyed a vibrant sunset. "I'm a huge believer that environments help set the tone … [The sunset] made it a lot easier for us to still have fun during the rain," Mowafi said. This year was also Chloe Yeung '28's first time at the fair, and she highlighted the variety of food offered by local vendors. "Lyman Orchards, which I like to go to, had hot apple cider, apple cider slushies, apple cider donuts … basically everything apple," Yeung said. She added that many classic carnival dishes were served, such as fried dough, corn dogs, tacos, and burgers.

While Mowafi and Yeung highlighted the food and rides, Ms. Terrill called attention to the Military Appreciation Parade awarded on Thursday, September 24; a quilt of valor to a state police K-9 team. "My favorite part of the process is watching the planning process come to life," Ms. Terrill said.

"There's a lot of other people from Connecticut … just people of different ages, different backgrounds [at the fair]… And I think it's nice to be able to see all these people and go outside the Choate bubble," Yeung said. For students accustomed to life on campus, the Durham Fair offered something different: a chance to spend a day among people, traditions, and activities that exist beyond Choate.

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

Celebrate Wallingford Brings Locals and Students Together

By **Audrey Owolo '30**
and **Annie Jungbacker '30**
Reporters

On October 3 and 4, the Wallingford community gathered for the annual Celebrate Wallingford festival. Located at the intersection of North Main Street and Center Street in the heart of town, Celebrate Wallingford is a two-day event that has occured since 1987. The festival, originally called The Taste of Wallingford, later expanded beyond food vendors to include other local businesses.

Since its creation, Celebrate Wallingford's purpose has remained rooted in community. "The goal has always been to bring Wallingford together as a community, to share products and services that we felt the town should be aware of," Wallingford Center Inc. Executive Director Ms. Liz Davis said. This year, organizers upheld that mission while adding new food vendors, local artisans, and businesses. In total, the event featured 130 local businesses, with spotlights such as Banana's Ice Cream, the Wallingford Wishing Well, and the Wallingford Rotary.

When selecting vendors for Celebrate Wallingford, organizers consider both where a business is located and what it can bring to the event. They first prioritize local businesses, while also seeking out vendors who have never participated before. After reaching out to businesses in Wallingford, they look for vendors from outside the town that offer something unique. This mix allows the event to showcase both familiar local businesses and new vendors from the surrounding area.

For returning vendors, the festival is also an opportunity to build connections beyond simply selling products. Brianna Rivera, who helps run Ocean and Sand Permanent Jewelry with her family, said the event has allowed her family to connect with other vendors and customers over the years. "We built a community by following them on Instagram and taking their business cards, and we really just have a good time with the vendors," Rivera said. Now in her third year participating in the festival, Rivera said the experience has also given her new perspectives on running a business and encouraged her own interest in entrepreneurship.

However, coordinating so many businesses comes with its own challenges. "The biggest challenge is putting together all the businesses, then assigning them vendor spaces," Ms. Davis said. She and her team have to determine where each vendor will fit while accommodating their individual needs. Ms. Davis spends about nine months organizing the event. Even then, the work does not slow down until the celebration begins. "The last two weeks are usually the most crucial two weeks of the event because people want to change and work around their needs as merchants," she said.

For Ms. Davis, part of what makes Celebrate Wallingford special is seeing the variety of businesses and organizations that come together for the event. After months of planning, the celebration gives local businesses a chance to connect with residents and with each other, while also introducing attendees to parts of the community they may not encounter otherwise.

Audrey Owolo and Annie Jungbacker *may be reached at aowolo30@choate.edu. and ajungbacker30@choate.edu*

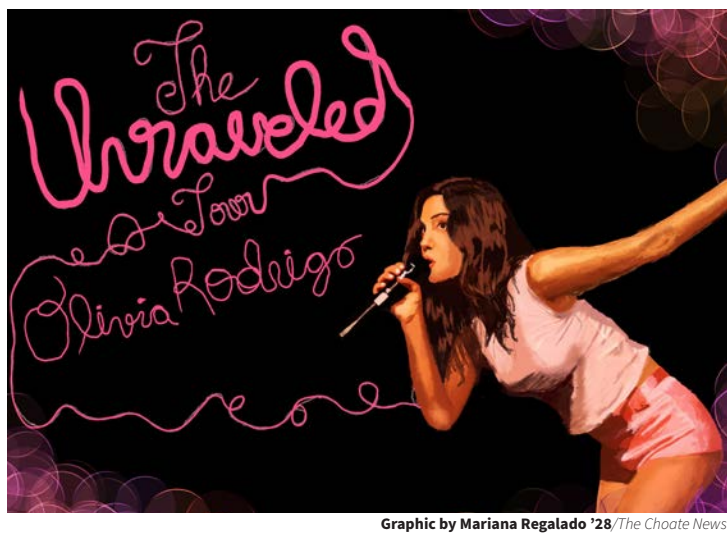


Photo by Zahabiya Khokha '27/The Choate News

Amie Mukeku '27, Jenell Karikari '27, and Sofia Seymour '29 at the event.

Olivia Rodrigo Unravels World Tour at PeoplesBank Arena in Hartford

By **Hannah Kousaka '30**
Reporter



Graphic by Mariana Regalado '28/The Choate News

On September 25, fans "dropped dead" with excitement at the opening night of Olivia Rodrigo's highly anticipated The Unraveled Tour, held at PeoplesBank Arena, only 30 minutes from campus. The arena's proximity offered students an exciting chance to see a major artist without having to travel to faraway cities such as New York or Boston. While neither Rodrigo nor PeoplesBank Arena has publicly explained why Hartford was selected to launch the tour, the decision gave the city the rare opportunity to host the first audience of a major global tour. "I felt very honored that Olivia Rodrigo decided to come here as her first stop on The Unraveled Tour," said Georgie Esselstyn '30, a Connecticut native.

The arena itself was decked out in pink and white flowers, a nod to the colors featured on the album cover. A tightly packed crowd of fans eagerly awaited Rodrigo's entrance. "Before Olivia Rodrigo even stepped on stage, the crowd was already screaming." Dylan Hawkins '30 said. "Everyone there was wearing pink and they all seemed so excited. When Olivia started playing, everyone started singing along and dancing," Jinx Hartong '27 said.

As the first stop on the Unraveled tour, fans in Hartford had the very first look at what Rodrigo had in store. Opening night brought many surprises in a 23-song set. The emotional climax of the night came during Rodrigo's performance of the hit song "the cure," in which rain fell over the artist, melting her dress and revealing a second outfit underneath. The audience responded with rupturous applause, leaving those with tickets to upcoming shows with much to anticipate.

The night also included something that could not be repeated at any other stop. The concert coincided with Rodrigo's Mother's birthday. Rodrigo led the arena in singing "Happy Birthday" to her, allowing each fan in the packed arena to feel part of a personal moment. For a few minutes, the Hartford audience was participating in a celebration with Rodrigo and her family. The combination of well-planned production and unexpected, intimate moments made the night feel different from a typical concert. Rodrigo even incorporated Hartford directly into the show, wearing hidden shorts that read "HFD + me 4ever." For local fans, those details made the opening night so special.

By the end of the concert, Rodrigo returned in a white tank top and low-rise jeans for a three-song encore, including "deja vu," "all-american b****," and "expectations." Even after nearly two hours, the energy in the arena seemed to increase. "When she sang the last song, 'expectations,' everyone was screaming at the top of their lungs. It was heartwarming to see the whole crowd come together," Rai Gelin '27 said.

Videos and photos soon shared the opening-night surprises with fans elsewhere. The dissolving dress would no longer be a secret. Neither would the flower-covered stage nor Rodrigo's entrance. However, for the fans inside PeoplesBank Arena, those moments happened without any spoilers. For one night, the Hartford audience was part of something that could not be replayed or experienced in quite the same way again – a shared moment that belonged entirely to the people in the arena. "It was the best concert ever!" said Esselstyn, a sentiment that captured what made the show more than just a performance.

Hannah Kousaka *may be reached at hkousaka30@choate.edu.*

TRAIL OF TERROR OPENS FOR ANOTHER SEASON OF SCARES

By **Oola Breen-Ryan '29**
Copy Editor

Every year, thrills, chills, and shrieks abound at the Trail of Terror, a popular haunted attraction in Wallingford. Now in its 32nd year, the Trail sprawls across four acres with about 30 scenes filled with jump scares and mazes. "The layout is an intricate maze which takes the public approximately 45 to 60 minutes to get through. Each turn brings you to another scene. Every year the theme changes, and the scenes change accordingly," Trail of Terror Board Member Ms. Kathy Thuerling said. This year's theme is "Spark Your Fear," and the storyline revolves around a hospital's dark secrets coming to light.

The opening date was pushed back a week due to the nor'easter that hit Connecticut the weekend of September 26. The Trail of Terror officially opened on October 2 and will continue to run almost every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday through October 30.

Although she grew up in Wallingford, Jocelyn Rivard '28 first attended the Trail last year. "I was pretty scared at certain parts of it, but it was really fun overall," she said. She specifically noted the effectiveness of the actors. "They're not allowed to touch you, but they get really close," Rivard said. "Every once in a while, one of them will decide that they're gonna follow you, so you'll turn around, and there'll be a person walking right behind you." She was excited to go again this year and felt more prepared because she knew what to expect.

Leah Wuttke '28, who attended the Trail on October 2, rated it an eight out of 10 for scariness. "The setups were so well done. I was at the front of the group for most of the trail, which I thought was better than being at the back because you could experience the scares firsthand," she said.

Beyond being a popular Halloween attraction, the Trail also raises money for local charities and community projects. "The Trail is a 501(c)(3) organization," Ms. Thuerling said. Over the years, the organization has donated more than $2.7 million to over 30 local charities, organizations, and community projects. These include the Wallingford Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Wallingford Emergency Shelter, and local fire departments.

"The Trail of Terror is a family. Many [volunteers] have been there since its conception," Ms. Thuerling said. The Trail of Terror combines a horror experience with a community tradition and a charitable mission, benefiting the Wallingford community. As the organization's motto goes, "We scare because we care."

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Photo by Leah Wuttke '28/The Choate News

An exhibition at the Trail of Terror.

The Choate News

120th Masthead

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Mixed (i)Messages in Choate's Phone Policy

By **Jinx Hartong '27**
Opinions Writer

Picture this: you're absolutely exhausted, and you arrive at the dining hall after a rough practice. Scanning the room, you don't see a single friend in sight, so you grab your food and situate yourself at a table alone. You've been socializing all day, so perhaps a bit of quiet time is in order. You pull out your phone, excited to unwind. Before long, a student or an adult approaches your table, reminding you about the "No-Phone" usage policy in the dining hall. "However, you can use your iPad," they say. "You can do homework."

Right. You put your phone way because you respect the rules and policies. You sit there in silence, and suddenly a feeling that Choate students know all too well begins to arise. You begin to feel guilty for not doing work. You pull out your iPad and begin your homework.

In recent years, the Choate administration has placed a new focus on restricting phone use — eliminating the phone break in study hours, removing the screen section in the dining hall, and forbidding phone usage on the paths. The general mission seems to be eliminating phones, rather than teaching students better etiquette around them. These restrictions raise an important question among Choate students: why are phones expressely discouraged, while iPads remain so celebrated? They both emit the same blue light. They both lower your melatonin levels. They both cause distraction.

According to Dean of Students Mr. Patrick Dennehy, "the distinction comes down less to the device itself and more to how it is being used. I have seen many students with a laptop or iPad open, actively working on an assignment or project, while simultaneously remaining engaged with the people around their table. We simply do not see that same level of engagement as frequently when phones are out ... We are trying to create an environment that encourages students to be present ... while still recognizing that laptops and iPads can be important tools for students' academic work."

While this policy is meant to emphasize engagement with each other, it sends a message to prioritize productivity over rest. Instead of strictly mandating anti-phone rules, Choate should redirect attention to teaching students proper phone etiquette and to develop better habits. These habit-building skills can be taught in Wellness meetings, discussed in advisory blocks, or even in presentations from various student wellbeing groups on campus.

Choate students work incredibly hard, and we deserve breaks. For many, meal times are the only moments of downtime in the whole day. Whether it's club events or ensemble practices, Choate students have their nervous systems running long after dinner time. Why are we allowed to work alone, but we aren't allowed to relax alone at the dining hall?

A student hunched over, grinding through a math worksheet at a table by themselves, is more in line with the spirit of our no-device rules than a student watching a five-minute video to decompress. We could ban all devices in the dining hall, but what good would that do? Some people enjoy doing their homework in the dining hall, especially day students eager to get home to their families.

If the concern is truly about connection and healthy technology use, then the solution isn't a blanket ban. At the end of the day, a tired student scrolling on their phone and watching Youtube or Tiktok is not the issue. The real threat is a culture that unintentionally polices rest while rewarding relentless work. If Choate wants students who use their devices responsibly, the School should start by trusting us and guiding us to make those decisions ourselves rather than making them for us.

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

A Say in Service



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

By **Olivia Bingham '29**
Opinions Writer

Every fall, the Choate community participates in a schoolwide Community Service Day, where every student is assigned to a unique project to help the community. This year, on October 2, students, staff, and faculty came together to perform community service centered around the values of Plant, Baby, Plant!, an organization founded by Potawatomi tribe botanist and author Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer, aimed at helping members of the Choate community rekindle their relationship with nature. However, members of the community asked questions about the relevancy of the assigned work.Allowing student and broader community input in choosing the annual theme for future Community Service Days would certainly make the experience more meaningful.

Currently, choosing a Community Service Day theme is solely the responsibility of Choate's Director of Community Service: Ms. Samantha Nelson. During the School Meeting when the theme was announced, I couldn't help but feel like the topic was a bit of a surprise. There was no prior discussion with students or other members of the Choate community. In fact, I believe that even if students were polled on the past two years' Community Service Day themes, a shocking minority would likely be able to confidentally recall.

The goal of Community Service Day is to connect with the work we are doing and understand the value of our service to others. Community Service Day could be more meaningful if we addressed and helped solve issues we are collectively passionate and excited about. While I am not saying that we would show differently on the actual day, there is greater fulfillment that accompanies work that you are truly passionate about.

This year, Ms. Nelson organized her first Community Service Day in her new role. She explained that planning Community Service Day takes close to a year, comparing the process to an overwhelming jigsaw puzzle. It requires many long hours of thinking, communication with partners, and detailed work. It is a demanding task that requires determination, diligence, dedication, and care.

Offering student input may help ease some of Ms. Nelson's workload while giving students more ownership over the day. The entire point of the day is to support the communities that all of us students are a part of. We are constantly exposed to issues and communities beyond Choate that need support. We should all be able to help Ms. Nelson choose themes that are important to us as students today. In doing so, we can help her narrow down the most popular themes that students are truly enthusiastic about.

This kind of community input can even apply to the broader Community Service program. Ms. Nelson herself said she is open to receiving feedback and making changes. She expressed an interest in students contributing their ideas. "Later in the year, something that I would like to do is hold listening sessions with advisers," she said. "I want to hear what you guys have to say."

As Ms. Nelson remarked, "What's so unique about Choate is that everybody here tries ... Students at Choate care." She is correct, and that is precisely why students should be able to participate in choosing the annual Community Service Day theme. We care, so let us exercise that care and make Community Service Day even more impactful.

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NO-NEED FOR MORE NO-HOMEWORK NIGHTS

By **Suhana Hora '30**
Opinions Writer

At Choate, there is a heavy emphasis on cultural inclusion, reflected through frequent campus-wide "no-homework" nights. No-homework nights are scheduled around important holidays so that students can prioritize celebration and religious observance without additional stress.

There are currently six no-homework nights in honor of religious or cultural holidays, and that number has largely stayed the same every year. While some students might argue that we should include more observances, I believe that adding more "no-homework" nights could force teachers to squeeze rigorous coursework into a tightened schedule. While holidays, such as Eid-al Fitr, do not receive no-homework nights, students have other ways to observe these holidays without affecting the entire school's academic schedule.

Director of Studies Ms. Kyra Jenney explained that choosing these no-homework dates is a collaborative process involving Director of Spiritual Life Reverend Aaron Rathburn. They "work together to identify what days of religious and cultural observance would be relevant for the student population and when actually to mark the homework restriction to reflect those dates." Many no-homework nights are also scheduled around spiritual programming. "If we know that a spiritual life organization is going to be offering programming for that holiday on a certain day," Ms. Jenney said, "we would set the no-homework night to be the next day so that students can participate in that programming."

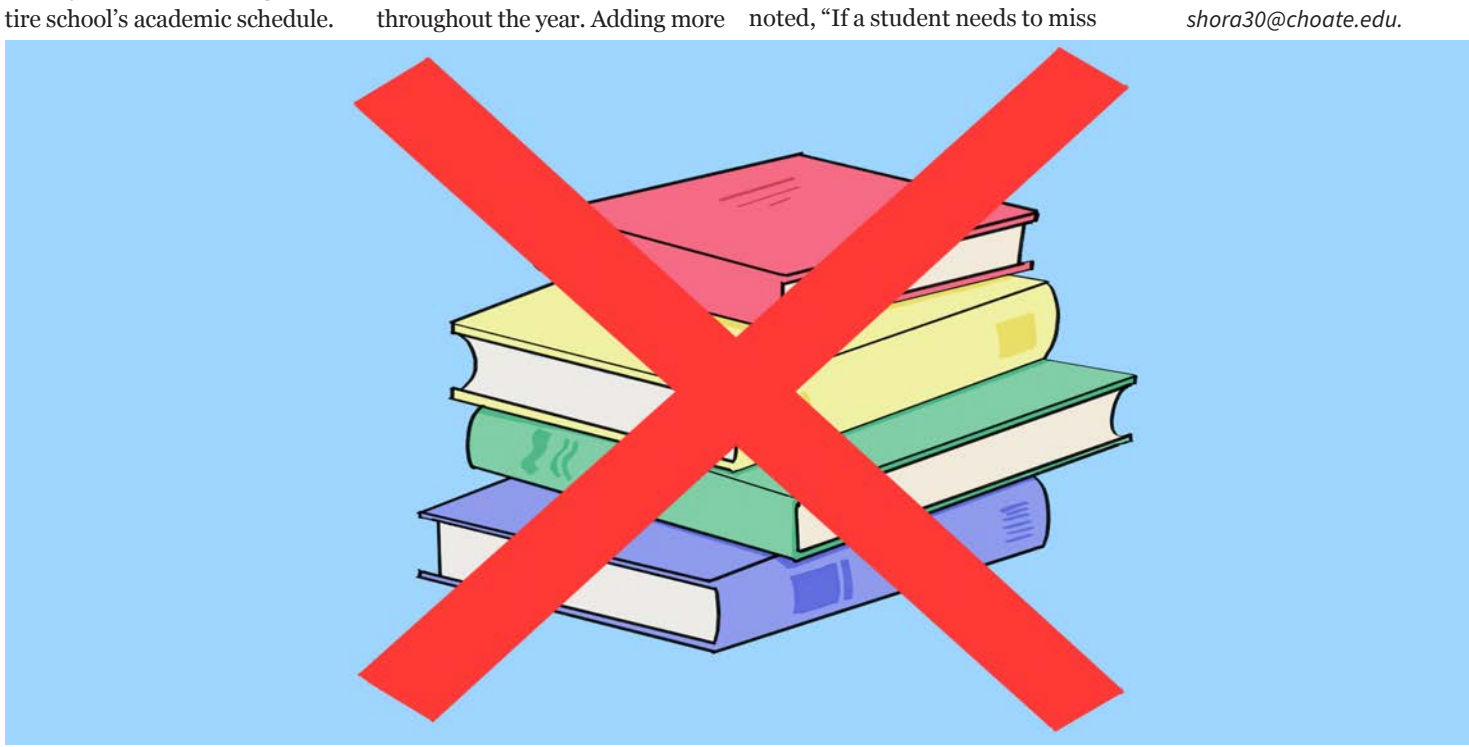
Choate considers several factors when determining which holidays receive no-homework nights. Given the diversity of the student body, creating exemptions for every cultural or religious occasion leaves little time for academic work that needs to be fulfilled throughout the year. Adding more no-homework nights forces teachers to work with shortened timelines, meaning that students will be forced to deal with tighter deadlines and heavier workloads before and after no-homework nights.

However, the absence of certain no-homework nights still generates some dissatisfaction. "I find it incredibly frustrating that we don't get a no-homework night for Eid al-Fitr," Zahabiya Khokha '27 said. "Eid is meant to be spent with family and friends over a large plate of food, not hunched over a computer stressing about whether an essay will be submitted in time. A no-homework night means that I can at least take the time to connect with the Muslim community at Choate."

Choate prioritizes both academic and cultural inclusion, and the administration takes into consideration that no-homework nights don't cover all festivities. There are alternatives for students who need flexibility to observe a holiday. Ms. Jenney noted, "If a student needs to miss classes because they are recognizing a particular observance day, that is an approved reason to miss school; it is an excused absence through the Deans' Office." She added that the absence isn't limited to missing class, and students are allowed to ask for no homework from their teachers. Choate policy dictates that teachers must allow the break if it is in relation to a student's religion or culture.

Choate already focuses on major cultural holidays, and not having homework nights for other festivities does not limit a student's ability to celebrate a cultural occasion. While there is room for growth, Choate provides many opportunities for individualized no-homework nights, while also maintaining a balance between cultural inclusion and academic responsibilities.

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

White House Bans News Press

By **Leah Whittingham '30**
Opinions Writer

White House reporters have historically served as a bridge between American civilians and elected officials. They are not simply guests of the White House, but critical witnesses for the public sphere. It need not be said, then, that no president should decide which news networks are allowed entry based on desirable coverage or alignment with certain beliefs; it is imperative that there is room for differences of opinion. Banning or excluding certain organizations is not only a violation of the First Amendment but also an attack on the free press and the public's ability to remain informed about government affairs.

Since the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration in the 1930s, the White House has had a system of sharing coverage through a rotating group of journalists, who then distribute any press to the wider press corps and general public. In a sudden move that changes the journalistic landscape of White House coverage, the Trump Administration has recently taken steps to bar CNN, MS NOW (previously known as MSNBC), and Politico from the White House newsroom.

In 2025, the Associated Press (AP) reported that it was barred from certain White House events after failing to align with President Donald Trump's P'00 editorial standards following an executive order renaming the "Gulf of Mexico" as the "Gulf of America." The AP punishment for a meager disagreement over naming conventions opens "Pandora's box," leading to a dangerous precendent of repression and censorship. It was in a similar fashion that, in October, 2009, former President Barack Obama attempted to remove a Fox News reporter from an interview with a Treasury representative. The Press Corps protested, and Fox was almost immediately reinstated. With President Trump, however, protests have been made to no avail.

News outlets may choose to inform the public with neutral, nonpartisan reporting or through opinionated, partisan journalism. Regardless, they reserve the right to make those editorial decisions. The public can choose to criticize and consume media, but there is no place for the government to do so. When the ability to publish depends on approval from those in positions of power in the government, journalists become reluctant to publish stories on certain topics because their reporting no longer reflects their analyses; rather, it echoes the administration's already-stated message.

Supporters of stricter White House control say access is a privilege, not a right. Still, press representatives must be chosen based on professional standards, fair rotation, and logistics, not loyalty or agreeability. A president does not have to like the press, but citizens deserve the right to open and honest reporting nonetheless.

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Has Discussion Replaced Diplomacy For The United Nations?

By **Leela Curry '29**
Copy Editor



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
President Donald Trump P'00 delivers remarks to the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

Every year during September, world leaders gather in New York for the United Nations (UN) General Assembly to reach agreements on the world's most important issues, with topics spanning war, human rights, poverty, and peace. However, after watching this year's assembly, it is hard not to wonder: do these speeches and diplomatic conversations ever result in measurable change? The General Assembly is a prime example of the UN's inefficacy in making tangible differences. As leaders discussed conflicts involving the United States and Iran, Israel and Palestine, Ukraine and Russia, along with other major international issues, there was not much done to help people within said conflicts.

The problem is that the same issues continue to be discussed without enough progress to show for it. If world leaders can spend days talking about war, humanitarian crises, and international cooperation but leave without meaningful resolutions, then those discussions lose purpose. The UN should be more than a place for countries to explain their positions; it should be a place where those discussions lead to tangible actions, making a concrete impact for civilians.

The glaring issue is that of the United Nations Security Council. Made up of five nations — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States — each one of these "P5" has the ability to completely veto any resolution made. Clearly, if any proposed resolution falls outside the realms of the P5's objectives, it won't pass. This makes the organization feel less like a force capable of changing global circumstances and more like an international forum for discussion, which, although nothing is wrong with it, ought to be treated as such.

The ability to bring countries together is powerful, but communication should be the beginning of action, not the end. The UN can become an easy place to shift responsibility. International organizations can provide assistance, but governments still have to take responsibility for their own countries. If a government is struggling with poverty, corruption, or poor public services, it cannot simply wait for the UN to fix the problem. The UN can provide resources and support, but it cannot address deeply rooted problems within a country's government on its own.

At the same time, the UN needs to take responsibility for its own shortcomings. It cannot continue to make promises about peace and international cooperation while having a limited ability to enforce them. Consider the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: adopted by 196 nations, the goal was to reduce carbon emissions and global rising temperatures. It was signed in 2015 with eight year intervals between checks. What is the consequence of failing to meet such environmentally significant goals? Nothing.

The UN does not need to solve every conflict in the world; that is obviously unrealistic. However, there does need to be a stronger connection between what happens inside the UN's meeting rooms and what happens outside them in countries. The United Nations is necessary, but its current approach is not enough. World leaders do not need another meeting to simply acknowledge these problems. They need to use these meetings to create solutions and follow through on them. After this year's General Assembly, the question should not be whether the UN has something to say; it clearly does, but the question is whether anyone is listening and is willing to take action.

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International Athletes Barred From Reaching Gold

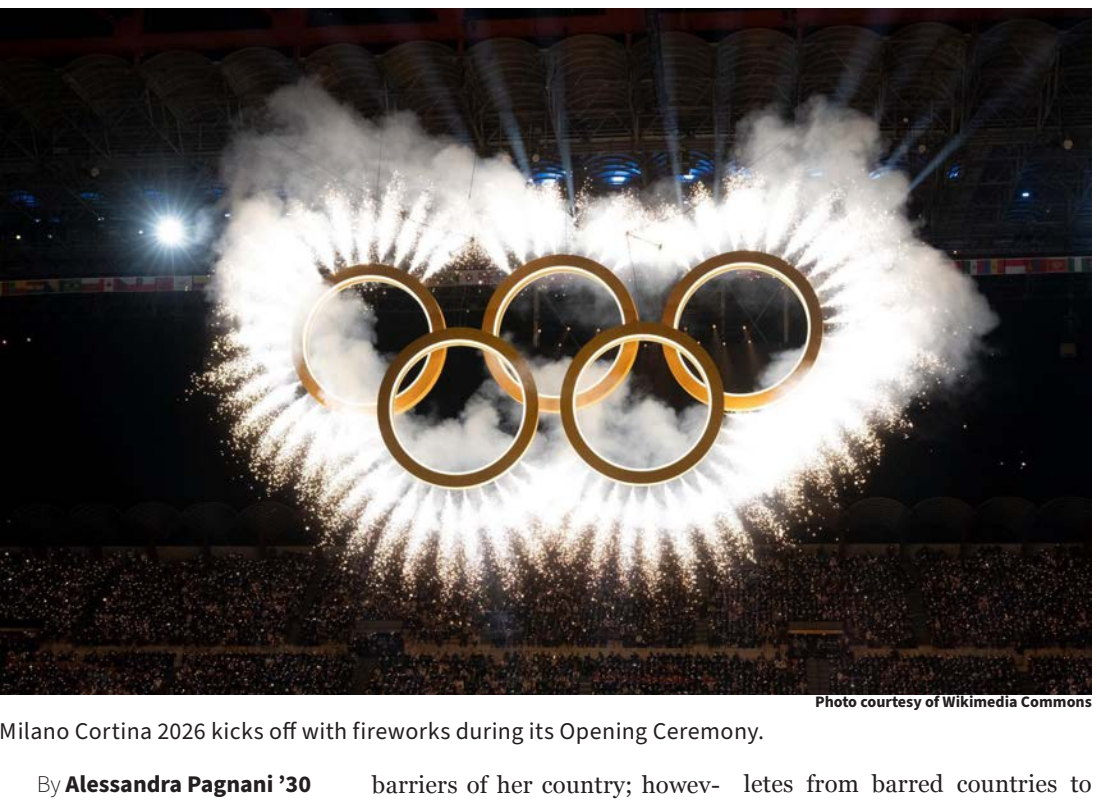


Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Milano Cortina 2026 kicks off with fireworks during its Opening Ceremony.

By **Alessandra Pagnani '30**
Opinions Writer

For most athletes competing at the international level, their daily training routines are a grueling, monotonous pattern of train, recover, and repeat. For these highly competitive individuals, this training routine is simply a step to reach their ultimate athletic goal: the Olympics. For many Olympians, the country they represent is simply where they are from. In this way, the Olympics is a dream for athletes to represent their country on the most prestigious athletic stage. Others, however, must overcome obstacles caused by conflicting international politics.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the International Olympic Committee barred South Africa from the Olympics due to the country's history of racial discrimination. For world-renowned Track Star Zola Budd, this meant she was ineligible to compete in track events, despite countless hours of training and hard work. Budd rose above the political barriers of her country; however, obtaining British citizenship through an expedited process so she could compete in the Olympics under the British flag.

This phenomenon is not particular to South Africa. Countries such as Belarus and Russia faced similar Olympic bans due to political tensions with the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Throughout modern history, athletic events like the Olympics have been opportunities to unify nations, regardless of political conflicts. While athletic events such as the Olympics allow athletes from divided nations to come together and set aside national-level political differences, the IOC must maintain the responsibility to bar countries that operate under unjust systems from competing. Athletics have been an international avenue to diplomacy; barring countries that back atrocities from competition is a necessary political statement. The organizers draw attention to governments' actions, sending an important message despite limiting opportunities for athletes from barred countries to play their sport on an international stage. Sports politics force viewers to pause and recognize a country's wrongdoings.

Despite the IOC's responsibility to make political statements through Olympic bans, it is imperative that they do so without impeding hardworking athletes from reaching their goals. The question now diverts from "should politics be involved in sports," to "how the IOC can respect the diligence of athletes while making important political statements against oppressive nations?" For the athletes who find themselves in a difficult position between representing a politically barred country and showcasing their athletic talent, there may still be a path to the Olympics. Under the Individual Neutral Athletes policy, athletes from banned nations can compete under a neutral designation if they are approved by international sports federations.

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Is Central Asia at the Behest of The Kremlin?

By **Eva Tumanyan '28**
Opinions Writer

In July, Kazakhstan's president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, stood beside Vladimir Putin in Omsk, Russia, praised his flexibility on diplomacy, and politely suggested freezing the war in Ukraine. The Kremlin said a freeze was impossible. Regardless of how much Tokayev wanted to, he could not afford to push harder on the issue. Why he couldn't shows how Russia is not losing Central Asia.

It is easy to say that China is replacing Russia in the region as the region's largest trading partner, and, as a result, Russia's once-prevalent influence is becoming less clear. But the extent of trade only shows who sells to Central Asia; the underpinnings of Central Asia, mainly employment, still lie with Russia.

According to the World Bank, remittances, the money migrant workers send home, equaled nearly half of Tajikistan's GDP in 2024. In Kyrgyzstan, almost all remittances in early 2025 came from Russia. Russia, effectively, comprises the GDP of these countries. Further, this data demonstrates a relationship of strong dependence. It is hard for any government to impartially negotiate with the country that employs so many of its citizens. About 80 percent of Kazakhstan's oil exports end at a Russian port. Two days after Kazakhstan announced production cuts due to drone strikes, Tokayev was in Omsk, Russia, asking for a freeze. Central Asia's heavy economic dependence on Russia, as both a buyer and employer of Central Asian countries, makes clear the necessity of careful diplomacy from Kazakhstan.

That is why the region's strategy of attempting to balance ties between Russia, China, and the West — a strategy known as "multi-vector" foreign policy — runs into hard limits. A government can shop around for the buyer of its goods. It cannot easily shop around for who employs its workers or where its oil exists. Russia's invasion of Ukraine damaged its image as a security partner, but it did not weaken its leverage over jobs and oil. Even as Chinese influence continues to grow, Central Asian leaders remain keenly aware of Russia's enduring economic presence.

Even as these Central Asian countries champion independence and a "multi-vector" foreign policy, external powers should be aware thatdespite nations being sovereign and self-determining, the underpinning of these countries' economies all lies at the behest of Russia. To escape this arrangement, Central Asia will have to invest in the unglamorous: a route for oil that skips Russia and an economy that gives workers a reason to stay home. That will take years and substantial sums of money, which is why Russia is unlikely to go anywhere soon. Until then, multi-vector will remain something of a pipe dream, and leaders like Tokayev will keep speaking to Moscow nicely.

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Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan's President, with Vladimir Putin, Russia's President.

FEATURES

BEHIND THE LENS OF BENTEN CAMERA

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

At many Choate hockey games, a glance at the glass offers a glimpse of pure joy — Ben Lee '27 with his camera, fist in the air, cheering loudly. "Sometimes we'll look over at the glass, and he'll be there with both hands in the air, camera in one hand, just cheering and jumping and getting excited with all of us," Girls' Varsity Hockey Captain Sophia Lind '27 said.

Through his Instagram account, Benten Camera, Lee has made an impact on Choate student life, working to bring the community together by documenting moments big and small. Behind the lens of his Canon R6 Mark II, he has become a source of inspiration, positivity, and energy, bringing the community together and celebrating the individuals who make it special.

Benten Camera began with simple curiosity. An avid Instagram scroller, Lee admired the cinematic vlogs on his feed and decided to try making his own. He recalled thinking, "I could probably do that too." Today, his work spans across campus, from sports team highlight reels, Boar Pen promos, Student Council content, to a video for the Admission Office.

Lee's enthusiasm allows him to fully immerse himself in the groups he films. One of Lee's favorite experiences has been working with the Boys' Varsity Lacrosse Team, in which he regularly attends team practices and meetings. Last year, before the end of the season, he was invited to deliver a pregame speech, a moment he described as "really emotional." With the Boys' Varsity Hockey Team, he traveled to a playoff game at Tabor Academy, encouraging players from the bench and between periods. "Ben was just as much part of the team as the forwards, the defense, the goalie," Boys' Varsity Hockey Assistant Coach Mr. Rob Sanders said.

For athletes, his most meaningful contributions lie in his attention to detail. Lind noted that he always remembers players' names and recognizes their goals and assists. "Those small contributions make a massive impact," she said. "It really feels like he's a part of our team, even though he doesn't show up on the roster."

In the year since Lee posted his first video, his work has expanded to many aspects of Choate student life. From videos featuring the newest Boar Pen to crafting a senior send-off video for the Class of 2027, Lee has taken the initiative to change Choate culture in a way that feels a little brighter than before. "I make people like the school more ... I'm trying to capture beauty on campus," Lee said.

His work has reached the broader community, generating interest in Choate athletics and encouraging students to attend games. Girls' Varsity Hockey Captain Claire Chanfrau '27 said his videos have been instrumental in filling the stands at the Remsen Arena.

Lee aspires to someday work for a major organization, such as the National Football League (NFL). For now, though, he is focused on capturing the beauty of life at Choate and spreading positivity, a mission that, by his peers' account, he already fulfills: "I've never had an interaction with Ben where I didn't leave feeling happier than I was before," Lind said.



Photo by Harry Kim '28/*The Choate News*
Ben Lee with his camera bag in front of St. John Hall.

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From Neuroanatomy to Real Estate: Student Internships

By **Anna Park '29**
Copy Editor



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

When the days get longer and warmer, Choate students bid farewell to campus for the summer, but their learning does not simply take a three-month hiatus. Instead, they take their learning beyond the classroom through internships, applying the knowledge and skills they have developed at Choate in real-world settings. Whether studying neuroscience with artificial intelligence (AI) systems in the lab, fielding constituents' suggestions at the state legislature, or overseeing expenditures for a commercial real estate company, Choate students spent a busy summer pursuing their passions through internships.

The Science Research Program (SRP) at Choate offers students the opportunity to conduct research in a university lab under a mentor. This summer, Gisele Yeung '27 spent eight weeks at the University of New South Wales in Australia. "My research mostly focused on neuroanatomy, and so we were mapping out brain circuits and trying to figure out the pathways from the lateral OFC (orbitofrontal cortex), which is this part of the brain near the front and prefrontal cortex," Yeung explained. She appreciated getting "a look into how people run their experiments, how they communicate with each other in the lab, and how they cooperate on research."

Juliet Eller '27 concentrated in connectomics, a field that combines neuroscience and computer science, working with her mentor and the lab's principal investigator over the summer at the Harvard University Center for Brain Science. Beginning in her junior year, she researched labs that interested her, sent cold emails to several institutions, and obtained a statement of support from Science teacher Dr. Chris Hogue. "In my internship, I was making a lot of ground truth data to train AI, so it was a lot of repetition, and creating that data that we needed to train our AI," she said. "I would say you never really see how much groundwork and manual labor go into these big research projects."

Students in the John F. Kennedy '35 Program in Government and Public Service also pursue internships before their senior year. Shaleen Sheth '27 worked at the state legislature in Hartford under the direction of Connecticut State Senator Paul Cicarella. "What I was doing was a lot of talking to constituents through emails and phone calls. I did a lot of organization and filing, but what I really took away from it was how much the state senators care about the people they serve," she said. "[State senators] really care about what everybody wants. He really took the time to talk to people, and it left a good impression on me."

Outside of Signature Programs on campus, students gained real-life experience in professional fields. Mila Mak '29 participated in Massachusetts General Hospital's Aspiring Physician and Medical Scientist Program due to her interest in biomedical studies. "I gained exposure to multiple areas of medicine, including emergency medicine, pediatrics, cardiology, neurology, surgery, radiology, and survival medicine," Mak said. At the hospital, she learned from Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) residents, Harvard medical students, Navy medics, and the director of teaching at MGH, who offered her perspectives on college and medical school paths. "I was grateful to have the opportunity to participate in hands-on clinical simulations, which helped me understand what medical decision-making can look like in practice and real-life scenarios," she said.

Ignacio Granda '27 interned at a Peruvian real estate company that recently relocated to Miami. In his sophomore year, Granda worked at a development company, where he conducted market analysis. This summer, he interned at a real estate company focusing on construction because he "wanted to get more insight into the finances of the natural construction site." Granda's internship entailed "managing the budget and the forecast of the budget, making sure that we were spending what we needed to on time and flagging any overexpending monthly and also in the long run." He added, "I also got the privilege to get hands-on and put some boots on and tour the project several times." He said he learned that listening and understanding industry terminology are essential. "With the experience I had the previous summer in a different field, I was also able to apply those skills to this field and learn as quickly as possible," he said.

As demonstrated by Choate students, numerous internships and programs can lead to fruitful real-world experiences. The steps needed are the drive to pursue personal interests, to explore all available opportunities, and to thrive in the ones you see yourself enjoying.

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Now Streaming: The Official Department Soundtrack



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

By **Henry Laurans '30**
Reporter

At Choate, students explore numerous academic disciplines. With over 300 courses across the six academic departments, each department has its own distinct vibe. In celebration of the sheer variety in courses of study and curricula, department heads and faculty chose songs to represent their discipline.

The Science Department

Science Department Head Mr. Kevin D. Rogers chose "The History of Everything" by Barenaked Ladies, a theme song from the science-themed sitcom "The Big Bang Theory," that incorporates chaos and scientific ideals into a single tune. The song was "as close as you can get to a theme song for the department." Mr. Rogers also acknowledged that there could be many answers and emphasized that science classes strive to sprinkle in humor wherever possible, something the song he chose does exceptionally well.

The HPRSS Department

HPRSS Department Head Ms. Courtney S. DeStefano (Destefs) selected "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" by Gordon Lightfoot as the song to describe the HPRSS Department's personality. The song is "the perfect balance of careful research and creative presentation, which is basically the highest hope we have for our students," DeStefs said. She considers "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" a folk-rock song, a classification she "doubt[s] everyone would agree with," but emphasized that HPRSS classes teach students to defend their arguments with evidence.

The English Department

English Department Head Dr. Sarah Hancock's response places emphasis on seeking deeper meaning behind ordinary experiences. She nominated "The Book of Love" by The Magnetic Fields, noting that "a lot of what we do in the English Department is to help us look past surface-level meanings of things," which the song perfectly captures.

The Arts Department

Arts Department Head Mr. Matthew T. McLean chose "Hospital" by Madison Cunningham. The song "balances complex guitar tuning and shifting rhythms with raw emotional power — mirroring how our department grounds technical mastery in genuine expression," Mr. McLean said. He added that "Some of us are obsessed with sharp, poetic lyrics, while others love driving, rhythmic dance tracks," showing how the Arts Department offers freedom between personal taste and skill.

The Math Department

Asked separately, Math teachers Mr. Marquis Tisdale and Ms. Katie Moore both chose "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars as their theme song. Mr. Tisdale said, "We are always there for each other, and having the word 'count' in the title doesn't hurt!" Ms. Moore said she was confident that her coworkers would agree with the choice, "because we all work together and help each other when needed."

The Language Department

With various languages, cultures, and identities represented in Choate's Language Department, Spanish teacher Ms. Le'ah Griggs chose "Layers," by Naïka, an American and French-Haitian singer-songwriter, to represent the Department's diversity. Naïka's song blends her own heritage while encouraging listeners to celebrate their unique identities, capturing the Language Department's mission.

The academic departments that define Choate play a prominent role in students' everyday lives. Whether it's creative or rigorous, each of the six departments brings its own special character and soundtrack to the Choate experience.

Scan this QR code for a Spotify playlist of all songs in this article!

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Calling All Choaties, the Counseling Center Cares!

By **James Chun '29**
Reporter



Photo by Kankan Adekoya '28/*The Choate News*
The Counseling Team smiling together in the counseling office.

Whether you know them from signs around campus or presentations at School Meeting, the Counseling Team serves as a central part of Choate's support system for students. Many believe that a counseling center should be a last resort, a place to visit only during the most stressful times. However, the Choate Counseling Team, located in the Pratt Health Center, hopes Choate students will view counseling differently: A place to better understand thoughts and emotions, discuss concerns that are hard to share with others, or simply have a conversation.

The counselors' schedules extend well beyond their time in their offices at the Pratt Health Center. Mental Health Counselor Ms. Christina Cicero described her workdays as "dynamic." In addition to meeting students for scheduled counseling sessions, she builds interpersonal relationships through ordinary encounters in the dining hall and spontaneous conversations across campus. "We genuinely love being part of this community. We enjoy walking around campus, seeing you all, and watching you engage with one another. We want to be visible and involved in the community," Ms. Cicero said. By connecting with students regularly, the team hopes to be more than just people students turn to when they are struggling.

"We are also a pretty silly group, and we love to laugh," Ms. Cicero said. Students do not need a pressing reason to visit; they can simply knock on the office door when boarding school life feels lonely, when misunderstandings arise with friends, or when communicating with teachers gets difficult. As Ms. Cicero put it, "You do not need to have a crisis."

For students who are hesitant to share, the counseling office prioritizes privacy. "We take confidentiality very seriously. What is said in the room stays in the room unless we have concerns around safety," Associate Director of Counseling Ms. Lisa Kimball said.

Even if it becomes necessary to speak with another adult for safety reasons, the process is not conducted without informing the student. "There are no surprises. If we believe something should be shared with another adult, we will talk with you about it beforehand and support you throughout the process," Ms. Kimball said.

The Counseling Team recognizes that Choate students face significant pressure to succeed both inside and outside of school, and that asking for help is not always easy. Counselor Ms. Tiffany Rivera noted that the team has the privilege of seeing students show courage by reaching out for help and staying committed to the process. She emphasized that for anyone, "learning healthy ways to take care of yourself and getting to a good place takes time."

Ultimately, the goal of counseling is to meet someone with whom you can share your story safely and comfortably, to feel less weight on your shoulders upon leaving the session, and to gain the strength to handle your future worries and emotions. Ms. Kimball echoed this sentiment: "Your time with us is your own, and we don't force you to discuss things that you don't want to talk about ... our goal is for students to feel safe, and for them to leave us feeling a bit lighter and better equipped to manage their emotions going forward."

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Step Squad and Hip Hop Club Take the Stage



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Step Squad performs on the Colony Hall stage during the Spring Dance Concert.

By **Rosie Tao '30**
Reporter

Every Sunday in Colony Hall's dance studio, Step Squad and Hip Hop Club members rehearse to put on spirited performances on the stage for Pep Rally, School Meeting, and other campus events.

The Hip Hop Club, led by Co-Presidents Katelyn Nguyen '27, Marin Wang '27, and Junior Officer Mia Cueto '28, focuses on fun and contemporary choreography. Members perform at events such as Pep Rally, the Holiday Program during Winterlude, and the Spring Dance Showcase. Prospective members are encouraged to bring passion and commitment to the Club, regardless of experience level. "It really just takes having passion, having energy, and having spirit," member Ema Silfa '28 said.

Joining Hip Hop Club is a great way to meet new people and build connections. "It's so small ... so you feel that little piece of connection with everyone," Nguyen said.

Led by Co-Captains Idara Ekanem '27, Samia Mowafi '27, and Junior Officer Brianna Appiah-Hagan '28, Step Squad is known for its energy and intensity, using clapping, stomping, and rhythmic body movements to create standout beats. The group performs regularly throughout the year, including at Pep Rally, the Holiday Program, and Revisit Week, and rehearsals focus on learning choreography, refining details, and maintaining enthusiasm.

"It's a lot of clapping and stepping and hitting your body. It's very intense, so with that intensity also comes hypeness, and a sense of passion for what you're doing," Ekanem said. Khristan Eustache '30, a new member, said that the club "is very welcoming" to new members and that everyone is encouraged to join and show some school spirit.

Silfa, a member of both dance groups with no prior dance experience, found that joining both clubs really boosted her confidence and allowed her to live out her "alter ego" on stage.

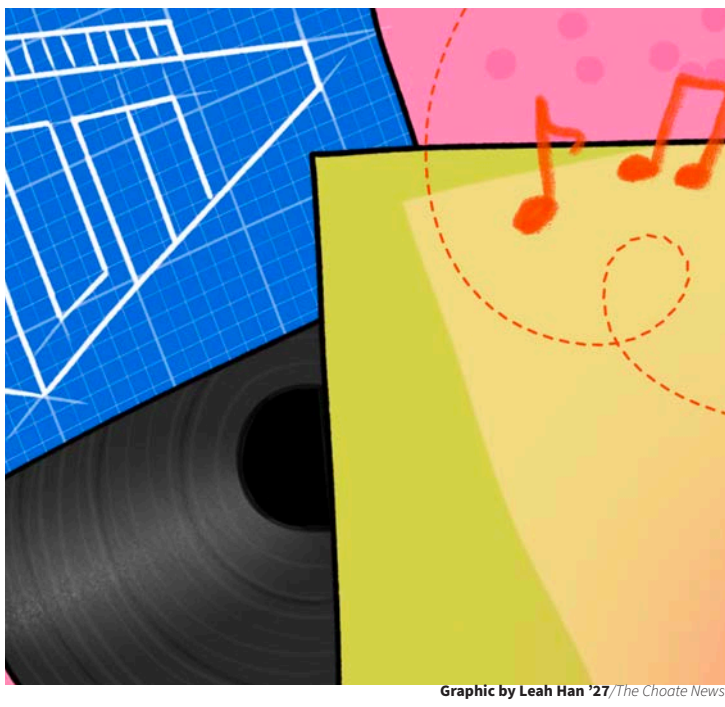
At Choate, various dance performances are hosted, and they are integrated into School Meetings and other school events. Silfa, Nguyen, and Ekanem all mentioned their love for Pep Rally particularly, which takes place every year prior to Deerfield Day and features both clubs. "Pep Rally is our favorite event ... because all of our work is [brought] to fruition," Nguyen said.

Dance is an important part of the Choate community, and these two clubs embody the Choate values of inclusivity and diversity, not only as clubs but also as supportive communities that encourage people to build their confidence and cultivate new connections. "I want to step until I can't step no more ... I want to hip hop until I can't hop anymore," Silfa said.

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Architecture and Albums: Students Pursue Arts-Related Capstones

By **Oola Breen-Ryan '29**
Copy Editor



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

Choate offers a wide array of electives, but the interests of certain seniors stretch beyond the limits of a standard course load. These students can find an outlet for their passion in the Capstone Program, a Signature Program that lets seniors delve into a subject of their choice during their last year on campus.

Philosophy and Religion teacher and Head of the Capstone Program Mr. James Davidson described the program as "an independent project [that] requires the student to take initiative." Throughout their senior year, students in the program take five classes within the Choate curriculum that are geared toward the subject of their capstone and present a polished project, paper, or presentation in the spring.

This year, two seniors are doing arts-related capstones. These projects reflect the wide range of Choate students' creative pursuits and show the dedication of student artists across mediums.

Logan Hegarty '27

Logan Hegarty '27 is working on an architecture project titled "Designing for Resilience." Her project, which blends sustainability, structure, and aesthetic appeal, is the product of an ongoing interest in the subject. "I've been interested in both architecture and engineering for a while, and I like that architecture combines creativity with math, physics, and problem-solving," Hegarty said. "For my capstone, I wanted to take that interest in a more forward-looking direction and explore how we can design buildings that respond to environmental challenges."

The interdisciplinary nature of architecture will be reflected in Hegarty's final presentation. "I definitely want the final presentation to be very visual. Instead of standing in front of a research paper, I'd like to show the evolution of my design through sketches, diagrams, floor plans, and a 3D model," she said. "Ideally, someone could look at the final building and understand not only what I designed, but why I designed it that way."

Hegarty also appreciates the freedom of the project. "There isn't a strict assignment telling me exactly what to do next, so I've had to learn how to set my own goals and decide which directions are worth pursuing. That has been difficult at times, but it's also one of the most valuable parts of the project," she said. Given her love of architecture, Hegarty plans to continue studying the subject in college. "By senior spring, I think I'll be less motivated by a grade and more motivated by wanting to create something I'm genuinely proud to present," she said.

Leo Bonnier '27

Leo Bonnier '27 is taking his capstone project in a different but no less ambitious direction: producing an album.

"The lyrics are mostly going to explore change, and everything that comes with it," Bonnier said, explaining how his album will include singing and rapping. Bonnier attributes his capstone project idea to his long-standing interest in music production. "I've always wanted to make an album," he said.

Music has been a core part of Bonnier's Choate experience, making this project a true culmination of his hard work over the years. "I spend a lot of my free time here in the studio or in the Paul Mellon Arts Center (PMAC), making music," he said. "I've been working on stuff for years now, so I've had a lot of songs just in the locker since 2024 ... but right now I'm working on something new." Bonnier's music-making process starts with creating an instrumental and then adding lyrics. He then records and mixes the song, making sure "it's as good as it can be." While he does play the guitar, his album mainly features music produced on a computer program and layered over with his voice.

Bonnier doesn't anticipate having trouble staying motivated to finish his album through senior spring. "I've always loved making music, so it doesn't really feel like a thing I have to do," he said.

While this year's arts-related capstone projects are very different from each other, they share one similarity: the students working on them are highly motivated and dedicated to their craft. "The best part of the program is to see students focus their efforts during their last year at school on a topic that really interests them and that they are passionate about," Mr. Davidson said. As Hegarty and Bonnier plan on continuing to pursue these interests after graduation, their finished projects will serve as both a culmination of their work at Choate and a preview of everything they'll accomplish in college and beyond.

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DIRECTING STUDENTS BRING THEIR VISIONS TO LIFE

By **Prudence Chen '28**
Copy Editor

Last fall, music filled Colony Hall as familiar faces appeared on the auditorium screen. Perhaps you saw glimpses of a short love story. Perhaps you heard the echoes of Taylor Swift's "Labyrinth" paired with dramatic close-up shots. These videos were part of a larger project conducted by the Honors Directing class, taught by Theater teacher Ms. Deighna DeRiu. Directing students are instructed to select a meaningful song within three minutes and cast other students as actors to tell their story, which will be screened again this year at the Fall Music Ensembles Concert over Parents' Weekend.

Jordy Miller '27 selected the French and English ballad "Old Friend" by Phyllis Hyman. The song holds sentimental significance for her. "During my study abroad, my host dad introduced me to this song, and so it gives me this feeling of nostalgia and hominess, and it really speaks to me in that way," Miller said.

When choosing actors, Miller was careful to select performers she was familiar with and trusted to get her story across to viewers. "I picked out people who I know are hard workers and who I know are going to be showing up, people who I know [the work style of], and people that are going to resonate with the themes of the video as well ... I'm really excited to have my vision come to life," Miller said.

One of Miller's actors is Kate Wai '28, whom she worked with on the 2025 fall musical *The Old Man and the Old Moon* and the 2026 spring musical *Twelfth Night*. Wai plays Panic, one of the many emotions Miller personifies in her music video. "[Miller] giving us costume notes was very helpful because I know my character has too much blush [as] she's very panicked, and I feel like that gave me a better sense of my emotion," Wai said.

Wai's goal for the video aligns with Miller's, as both are eager to see what they've been rehearsing and creating on the big screen. "The most important thing [to me] is to fulfill the director's ideal ... I can add my own parts, but being able to follow their directions and see their vision [is important]," Wai said.

Fellow director Jinx Hartong '27 is no stranger to this project — she starred in a video last year, which got the gears in her mind turning for her own film, set to "As Good a Reason" by Paris Paloma. "I wanted to do a feminine, empowering [piece]. It's a little eerie," Hartong said. The plot revolves around two women and their shared experiences with abusive relationships. "The older woman is giving her advice about how she was in an abusive relationship and how she got out of it," Hartong explained.

Miller also aims to empower viewers through her video. "The main thing I want people to get from it is even though sometimes you are feeling these big emotions, or feeling down, there's always a sort of a source of light and happiness in the world," Miller said.

The Honors Directing music video project is an opportunity for arts students to explore and create a unique piece on their own, using their love for the craft to promote messages they care about. Hartong emphasized how valuable the assignment is. "I really enjoy the fact that it is very open-ended — you could choose pretty much any song, any style. We're doing it completely independently on our own. It's all on us to film, to cast, to direct," she said.

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

Pitch Perfect Harmonies: Inside A Cappella at Choate



Photo courtesy of photos.choate.edu

Bellacanto performs on the Colony Hall steps.

By **Regina Choi '30**
Reporter

After the Involvement Fair on September 18, students gathered in front of the Student Activities Center for the first a cappella performance of the season.

To kick off the 2026-2027 school year, different a cappella groups held auditions, welcoming new and returning students to join their communities. At Choate, a cappella is more than just groups of singers; the different groups bring together students with varying voices, styles, and interests to create a cohesive work of art. There are five a cappella ensembles in the School: Whimawehs, Bellacanto, Lilith, Maiyeros, and Melatones. Although they all share a love for singing, each group brings its own and personality to campus.

From music choices to performance styles, the five groups each have distinct identities. "We do a lot of popular songs ... We really consider the atmosphere of the performance," President of Lilith Kaylin Lam '27 said. Last year, they performed "Riptide" by Vance Joy, which Lam described as "pretty popular among students and also very easy to sing along [to]." Meanwhile, Whimawehs, the oldest all-female a cappella group on campus, usually performs pop songs or classic rock. "We don't stick to one genre, and we like exploring making sound with all of them," Whimawehs Co-President Madeline Baldwin '27 said.

Auditions took place from September 15–19. During the audition, the group leaders called each student in, instructing them to sing any verse of a song of their choice for one to two minutes. Afterward, the student leaders conducted a range check to determine each student's vocal range. "The audition process is actually really chill ... it's a really non-stressful experience, and everyone in the room is really nice," Zoe Chen '30, a new member of Bellacanto, said.

While many students may mistakenly believe that they need an impeccable sense of pitch in order to join a group, the leaders emphasize how vocal ability is not the only aspect they look for when considering members. Samia Mowafi '27, the co-president of Bellacanto, shared her perspective on selecting new members. "We are not looking for the best singer in the whole wide world ... [we] looked for people who have the enthusiasm, and I think most groups look for that," she added.

For students who are considering joining a cappella in the future, the leaders' advice is straightforward: give it a try. "Definitely just try it and give it a go," Baldwin said. "You don't have to pick one [song] that sounds the most impressive," Lilith Junior Officer Kate Wai '28 added. Lam suggested "[being] confident in yourself, because one of the main things we want to see is someone who is able to be confident and shine on stage."

Ultimately, Choate a cappella groups offer far more than a chance to sing; they provide students with an opportunity to find their own voice, build confidence, and collaborate with others to create a unique harmony.

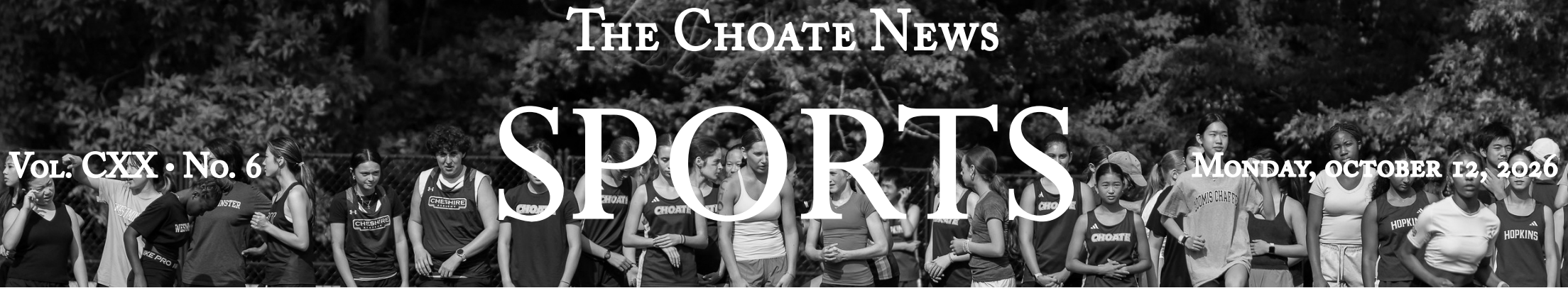
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SPORTS

Monday, October 12, 2026



FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

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Varsity Games

Girls' Soccer (4-3)
vs. Loomis, 1-0

Boys' Water Polo (3-1)
vs. Suffield, 22-8

Girls' Volleyball (5-1)
vs. Sacred Heart, 3-0

Boys' Cross Country (2-0)
vs. Trinity-Pawling, 15-50

Girls' Soccer (4-3)
vs. Westminster, 1-3

Boys' Water Polo (3-1)
vs. Hill School, 12-20

Girls' Field Hockey (2-3)
vs. Westminster, 0-1

Boys' Football (2-1)
vs. Lawrenceville, 6-8

J.V. Games

Girls' Volleyball (4-1)
vs. Hopkins, 2-0

Boys' Cross Country (2-0)
vs. Taft, 15-50

Girls' Field Hockey (1-2)
vs. Westminster, 0-1

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

Gear Up — Mr. Whittaker Receives National Equipment Manager Recognition Award

By **Miya Aoki '29**
Reporter

Before a student-athlete can step onto the field, court, track, or rink, there exists a team of people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make that moment possible. At Choate, Mr. Justin Whittaker has been one of those people, serving as the Head Equipment Manager and WJAC Scheduling Supervisor since 2017. This year, he is stepping into the role of Assistant Athletics Director. On June 15, his immense effort received national recognition as he won the 2026 Booker Kilgore National High School Equipment Manager of the Year Award at the Athletic Equipment Managers Association (AEMA) Convention in Covington, Kentucky.



Photo by Edward Wang '30/*The Choate News*
Mr. Justin Whittaker at the WJAC.

For Mr. Whittaker, the award felt like a "full-circle moment" as he concluded his former role as equipment manager. "It was like a gold-standard moment," he noted. "It was an awesome honor to receive and be looked upon by my peers as somebody that deserved the honor."

This award also carries a sense of legacy. In 2009, former Choate Equipment Manager Mr. Jim Paradise received the same award. Although Mr. Whittaker never got the opportunity to meet Mr. Paradise before his passing in 2015, he heard countless stories about the impact Mr. Paradise had on the Choate community. "He was the man," Mr. Whittaker said. He added, "To win that award and be in the same group as someone like [Mr. Paradise] is rewarding." Choate is now the only high school in the country to have two recipients of this award since its inception.

Assistant Director of Athletics Coach Nolan Silbernagel, who works closely with Mr. Whittaker, said, "to see someone who deserves the award and highlights all the qualities you want in someone receiving that recognition was really awesome." He described Mr. Whittaker as "hard-working," "a problem solver," and "friendly:" infectious qualities that extend beyond the equipment room. Moreover, Mr. Whittaker finds ways to contribute to Choate on a wider scale, from helping with Pep Rally to being the leader of Boar Pen. "This wasn't a part of the original job description," Coach Silbernagel said. "That was [Mr. Whittaker] having these characteristics and wanting to contribute to the school." He emphasized that Mr. Whittaker's enthusiasm and dedication made him truly worthy of the award.

Boar Pen member Tori Vollero '27 agreed. "[Mr. Whittaker] is beyond deserving … [he] ensures that every athlete has everything they need to make their season as successful as possible," she said. "Since working with him on Boar Pen, I have realized just how much goes into his job … Choate athletics could not be what it is without him."

The greatest takeaway Mr. Whittaker hopes students learn from his journey is that no achievement is ever accomplished alone. After nearly a decade behind the scenes, he knows better than most that the team behind the scenes are often the ones who make it all possible. "Embrace the team culture, no matter where you are in life. Whether it's a sports team, your personal life, or where you go to work in the real world, lean on the people around you. Those people that you work with are the people that make the experience," he said.

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Boys' Soccer Kicks Off

By **Amira Faiz '29**
Reporter

From September 26–27, the Boys' Varsity Soccer Team participated in the NXT LVL Boys' Soccer Invitational in Albany, New York. Attended by various boys' prep school soccer teams throughout New England, Canada, and Puerto Rico, this showcase allowed talented soccer players to display their skills to college scouts and compete with other outstanding teams.

Starting on September 26, the team played against the Puerto Rico Sea Raiders and were faced with different challenges. "The contrast in different playing styles was something we had to adjust to. The [Puerto Rico] Sea Raiders were … pushing us to our physical capabilities," defender Jelani Harvey '28 said. At their second game on September 27 against St. George's School, Harvey added, "St. George's were smaller and more technical on the ball."

Assistant Coach Zach Kafoglis talked about the team's intentions, driven by perseverance and a competitive mindset. He said, "Ultimately, our goal is to have a successful season and be competitive. And so the primary objective is to get good results in the games." This showcase was the first step to achieving those goals. Tying 1-1 with St. George's and beating the Puerto Rico Sea Raiders 3-1, the team demonstrated their natural ability to stay consistent and committed to each other.

Players also shared memorable moments from the trip off the field, where the team bonded over team dinners, outings, and TikTok dance videos. "We went to Dave & Buster's. It was great team building … and it helped us become more unified and more like family," midfielder Nicholai Banton '28 said.

Team captains Josh Federowicz '27, Wisdom Humalie '27, and Freddie Repton '27 shared how they were able to keep the team focused and connected. Federowicz stated that "on the field, [Humalie and I] kept everybody aligned, making sure we focused." Repton, who is injured and out for the season, said, "I'm keeping everyone focused and morale high, and showing leadership off the field." Meanwhile, Humalie ensures the team is organized. "I always make sure the team does the small things that they need to do, like being on time for group meetings," he said. Together, the team captains do their part in setting an example for their fellow teammates, whether on or off the pitch.

Left wing Tofick Sheikh '27 said, "In my four years here, I think this is the year that our team connection has been the strongest, because everybody is really calm and they love each other so much." The showcase demonstrated both the unbreakable bond and talent of the Choate Boys' Varsity Soccer team.

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Science by Day, Iron Men at Dawn

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

For Science teachers Mr. Will Morris and Mr. Pat Guelakis, physical activity is more than just a hobby. On October 10, these two Choate faculty members competed in the Ironman World Championship in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, after qualifying at Ironman races in New York and Maryland. For Mr. Morris, this was his 14th Ironman since his first one in 2003. Mr. Guelakis's journey started after the pandemic as a way to improve his health, and Mr. Morris sparked his interest by encouraging him to try a triathlon. This was Mr. Guelakis's third Ironman. Reaching this stage, however, takes an enormous amount of effort and preparation.

Mr. Morris

Chemistry teacher Mr. Morris trained for "a couple of hours" each day. His training regimen focused on simulating the specific demands of an Ironman, which consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a marathon run. Each week, he swam, biked, and ran for several hours, while still managing his other responsibilities at Choate, such as teaching and serving as the advisor to the Judicial Committee. "Friday, Saturday, Sunday, that's when I try to put together back-to-back, longer workouts to simulate the demand of having to do [an Ironman] in a day," Mr. Morris said. His preparation also extended beyond workouts, as he planned how he would stay hydrated, consume enough calories, and manage the heat during the race.

Mr. Guelakis

Mr. Guelakis's training was just as intensive. He has a coach who planned his workouts, and his training ranged anywhere from 14 to 21 hours a week. A typical week included swimming 3,000 yards three times, running 45 to 60 miles, and biking for roughly 11 hours. "[I] have been consistent since I started all this," Mr. Guelakis said. For him, balancing his training with Choate responsibilities means "a lot of early mornings," since he coaches cross-country in the afternoons in the fall. To keep himself disciplined, he thinks back to all the work he's put in and keeps moving. "This journey started from a place of poor health, and I'm motivated by how far it's taken me," Mr. Guelakis said.

Both teachers describe the Ironman as a victory lap and are grateful to have made it this far. "My goal in this event in particular is to appreciate the experience, go through it with a sense of gratitude," Mr. Morris said before leaving for Hawaii.

Before the race, Mr. Guelakis reflected on his excitement about crossing the finish line. Encouragement from people on the sidelines, such as high-fives, is one of the small things that keep him going during the race. "It's hard, and it's worth doing, and it's a cool feeling to finish," Mr. Guelakis said.

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

ROLL BOARS: MEET YOUR NEW HYPE SQUAD

By **Ava Hult-Falk '27**
Staff Contributor

Boar Pen wants you to show up and show out at all of Choate's incredible campus events this year. Whether it's a Saturday whiteout football game, or a theatrical production in the newly-opening Little Theater, Boar Pen hopes to see Choate students pack the stands.

Boar Pen, Choate's student spirit group, promotes athletic and campus events. This year's pen has six students from the Class of 2027: Juju Iannace '27, Elishua Mercado '27, Izzy McGehee '27, Jack Kang '27, Jason Schmidt '27, and Tori Vollero '27.

Iannace said one key difference in this year's group is the range of varsity teams the members play on. "Each player is on a different varsity team throughout many seasons, so now more players can come to each of the games," she said.

Mercado hopes to inspire students to attend events that don't usually draw the largest crowds. "Last year there was a standard to be at big games: football, volleyball, soccer," he said. "We want to expand that and be at the arts, be at the plays, be at the field hockey games, be at water polo." Schmidt noted that Boar Pen is trying to "support other areas on campus beyond our athletic teams, because, frankly, school spirit goes beyond just the sidelines."

Iannace and Mercado said their biggest goal is to try something new. "We're not just recycling spikeball a bunch," Iannace said. "We have a bunch of plans in the works to do more," Mercado added. The group hopes to launch Boar Pen merchandise with an official logo. "We want to expand [Boar Pen] into really meaning something a little more than it has in the past," he noted.

To attract larger crowds, Boar Pen is considering an incentive program in which students who attend home games could be entered into a raffle for a chance to win gift cards.



Photo by Ashley Wu '28/*The Choate News*
The six members of Boar Pen gather at the Hill House steps.

"It's not fun if there's no student section," Iannace said. She also hopes to bring athletics and the arts programs closer together. "I think it's [about] bringing athletes to arts performances, and theater performers to athletic games," she added.

In addition, Boar Pen plans on partnering with various clubs on campus. "We're excited to work with CRH Grilling [Club] … I think we will partner, possibly, with Choate for Women, for [a] breast cancer awareness fundraiser," Schmidt said.

This season's calendar is packed full. "We have a bunch of fun event ideas brewing," Vollero said. Iannace is looking forward to Deerfield Day and is also excited about various new events under proposal, such as a hacky sack tournament, kickball in the dark, and a flag football competition. Mercado said that the group is planning themed games, including body paint, a neon night, and a Halloween event.

Students have taken notice and expressed appreciation for Boar Pen's enthusiasm. "I think they bring a good energy, and I like them at School Meetings," Graham Jessen '29 said. Sophie Zhang '29 agreed: "They're doing well with the hype and planning events."

Sophie Eliades '27, meanwhile, appreciated Boar Pen's efforts to increase turnout at non-sports-related events. "It's good to get more students [at] arts [events] so they can experience the quality of work on campus, both on and off the sports fields," they said.

In the end, members of Boar Pen measure their success by turnout and crowd enthusiasm. "Success is building a norm of showing up, and being loud, and being excited," Vollero said. Iannace described her vision for the year as "people coming to games, and actually enjoying them, and actually wanting to come to games," For Mercado, it's even simpler: "I want people to be bleeding blue and gold."

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