



BOARDS ARE BACK

CHOATE IMPLEMENTS NEW GUIDELINES FOR FALL TERM



After a year of socially distanced dining, students are now allowed to sit multiple people to a table. Photos courtesy of Choate Flickr (left) and Sophia Kim (right)



After a year of socially distanced dining, students are now allowed to sit multiple people to a table. Photos courtesy of Choate Flickr (left) and Sophia Kim (right)

By **Ryan Kim '23**
Staff Reporter

Following a tumultuous and challenging year and a half, Choate has fully reopened for the 2021-2022 academic year, resuming in-person classes along with a full catalogue of extracurricular opportunities in athletics, the arts, and student clubs. Despite Choate's campus-wide vac-

nation rate of over 99%, the School has maintained the previous academic year's Covid-19 safety policies on indoor masking, along with the enhanced air ventilation and filtration systems that were installed last year. However, students are no longer required to wear masks outdoors, nor be physically distanced when indoors.

Besides the less stringent Covid-19 guidelines, life on

campus has mostly returned to pre-pandemic norms, with all students required to return to campus for in-person learning. For some returning students, this year marked the first time they have met their peers in-person. Yoyo Zhang '24, a returning fourth-former from Shanghai, China, appreciated the opportunity to gather in-person and chat with her friends. "I love how we are able

to be together, have more social events, and feel the energy of the community," she said. "The interludes of exciting activities throughout an academic day energize me and motivate me to work."

Additionally, all academic classes have returned to the in-person schedule and format from the 2019-2020 academic year, with round Harkness-style discussion tables

back in Humanities classrooms and movable desks for discussion groups in STEM classes. David Garsten '23, a returning fifth-former from North Haven, Connecticut, appreciated the increased cooperation brought by in-person learning. "In general, classroom participation becomes a lot more active without the awkward silence caused by everyone 'muting' themselves and having to raise their 'virtual hand,'" he said. Garsten especially appreciated the return of Harkness tables. He said, "Being able to sit at a round table and engage in discussions builds a strong classroom connection."

Science teacher Dr. Chris Hogue agreed with Garsten. "More than anything else, [in-person classes] have reminded me again just how amazing Choate students are, and how lucky I feel to teach them," he said. "Engaging with them in person, seeing how they interact with their peers, feeling their passion — it completely validates all the reasons I love working here."

Sports, arts ensembles, and student clubs have also returned in full swing, with the first outdoor SAC Dance held on September 18 and the outdoor Club and Organization Fair on September 19. Returning sixth-for-

mer Kenadi Waymire '21 said, "I'm super excited to dig into play rehearsals, watch fall sports games, go to SAC events, and start club activities back up again. I really missed the hustle and bustle of a regular Choate year, so I'm eager to get back into the swing of things."

However, an increasingly large number of students and faculty have begun to raise awareness of the visible physical and mental toll a fast-paced return to normality has pressed upon the community. Only two weeks into the new academic year, returning students who have only experienced Choate through the screen have reported feeling exhausted and overwhelmed after classes every day due to the sheer amount of homework they receive on top of various extracurricular commitments. This has caused them to spend many hours late into the night completing homework assignments due the next day, often compromising their sleep and wellness to get work done. Addressing the issue, Dr. Hogue said, "Things are still not normal. For that reason alone, I don't understand the urgency to jump back into the pre-Covid pace of life."

Ryan Kim may be reached at rkim23@choate.edu

WEBSITE RECEIVES MAJOR MAKEOVER

By **Lauren Hsu '24**
Reporter

This past summer, Choate underwent a major revamp of the website, which was last updated over three years ago.

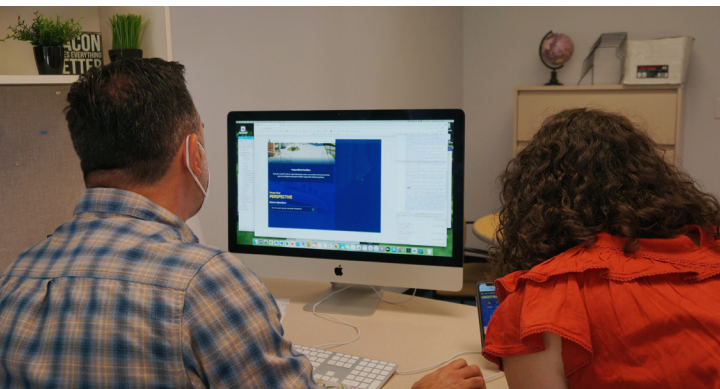
Redesigning the website began with defining its goals and stakeholders. Choate partnered with a creative agency, 160over90, to create the School's viewbook, and a website vendor, Finalsite, which reviewed the visual design and content of the site.

However, the redesign process was complicated by the global pandemic, leading the administration to rethink some of its procedures. "A big unforeseen challenge this time around was getting visual assets without students with masks on," said Director of Communications Ms. Alison Cady, who oversaw parts of the redesign. Due to Covid-19 protocols, much of the media content on the website had to be captured during the last three days of the 2020-2021 school year, once the majority of the community had been fully vaccinated.

In order to create an effective website, the School reviewed the previous site and discussed how to create the best user experience. Choate's Website & Electronic Communications Manager Mr. Todd Jaser, who managed the redesign of the Choate website, said, "It was a very mobile centric, media-rich goal for us." Analytics showed that half of users were viewing the website on their mobile devices, and a majority with their right hand. As a result, the new design included a feature that would allow many of the videos to be played vertically so users wouldn't need to rotate their phones. The menu on mobile devices was also positioned on the bottom right for right and single-handed use.

Ms. Cady hopes that students are pleased with the new website. "We really intentionally did not want to look like any of the other schools out there," she said. "I think we hit the mark with that."

Lauren Hsu may be reached at lhsu24@choate.edu



Mr. Todd Jaser managed the Choate website redesign.

By **Sabrina Wang '23**
Copy Editor

Starting in early September, students began making their way back to campus to prepare for the new year — prefects began their Community Leadership Initiative (CLI) and athletes began preseason training. To begin the transition to the new year, the School resumed opening day events, which had been canceled last year due to Covid-19 restrictions, allowing the community to gather once again to celebrate the commencement of the new academic year.

On Thursday, September 9, opening day traditions kicked off with the annual Senior Class Dinner with faculty. However, unlike previous years, the dinner took place outdoors rather than in the Hill House dining hall. "I met a lot of new faculty members that I didn't know before, and it was very nice to see everyone back on campus again and in one place," said Maddie Dubrinsky '22.

On Friday, September 10, Pathways, a program that creates a welcoming environment for new students of color, began its in-person programming. International Student Mentors were also able to connect with their mentees on campus to help them adjust to boarding and life at Choate. They also engaged in activities such as a scavenger hunt and ice cream social, rather than attend the Zoom meetings that had taken

Opening Day Traditions Begin Again



Photo Courtesy of Choate Flickr

Students participate in an ice breaker at Playfair.

place last September. "I really enjoyed the scavenger hunt," said Chloe Chan '23. "I chatted with my mentee and learned a lot about her on the way to finding my next clue."

Later that day, new students gathered with their prefects on the lawn next to Sally Hart Lodge for the New Student Dinner and Matriculation. Usually, the dinner is held inside the dining hall, followed by Matriculation in the St. John Chapel. This year, students were assigned to tables with their dormmates or with other day students and were called up to sign the matriculation books for the archives. "I found that it was a lot more efficient than my freshman year, since we didn't have to wait in such a long line," added Dubrinsky, who is a prefect at Archbold.

The next day, new students attended Choate's annual social orientation, Playfair, on the Great Lawn. Although many

pandemic restrictions have loosened up, Playfair still had to change some of its traditions, such as holding hands with other students. However, the goal of Playfair remained the same. New students were tasked with finding connections with each other, and prefects were there to help facilitate the event. Although many people were able to form friendships during Playfair, others did not find it useful. "I don't remember anyone from Playfair. Everything felt too organized. I thought the form event was a lot better, as we just hung out, so we could actually go and talk to new people," said new student Junho Lee '24.

The opening day traditions concluded with Convocation on Friday, September 17, when the entire school community gathered in Colony Hall. Unlike in years past, Convocation was held during the school week rather than before the start of classes. During Convocation,

students and faculty listened to an invocation by Director of Spiritual Life Reverend Aaron Rathbun, as well as remarks from Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis, Interim Head of Student and Academic Life Ms. Katie Levesque, and Student Council President Abby Lu '22. Convocation concluded with a closing speech from HPRSS teacher and Faculty Marshal Mr. Jim Davidson. "I was hesitant in how Convocation would fit in[to the day], but it didn't last too long," recalled Mr. Davidson. "I like that we're no longer a school that advocates [for] being spoken at."

New science teacher Ms. Mallika Beach-Mehrotra agreed, "Convocation was the first time where everyone was together, and it really made me feel like, 'Oh, I'm finally part of this community now, and I'm part of this entire group working together.'"

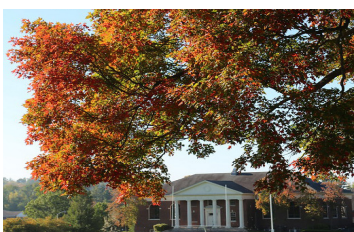
Sabrina Wang may be reached at swang23@choate.edu

Welcoming New Faculty
Twenty-three new faculty join the community.
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CHOATE WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

By **Oliver Howard '23, Harper Knight '23, Alexis Lien '23, Aubrie Williams '24, Tyler Kuo '23, Tess Taetle '24, Meredyth Syms '23**
and **Arin Tongdee '23**
Reporters

Photos by Sophia Kim '24, Noah Molina '23, Ava Persaud '25, Sedi Agyeman '23, Shaylah Finnerly '25



MS. MALLIKA BEACH-MEHROTRA: The Choate Science Department welcomed new Biology and Marine Science teacher Ms. Mallika Beach-Mehrotra. Hailing from the West Coast, Ms. Beach-Mehrotra was a teaching and research assistant as well as a Citizen Science Director and Curriculum Writer at Ocean Institute. At Choate, “Ms. M” — as her students fondly call her — looks forward to developing her collaborative and experimental teaching style and experiencing the traditional New England fall weather.



MRS. KIMBERLY FINN BOLSTER: Mrs. Kimberly Finn Bolster joined the Science Department after teaching Physics and Engineering and serving as Co-Director of Student Activities at Avon Old Farms. She received her B.A. from Mount Holyoke College and her M.Ed. from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Other than sharing her passions of Astronomy, Mrs. Bolster is also “looking forward to some of the traditions and events that help to make Choate, such as Deerfield Day and Mug Nights.”



MRS. DEANNA CLARK: Mrs. Deanna Clark joined Choate this year as a new teacher in the Math and Science Department. Prior to Choate, Mrs. Clark received her Bachelor of Science from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and worked as an environmental engineer. Mrs. Clark plans to work in the Robotics Department, especially through the Advanced Robotics Concentration (ARC) signature program. Choate Robotics Co-captain Max Zhang '22 is “very excited to have her as our mentor.”



DR. SCOTT DAVIS: Dr. Scott Davis began teaching at Choate last year as an adjunct Latin and English teacher. This is his first year teaching as a full-time faculty member at Choate. “I’ve enjoyed getting to know the incredibly talented, supportive, and kind faculty,” said Dr. Davis. “The best part of my job is that I spend all my time in the classroom teaching and rarely have to deal with disciplinary issues.”



MR. MATTHEW FERRARO: Mr. Matthew Ferraro recently joined the Choate Language Department as a French teacher. He has a B.A. from Cornell University and lives in Memorial House. Before his arrival to Choate, Mr. Ferraro was a Teaching Assistant for the course “Global Climate Change Science and Policy” and Student Representative to COP23, the UN Climate Change Summit.



DR. AMBER HODGE: Dr. Amber Hodge is a new member of the English Department this year, currently living in Porter House. They previously worked as a Graduate Teaching Fellow in the English Department and Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies at the University of Mississippi. Dr. Hodge decided to come to Choate to “work with some of the brightest, most talented students anywhere.” They are especially looking forward to teaching Modern Dystopian Literature in the spring.



MS. WINNIE MALONEY: This year, Ms. Winnie Maloney joined Choate as an Associate Dean of College Counseling and Testing Coordinator. Ms. Maloney said that her experience reading Choate students’ college applications and meeting them made her eager to join the community. Getting to know other new faculty at orientation and meetings has been an enjoyable part of her time at Choate so far. Although she is only a few weeks into her job, “I’ve already felt supported by these folks as we adjust to life at Choate ourselves,” she said.



MS. NICKIE PAUL: Ms. Nickie Paul is no stranger to Choate, having taught part-time at the school for the past seven years. With more time on her hands now that her children are older, Ms. Paul decided to make the transition into her first year as a full-time teacher. In addition to teaching both introductory and advanced psychology classes and Cognitive Neuroscience, she is a Capstone adviser and a coach to Track & Field in the spring.



DR. MARY ROCA: Dr. Mary Roca is a new member of the English Department this year, currently living in Richardson House. “I felt like Choate was a place where I could not only teach, but also learn and grow myself,” she said. Dr. Roca looks forward to learning more about Choate’s extracurricular activities and athletics in the coming few weeks. She added, “I’m new to Connecticut, so I’m looking forward to autumn weather!”



MS. AMY SUN: Ms. Amy Sun is Choate’s newest Associate Director of Admission. “After teaching Latin for the last two decades, I really wanted to shift beyond the classroom to Admission,” she said. “I was eager to interact with families in a new way.” Ms. Sun looks forward to hearing the stories of prospective Choate students and learning more from her colleagues.



MR. TIMOTHY YUN: Born and raised in Los Angeles, new HPRSS teacher Mr. Timothy Yun has always wanted to experience the boarding school culture. Joining the Choate community after teaching in Korea and New York, Mr. Yun seeks a different type of teaching experience. He said, “With boarding, you get to be very immersed with students’ lives. It’s a really close-knit community.”

MR. YASSINE BENZINANE : Mr. Yassine Benzinane joined the Choate Language Department as both a French and Arabic teacher. After moving back to New England to be closer to his family, Choate’s Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies signature program drew Mr. Benzinane to the School. His budding love for the Choate community feeds into his teaching both inside and outside of the classroom. “I like the fact that students respond positively when challenged beyond their comfort zone,” said Mr. Benzinane. “They take the life of the intellect seriously despite their athletics, artistic, and residential life commitments.”



MS. ELIZABETH BERESTECKY: Ms. Elizabeth Berestecy has worked in the Choate Admission office for the past six years as a staff member, but this year she became a faculty member — transitioning to the role of Assistant Director of Admission. “What I enjoy most about working in the Admission Office are my colleagues,” she said. “We have a great team and work very well together.” Ms. Berestecy also looks forward to “getting to meet our new students and watch them experience all that Choate has to offer.”



MS. ALEXANDRA COPELAND: Ms. Alexandra Copeland was welcomed this year as Choate’s new Director of Health and Wellness. Ms. Copeland received her bachelor’s degree in science at Stephen F. Austin State University and went on to earn her master’s degree in science at Texas Women’s College. At Choate, Ms. Copeland is excited to “[build] meaningful relationships with the wonderful students, faculty, and staff.”



MS. LAURA DiCARLO: Ms. Laura DiCarlo joined Choate this year as the Girls’ Varsity Ice Hockey Head Coach, Admission Interviewer and Reader, and a member of the Teaching and Learning Center. Ms. DiCarlo is currently a faculty adviser in Hill House. Maddie Dubrinsky '22, a Co-captain of Girls Varsity Ice Hockey, said, “Coach DiCarlo is amazing both on and off the ice. Her enthusiastic personality and kind heart will make this season one to remember.”



MS. LE’AH GRIGGS: Ms. Le’ah Griggs is new to Choate as a Spanish teacher and adviser in the Library dorm. Before taking up her full-time position at the School, Mrs. Griggs was a Spanish Teacher at Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary School and an Adjunct Spanish Teacher at Choate. She received a B.A. from the College of Charleston and her M.A. from Universidad de Alcalá. She is most looking forward to “getting to know my students better and exploring new and exciting ways of teaching Spanish.”



MS. EMILY KAPLAN: Hall adviser Ms. Emily Kaplan joined the HPRSS Department this year. She previously worked as a history teacher at Tabor Academy. Ms. Kaplan decided to join Choate after her interview process when she “got a real sense that this was a community of learners who were asking the right questions about how to best educate teenagers in our rapidly evolving and often divisive world.” She is looking forward to “watching students question their assumptions and preconceived ideas about America’s past.”



MR. DEREK PALMORE: Coming from The Taft School, Mr. Derek Palmore is a new addition to the Choate English Department. Mr. Palmore was drawn to Choate because of its diversity and representation. Feeling confident about settling into a new environment, Mr. Palmore said, “the conversations, the programs, how we talk about our students: that [all] feels good.” Other than teaching English, Mr. Palmore is also assistant coach for Girls’ Varsity Volleyball and an adviser in Quantrell.



MR. BARI ROBINSON: Mr. Bari Robinson, who attended boarding school himself, has decided to return to his roots by joining the Choate Art Department this fall. He said, “I thought it would be good for me to be on the other side of things at one point and take my experience I had as a student, and my life experience, and see if I could make a difference.” He teaches Theater 100 and 351, will direct the winter main-stage show, and is voice coaching in the fall productions, *Xanadu* and *12 Angry Jurors*.



MR. MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ: Mr. Michael Rodriguez is a new Admission Officer and currently lives in Ray Brown House. “I decided to come to Choate because I am drawn to the opportunity to connect with prospective students and their families to make the admission process more accessible,” he said. Mr. Rodriguez looks forward to interviewing prospective students and learning more about their interests, backgrounds, and families.



MS. CHANTAL WANG: Having previously worked as a research assistant at Colorado School of Mines, Ms. Chantal Wang is now teaching math at Choate. She was drawn to Choate for its supportive network and common curiosity. Reflecting on her two weeks of teaching geometry so far, Ms. Wang said, “Inside the classroom, the students here are lovely. They are very, very enthusiastic and eager to learn.” She looks forward to seeing connections grow as students become more comfortable in her classes and at Choate.



MS. VIVA ZHAO: Ms. Viva Zhao joined the Choate Science Department after previously teaching at Northeastern University. She was drawn to Choate by its “emphasis on holistic education.” In the few weeks of school thus far, Ms. Zhao has appreciated the students in her Biology and Human Anatomy and Physiology classes, and looks forward to getting to know their “pursuits and passions in life.”



Delights of Wallingford

By Begum Gokmen '23, Teniola Obayomi '25, and Analy Vega '25
Copy Editor, Reporter, Reporter

MAIN STREET

Mr. D's

Mr. D's, located just a five minute walk from campus, is high on the list of campus favorites. Michael DiCostanzo '23 said, "As a returning student who hadn't ever gone to Mr. D's until this year, my first thought upon walking inside was my realization of what I'd been missing out on last year." Mr. D's is a bakery that offers everything from delicious cupcakes to 12 different flavors of ice cream and sorbets to boba tea. For those looking for something a little less sweet, the store also sells savory delicacies like grilled cheese sandwiches and nachos. Mr D's is quintessentially local, found just a short walk down Main Street. Kathleen McClatchie '23 advised any newcomers to try the Oreo cupcakes: "They are amazing."

Wallingford Public Library

The Wallingford Public Library is a storied institution that has served its community since 1881. One hundred and forty years later, it has remained a popular place for Choaties to relax and find a good book to read. Arjun Singh '22, a leader of the Interact Club, a community service organization that partners with the library, described the library environment as "incredibly supportive." Singh went on to say that "The librarians are always willing to help the community, whether it be helping to pick out a book or organize an event. The library is not only a great place to find books; it's also an amazing place to engage with the Wallingford community. They work hard to keep the library operating smoothly and I think that's a wonderful way they give back to the community."

Archie Moore's

Archie Moore's Bar & Restaurant, another Choate classic, has taken an interesting path to North Main Street. Archibald Moore, an Irish immigrant, settled in New Haven and established a watering hole — also known as a saloon — on Willow Street in 1898. It wasn't until 1982 that the restaurant began serving their award-winning buffalo chicken wings to Wallingfordians. "The first year I discovered Archie Moore's, for a month and a half straight, I went there for breakfast every Sunday," said Dylan Allen '22. Only a few blocks away from campus, the Archie Moore's boasts a classic bar atmosphere. "The wings are amazing," Allen '22 recalls. "The berry raspberry bourbon peach chipotle sauce makes them the best wings ever."



Za-onn Thai House

For those craving authentic Thai food, the Za-onn Thai House fits the bill. Their traditional Thai dishes range from pad woon sen to chicken roti. Shauna Schiffman '23 stated: "I form many lasting memories with my best friends eating Thai food at that restaurant." Prim Tangkaravakoon '24, a Thailand native appreciates the tastes from home, "The food is really authentic, it reminds me of Thailand." Found past Archie Moore's on the corner of Center Street and Wallace Avenue, Za-Onn is just a walk away from campus.

Hidden Gem On Main

Just around the corner from Archie Moore's, Hidden Gem On Main is the place for those with spiritual inclinations. "We say that we are on the 'corner of wellness and woo,' so we have a lot of the magical 'woo-woo' stuff, but we also have a lot of holistic practitioners," explained Hidden Gem's energetic and botanical alchemist, Ms. Julie Dokas. As described on their website, "Woo" is short for The Woo Cottage, a "cozy, enchanted place" where patrons can receive psychic and tarot readings. They can also find crystals and workshops like spa services, energy healing flower essence consultations, and yoga therapy. Noah McBride '23 recounted his experience: "The general atmosphere of Hidden Gem was surprisingly welcoming and warm ... it looked and felt like an organic store." Although it was only recently founded in 2018, Hidden Gem is already quite popular on campus.

NORTH COLONY ROAD



Holiday Cinemas

Holiday Cinemas 14 is a long-time hotspot for Choate students. "We are a local family-owned movie theater that has been around for almost 20 years," said Mr. Austen Washington, the manager at Holiday Cinemas. After a year of Netflix and Hulu, many Choate students are excited to experience going to the movie theater with their friends again. "Watching movies with friends is always a good bonding experience," said Nathan Lang '22. "I recall going to see *Green Book* freshman year, the movie was so good and deep," he added. Located on North Colony Road, the movie theater is within walking distance of campus, making it a convenient selection for a night out. "We love to bring a good, comfortable atmosphere [for our customers] to enjoy ... and stay safe and healthy," said Mr. Washington.

Colony Diner

Established in 2004, Colony Diner, is an all-day, family-owned breakfast eatery located on Colony Road. This mom and pop diner was established by owner Mr. Eric Selic after he immigrated from Turkey. Many of the restaurant's employees are also part of his own extended family, giving the establishment its homey atmosphere. The menu offers a wide selection of dining options throughout the day. "You could come here at night and get breakfast or come in at nine o'clock in the morning and get dinner," said Mr. Selic. The dining options are diverse, with Mediterranean, vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free meals available. "The pancakes were always a move on a Sunday brunch date with friends," said Lara Prakash '22. Frequented by students, and a common option for ordering in, the Colony Diner stands amongst the well-loved attractions of Wallingford and Choate.

Begum Gokmen, Teniola Obayomi, and Analy Vega
may be reached at bgokomen23@choate.edu,
tobayomi25@choate.edu, and avega22@choate.edu

Photos by Tiffany Xiao, Gaby Nirmal, and Henrik Torres

Graphics by Yujin Kim

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Henrik A. Torres '22
Editor-in-Chief

Rachel R. Pittman '22
Managing Editor

School News
Renee Jiang '22
Praj Chirathivat '22

Local News
Adrienne Chacón '22

Opinions
Jessica Wu '22
Anika Midha '22

Features
Kate Bailey '22

Arts & Leisure
Angel Guo '22

Sports
Richard Chen '22

Photography
Tiffany Xiao '23

Graphics
Yujin Kim '23

Layout
Linda Phan '22

Copy Editors

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Sam Anastasio '23

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EDITORIAL

Forget the Verbs

As students begin to crowd around dining hall tables, rally at interscholastic sports games, and get to know each other's faces past pixelated portrayals, Choate is looking a lot more like normal. While this transition marks the return of in-person collaboration and connection, it also means that the community is back on its never-ending hamster wheel of the Choate grind.

During classes, students flash between computer tabs of their packed Google calendars, essays, and homework assignments. After classes, the paths are just as busy as during the day, with students rushing to clubs, sports, and extra help meetings. As students push the limit of what they can fit into a day, they test how far they can push their health, too.

While this lifestyle may have (barely) worked before the pandemic, it won't work now — especially because we aren't actually returning to the "normal Choate," but a community recovering from a series of traumatic events that the past year and a half have brought. The global pandemic led to mass mourning, health stress, and financial crises across the world. While the new focus on racial trauma spurred the Black Lives Matter movement, it also forced BI-POC-identifying people to witness violence against people who look like them everyday on social media and the news.

While the Choate we are returning to may allow students to go maskless outside and jump all over each other at SAC dances, it is not the same as before.

In part, our instinct for verbs is what has made Choate such a dynamic community in the past — we *rush* to classes and clubs, *run* for leadership positions, and generally, *do* stuff. Together, in our many clubs and organizations, we pushed each other and the School toward personal and communal progress. But, as HPRSS teacher Mr. Morgan Harris said in a recent Moral Reasoning class, "we aren't human-doings; we are human beings." And, after a while, this constant push against what we crave as human beings — to just be — becomes impossible to maintain.

This year, it's important that we give ourselves and each other the space to just be. Take a (maskless!) walk, go to sleep, let yourself actually think about a compelling class reading, see how long you can hear the whistle of the train before it disappears into time. Once we can detach ourselves from all of the verbs and focus on just being, we can then turn our attention to how we are being — to adjectives. It is this effort on being curious, creative, empathetic, and healthy that will progress our community, more than any last-minute, late-night club meeting or half-present class participation.

Summer Reading: A Question of Delights

By **Eva Swanson '25**
Opinions Writer

With all its glowing reviews, one would have expected Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights* to make an impact. Yet, I failed to find the magic that many others raved about.

The premise of the book was simple enough: essayettes about how the mundane and everyday can bring joy to one's life. Going into reading the book, I was excited. I had never read a book with this format before — I found Gay's daily reflections on life's delights to be an intriguing idea. However, a few chapters in, I started having doubts.

Instead of sounding like a well-put-together compilation of essayettes, the book read more like an unorganized collection of Gay's consciousness and thoughts. Furthermore, with half the essayettes being under 250 words, the sometimes short and choppy pieces read like filler. The random facts and anecdotes scattered throughout the novel also contributed to the overall disjointed flow of the book. I understand the need to shock the reader with jarring juxtapositions, but did we need to hear about his step-daughter nearly drinking his urine or his recurring, inappropriate dreams about his mother?

I believe it is essential to expose students to various authors and styles, and I hope to read many interesting books

that highlight the diversity of our world over my four years at Choate. However, *The Book of Delights* is not the best example of such writing. The anecdotal style is unique, but the repetitive format makes the book dull and hard to remain focused on.

With a bright and intelligent student population, a more thought-provoking summer reading book would have better challenged Choate's curious minds. In fact, instead of the choice for the all-school summer reading book resting only in the hands of a small committee of faculty, the School should assemble a list of possible options and allow students to vote on which one the whole school should read. This way, the selection process would be more democratic and equitable, ensuring that the majority of students are, at the least, content with the book they'll be poring over in English classes the following year.

Clearly, the search for meaning through joy is important, and it is one that we should all take to heart. But to me, Gay's prose and style fell flat. *The Book of Delights* had so much potential, but its execution and delivery made me wonder if it was the best pick for our summer reading.

Eva Swanson is a third-former from New Haven. She may be reached at eswanson25@choate.edu

By **Cassatt Boatwright '24**
Opinions Staff Writer

The first week back on campus, I began asking my friends what they thought of Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights*. The consensus was clear: many students found the text to be less than delightful.

After attempting to power through the collection of essayettes at the beginning of summer, I, too, had a negative opinion of the book and gave up on it quickly. It was hard to read multiple chapters of the book per day, and I found the essayettes to be confusing and not-so-delightful. The changes in tone and writing style, including frequent shifts from poetic language to vulgarity, were abrupt and jarring. Although I knew going into reading it that this was a book of personal essays, it felt invasive to learn such intimate details about Gay's personal life.

However, *The Book of Delights* was still the summer reading, and, as a Choate student, I still had to complete it. I shifted from attempting to speed read through it to reading only one chapter per day. I was surprised at how this change of approach improved my experience immensely. Not only did I start to grasp the deeper meanings behind each chapter, but I also began to enjoy his humor and insight on how we experience beauty. Chapter 80, "Tomato on Board," hit close to

home, as I reflected upon my own relationship with my parents and their loving gestures.

That said, my English teacher, Ms. Victoria Pierotti, completely altered my view on *The Book of Delights* and Gay. She acknowledged that the summer reading was difficult to get through — especially since readers tend to enjoy books that they can see themselves in. Because *The Book of Delights* is not written from a teenage perspective, the book was not particularly relatable to me as a highschooler.

On that note, she projected a video of Gay reading some of his poetry to an audience. I was amazed by the control of his voice and the emotion I felt through hearing his words spoken out loud. Bits and pieces of his writing that I would not have thought to be important were emphasized as he changed the speed and volume of his voice, indicating hope or sorrow. I strongly recommend listening to Gay's narration of his writing if you did not do the summer reading or just did not enjoy *The Book of Delights*.

I am very excited for Gay to come to campus later this fall and hear his writing not through just a book or a screen, but through his own voice and style.

Cassatt Boatwright is a fourth-former from San Francisco. She may be reached at cboatwright24@choate.edu

THE REALITY OF BEING A "MEM BOY"



By **Stan Cho '25**
Opinions Writer

Sitting on the cold, stone stairs leading up to Memorial House on my first Saturday at Choate, I patiently awaited the impending dorm meeting organized by our advisers. As I put on a mask of intrigue and happiness, I mentally prepared myself for a sluggish, monotonous speech. However, my expectations couldn't have been any more wrong. I found myself listening intently as Mr. Ned Gallagher, our house adviser, explained his motto of "the other fellow first," encapsulating the mentality shared by Memorial House residents.

When I arrived at Choate as a new international student, I was welcomed by my peers who eagerly offered to help me out and gave me a brief tour of campus. My new dorm-mates, despite having early-morning preseason football practice and other campus obligations, fought through the lethargy to give a helping hand to an oblivious South Korean repeating freshman year. I was moved that their thoughtfulness

and consideration towards a total stranger came not from a prefect or adviser harping on their shoulder, but simply from a sense of Mem House camaraderie.

The School's decision to provide a single dorm for all male-identifying, freshman boarding students enables opportunities for them to engage in the most fundamental aspect of Choate: building meaningful relationships. Despite our different academic schedules and extracurricular interests, Memorial House is where we all return at the end of the day and prepare with one another for the next.

Memorial House is still a work-in-progress; it is a tapestry woven by the freshman boys that — with a bit of tidying up — will become a complete and unified project by the end of the academic year. The mix of unique backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, identities, life experiences, and personalities creates a group that, together, is vibrant and full of character. The lasting bonds that I have created with my fellow Memorial House residents in a mere three weeks is a testament to

the unity and acceptance exhibited by "Mem Boys."

That said, the residents of Mem House have a notorious reputation, with the false characterization of a "Mem Boy" illustrating a chaotic, rowdy, and unorganized student. However, during my brief residence in Mem House, I have observed that this broad description is both unreasonable and imprecise.

Not only does the term "Mem Boy" serve as an injustice towards those who are respectful and responsible members of the community, such characterizations create a stigma and shame around those who are still learning to adapt to life at Choate. Growth is a crucial part of the Choate experience, but it requires thoughtful reflection on past mistakes and a determination to correct them in the future. It goes without saying that the freshman boys living in Mem House aren't perfect — sometimes they cause chaos in the dining hall or skip a shower here and there. However, the inaccurate "Mem Boy" persona attached to all freshmen boys judges us

for being flawed rather than encouraging growth.

The negative connotation of a "Mem Boy" is an issue that has been addressed by our advisers, and we have begun to pioneer its recontextualization with the assistance of our prefects. Through our tedious, yet vital dorm meetings where advisers clarify school policies and prefects provide us with personal advice, we hope that the negative perception of the "Mem Boy" will be reconstructed. Advisers and prefects alike make sure to draw the line between where the rambunctious energy of freshman boys becomes disrespectful by enforcing stricter policies and organizing personalized meetings.

Memorial House is not all sunshine and rainbows, but we "Mem Boys" are excited to exhibit change and uphold the values of the greatest dorm on campus — we just hope that we will have the acceptance and support of the school community as we do so.

Stan Cho is a third-former from South Korea. He may be reached at scho25@choate.edu

Graphic by Yujin Kim/The Choate News

If you are interested
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Gabby Petito: A Case Study In Racial Inequality

By **Semilola Obayomi '23**
Opinions Writer

On September 11, Nicole Schmidt reported her daughter, Gabby Petito, missing after not hearing from her for 13 days. Petito had been on a road trip with her significant other Brian Laundrie, from which Brian returned alone, then promptly disappeared from the public eye. After a national investigation, Gabby Petito's body was found in Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, eight days after the missing persons case was filed. This tragic case has been on everyone's minds across the country. However, the extensive national coverage of this case has brought to light the racialized way news outlets present missing persons cases, omitting thousands of stories that don't focus on young, white women.

Ever since Gabby went missing, the front page of every news outlet has been covered in updates about the case. Her story has captured the attention of millions of people on social media with over 794 million people viewing "#gabbypetito" on TikTok alone. Although race should never be the center focus in any missing persons case, Gabby's story was racialized from the start, with news stories focusing on her physical appearance. Because of this, many attribute the national obsession with

this story to "missing white woman syndrome," a term coined by Gwen Ifill in 2004, referring to the disproportionate media coverage of missing persons cases based on race. Although this syndrome has impacted the media coverage of Gabby's story, it isn't the sole contributor to the widespread attention.

To start, there is lots of public footage of Gabby's trip — from her personal vlogs to police body camera footage of a traffic stop — that has caused many to become attached to her as an individual. This, along with her considerable social media following, allowed many to become invested in her story, which eventually led to individuals finding clues related to her case. Jenn Bethune, who was in the Bridger-Teton National Forest at the same time as Gabby, obtained footage of Gabby's van that ultimately helped investigators. Unfortunately, this story will always be underlined with racial bias in our society and the sad reality that millions of families of missing people of color don't get to experience the same national attention.

The obsessive nature of news coverage about missing white women constantly undermines the trauma of other missing people and their families, especially when the disappearances of many people of color do not garner as much media interest. In Wyoming, the state where Gab-

by's body was found, 710 Indigenous people, mostly women and children, remain missing and have received no media attention for their stories. In addition, missing Black people are severely underrepresented in news coverage. This can be attributed to the lack of racial identities in executive positions in news boardrooms, or the social depictions of white women as innocent and women of color as complicit in their disappearance. Whatever the reason, it doesn't change the fact that missing persons cases deserve to be treated equally, and the racial biases of American society should never impact the way we think and sympathize with missing people.

Gabby Petito was a young woman who should have gotten to experience her life to the fullest but was tragically deprived of that chance. There are numerous others like her such as Jelani Day, who went missing August 24, and Daniel Robinson, who went missing June 23, who deserve to not only experience life but to have their lives and disappearances valued, prioritized, and humanized by the media and society. The ability to empathize with Gabby and her family over the past few weeks is a high point that we should apply to all victims, regardless of racial background.

Semilola Obayomi is a fifth-former from Milford, CT. She may be reached at sobayomi23@choate.edu



Photo courtesy of Henry Herald

Gabby Petito's disappearance highlighted the discrepancy in the way the media treats such cases.

CHINA'S CRACKDOWN ON VIDEO GAMES



Photo courtesy of The Post

Gaming is heavily restricted by the Chinese government.

By **Erin Li '24**
Opinions Writer

One of the hallmarks of being a kid is staying up late with your friends and playing video games. Video games are so intrinsic to the daily lives of teenagers that they have become one of the most popular pastimes — unless you're a kid living in China. Recently, China passed a law restricting the amount of time all minors can spend gaming — their access to gaming platforms has been limited to a mere three hours on weekends.

This new policy is an effort by the government to help the country's youth maintain physical and mental health. Gaming has become so popular that many adolescents have become addicted and feel uneasy when unable to game — what China refers to as "spiritual opium."

Parents in China have been worried about their children's gaming habits and as such, are content with this regulation. Many parents felt the struggle of prying their kids away from gaming devices; for those parents, having the government shoulder the responsibility of regulating their children's leisurely screen time took off stress and even improved the relationship with their kids. However, such a limitation being imposed by the government on private citizens is problematic for several reasons.

While gaming does have the potential to be detrimental

to one's well being and health, it can also be a form of relaxation. Research performed by the American Psychological Association showed a correlation between gaming and improved mood, lower levels of anxiety, and increased relaxation. Especially during a pandemic where lockdowns are difficult to anticipate, many kids have turned to games for social interaction. Taking this outlet away from teens can exacerbate the feeling of loneliness.

Similarly, the gaming industry has become one of the most lucrative industries, with 45.6 billion dollars of revenue in China in 2021. Preventing young people from playing games can have long-term effects on the financial industry as well: shares of some of the largest gaming companies, Tencent and Netease, have experienced plummeting shares. In Hong Kong, Tencent fell 8.48%, and Netease fell 11%.

The Chinese government implemented the gaming ban due to runaway economic growth in tech, education, and property as well as to support their goal of strengthening government control over these sectors. Policymakers also felt that children needed to prioritize their academics and wellbeing over playing games. Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, stated, "Protecting the physical and mental health of minors is related to the people's vital interests, and relates to the cultivation of the younger generation in the era of national rejuvenation."

Many have argued against the policy, saying that the government shouldn't be able to control citizens' leisure time. Dr. Rachel Kowert, a researcher in video-game psychology, said, "We need better media literacy on what games are and what they're not, especially as they promise to remain the dominant form of media consumption in the 21st century." Dr. Kowert proposed that a better solution would be for parents to find a way to help their children strike a balance between games and wellbeing. However, she also criticized the comparison between video games and opium addiction, stating that the level of dopamine release by video games is "similar to that reached when a person consumes potato chips — not illicit drugs."

While the attempt to ban games is starting to take effect, adolescents have already found ways around the ban. For example, they could use different devices or their parents' logins to avoid the restrictions. Ultimately, it is up to the parents to educate and monitor their children's lifestyles. Although the issue of video game addiction is real, the government should not implement such a harsh crackdown on citizens' private lives and leisurely activities. If gaming is genuinely disruptive in a child's life, it is the parents' responsibility to take action.

Erin Li is a fourth-former from Arcadia, CA. She may be reached at eli24@choate.edu

Women Right's Jeopardized in Afghanistan

By **Campbell Pflaum '23**
Opinions Writer

Over the last weeks, women's place in Afghanistan has devolved into a full blown humanitarian crisis under Taliban rule. Although the Taliban initially stated it would "respect women's rights," its policies have already repealed the Ministry of Women's Affairs, barred women and girls from receiving schooling past the sixth grade, and made it impossible for women to go to work without a male family member to chaperone them.

Unfortunately, the question lingering on the world's mind is not "will the situation worsen?" but "just how much worse will it get?" Zayba, a 12th grade female Afghan student with aspirations of becoming a surgeon, told *The New York Times*, "The day the Taliban took control I was thinking: this is the end of life for women." Two decades of incremental progress for women, bolstered by U.S. aid, is in jeopardy. Though Biden assured the world that the United States will



Photo courtesy of NDTV

Women are amongst the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan; the UN has tried to ensure they are protected.

"continue to push for regional diplomacy and engagement to prevent violence and instability" and "speak out for basic rights of the Afghan people, especially women and girls," he has yet to release a plan to protect Afghan women.

But not all hope is lost for the women under Taliban rule. One

solution to this problem may lie in the financial sector. While the U.S. occupied Afghanistan, much of the Afghan government's reserve was moved to American banks. Upon evacuating Afghanistan, the U.S. froze the Taliban's access to these funds as a form of protest and as collateral to incen-

tivize the Taliban to allow U.S. citizens to evacuate the nation safely. But despite the fact that most Americans in Afghanistan are now home free, the U.S. has not yet released these funds.

The Taliban has made it clear that it is seeking more leverage in international poli-

tics, but that leverage will not be easy for them to get. The leverage a country has when it comes to international political negotiation is largely determined by a nation's wealth. This is bad news for the Taliban, which is governing a small economy, and just ousted half their population

from the workforce. Furthermore, they recently lost billions in foreign aid that they were receiving. If the Biden administration really is intent on aiding Afghan women, it should leverage its international standing and financial resources to push the Taliban to reinstitute the Ministry of Women's Affairs and repeal its restrictions on women's education and careers.

Furthermore, the Biden administration should release a plan to expand asylum immigration appeals for Afghan women. There is bipartisan support for this issue with prominent politicians on both sides of the aisle, including former Presidents George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, advocating for easing the restrictions on immigration to allow those fleeing Taliban rule easier passage.

With swift action backed by support from both sides of American politics, we can surely look to a brighter future for women in Afghanistan.

Campbell Pflaum is a fifth-former from Nashville, TN. She may be reached at cpflaum23@choate.edu

FEATURES

Hill House Residents Experience the Future of Dorms

By **Jacqueline Yan '24**
Reporter

The new school year marks new beginnings for the entire Choate campus, but especially so for Hill House. After a 2019 fire caused significant water damage, the School began renovating the historic dorm. Now, after two years, Hill House is once again home to the college counseling offices, new private dining rooms, a faculty lounge, and a new, coed dorm.

Hill House's renovation came with a variety of upgrades and new features for the students who were lucky enough to secure a spot in the dorm. "I think we did a great job renovating Hill House, and it is definitely the best dorm on campus in terms of facilities," said Nathan Lang '22, one of the Hill House prefects this year.

For example, students now have access to laundry rooms on each floor, and new fingerprint locks have replaced the traditional key-operated locks, in part to prevent residents of the opposite gender entering each other's rooms. There have been a few

complaints, however, regarding the unreliability of the new locks. Roommates Celia Glover '24 and Sydney Kim '24 reported having to repeatedly call each other throughout the day due to the fingerprint scanner malfunctioning and preventing them from entering their room.

Hill House's common rooms have also received an upgrade, as each of the dorm's four "pods" has its own common room. Resident Grace Liu '23 explained, "We have six common rooms in total. There are two coed common rooms, and four smaller common rooms for the north and south sides."

Additionally, after decades as a boys' dorm, Hill House is now the third coed dormitory on campus, joining the Kohler Environmental Center and West Wing, the all-gender dorm. "This is one of the decisions we made to create a more equitable and supportive housing model," said Dean of Students Mr. Mike Velez '00.

According to residents, the multi-gender dynamic has been a success so far. Liu said, "When

an adviser is there, we play board games in the coed common room until midnight on Friday night. All the dorm meetings are coed, and we play fun games that [dorm adviser Dr. Chris] Hogue comes up with."

Still, Hill House enforces some divide between genders. Rather than students of all genders living among each other in a single hall, in Hill House, all female residents live on the south side of the building, while all males live on the north side. The sides aren't allowed to interact with each other after lights out. "To keep it safe after the advisers leave, the girls are only allowed to use the third floor coed common room, and the guys are on the second floor," explained resident Sarah Yildirim '23.

Mr. Bari Robinson, an acting teacher and adviser in the new dorm, said, "It'll be really exciting for people to see the possibilities of this place and see how beautiful it is for the students."

Jacqueline Yan may be reached at jiyan24@choate.edu



Photos by Farah Kabbani/The Choate News

After two years, the newly coed Hill House reopened with a slew of new features, including fingerprint locks.

TREES, BIRDS, SQUIRRELS, OH MY! BIODIVERSITY ON CAMPUS

By **Yoyo Zhang '24**
Staff Reporter

As classes intensify and the weeks begin to blur together, it is hard for many Choate students to take a second to appreciate plant and animal life on campus. From squirrels and snakes to dandelions and daffodils, Choate's 458-acre campus is home to hundreds of different species to explore.

Biodiversity is important to the campus in ways beyond some students' passing fascination with the bold campus squirrels. Ms. Lena Nicolai, a biology teacher and the Green-House Director at the Kohler Environmental Center, pointed out biodiversity's three benefits on campus: functional purpose, aesthetics, and well-being. She explained that not only do the animals and plants help with fertilization and pollination, but having spaces to

"participate and observe species interactions" is also crucial to our human health.

Many students agreed that the diversity of the Choate wildlife adds to the campus experience. "I love the sound of birds chirping around me and seeing ducks swim by in the pond," said Jackson Haught '24.

Lauren Hsu '24 appreciated the curious creatures spotted around campus, a departure from her starkly urban hometown. "I love that there is so much more nature here at Choate compared to my hometown, Hong Kong, a city full of glass and concrete," she said.

The biodiversity is especially evident at the Kohler Environmental Center (KEC). According to Mr. Joe Scanio, the director of the KEC, there are more natural landscapes and no synthetic fertilizer, pesticides, nor herbicides at the KEC. For this reason, the KEC

attracts insects, birds, and other wildlife, creating a more biodiverse environment than the main campus.

"You can just hear the difference when you walk around the KEC," said Mr. Scanio. "There are things that we don't see in other parts of the campus because of the lack of biodiversity."

KEC students also learn to protect biodiversity through their study of invasive species. Last year, one student researched ways to "commercialize the eating of invasive species." Outside of the classroom, KEC students also work hands-on to protect biodiversity. They have removed invasive plants, such as barberry, silverberry, and multiflora rose, from the cross country course and studied how those plants affect the local perennials.

Rose Shen '22, a prefect at the KEC who participated in the Environmental Immersion

Program last year, expressed how grateful she is for being able to interact with the wildlife there. "We explore a specific location in the woods twice a week," she explained. "And every time, I find something new." However, she also noticed the lack of such biodiversity on the main campus and wished that more species could be brought there.

In order to restore nature to the main campus, Choate has been planting native species around academic buildings and maintaining the wooded parcels, such as those on the cross country course. With these recent restorative initiatives, maybe some day the students of the main campus will have the chance to experience the wide assortment of wildlife that can only be found at the KEC as of now.

Yoyo Zhang may be reached at yozhang24@choate.edu

Teachers Who Turn Down Titles

By **Isabella Wu '24**
Reporter

From a young age, we are taught to call our teachers by their last name and accompany it with a title. From kindergarten through senior year, we may not even know the first names of our teachers due to this classroom norm. But as the times change, so do some of the traditions and practices of the past. Some Choate teachers, however, go against the grain and choose to be called by their first name.

For ceramics teacher Mr. Aaron Sober, the choice to go by his first name was a recent one. He said, "I went by Mr. Sober for a very long time. But it didn't seem to be the right name, and so I switched this year to Aaron." He credited the Covid-19 pandemic with spurring the switch to his first name. He wanted to counter the disconnection of remote learning with closer relationships between him and his students. "I think it's more comfortable in a lot of cases to address each other in the same manner — all by our first names. It's slightly equalizing."

Aaron doesn't feel that the "Mr." title is a crucial indicator of the teacher-student power dynamic. "I'm still the teacher, the students are still the students, no matter whether I go by my first name or my last name, so the fundamentals don't change about that," he said. "It doesn't seem like the name is necessary to maintain those fundamentals."

For other teachers, using their first names in the classroom ties back to their culture. Spanish teacher Mr. Sergio López, who previously taught in Bogotá, Colombia, said, "Back in Colombia, before coming here to the U.S., I was used to going by my first name. It felt way too formal and not organic to go by 'Mr.'" He explained that students are much closer with their teachers in Colombia, which is why they are comfortable addressing them by their first names rather than by their last names.

Still, Sergio had his doubts about using his first name when coming to the United States. "I knew the culture was different. I remember introducing myself and asking students to call me Sergio. And then, in a different context, another teacher mentioned that they had heard students saying that they feel uncomfortable calling the teacher by their first name. I felt bad because I didn't think of how

students felt calling me by my first name, and I wouldn't want to make them feel uncomfortable." Now, Sergio makes it clear to his students that while he is more comfortable with them calling him "Sergio," they are welcome to call him "Mr. López" if they prefer.

As a teacher, Sergio thinks of himself as a guide through the language-learning process rather than an all-knowing "knowledge giver." Of the teacher-student dynamic, he said, "Almost the only way I can think of [the dynamic] is as a power struggle, and how you exercise power over others. And that's not at all what I want to do." By going by his first name, Sergio hopes that students will feel more comfortable with his class. The language learning process, he explained, is already challenging, but by going by his first name, conversations flow more easily.

Ms. Jessica Cuni, a visual arts teacher, also uses her first name in the classroom because of her culture. "I am Quaker, and in the Quaker tradition, the community is intentionally non-hierarchical. At many Quaker schools, all teachers are called by their first names to eliminate any sense that a teacher could be seen as being 'above' the students," said Jessica.

Jessica and Aaron aren't the only teachers in the Arts Department who prefer to be called by their first names — indeed, many arts teachers on campus are referred to that way. Of this trend, Aaron said, "Artists are less concerned with the honorary title, and more concerned with the person behind it, and their humanity and everybody's humanity."

Ms. Tracy Terry, an acting teacher, describes her classroom as a safe space for everyone. "We get along with each other, we become a little family, a little community. Everybody's cheering everybody on, including me, because I want them to succeed," she said. With students, she chooses to go by Tray Jay, a nickname taken from her stage name, Tracy James. Like many teachers who have students call them by their first name, Tray Jay hopes that her choice will make the classroom a more inclusive and comfortable space for all. Tray Jay said, "When I have students that call me by my first name, I think it gives them a [higher] comfort level."

Isabella Wu may be reached at iwu24@choate.edu



Photo by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

Choate is working to restore biodiversity to the main campus.

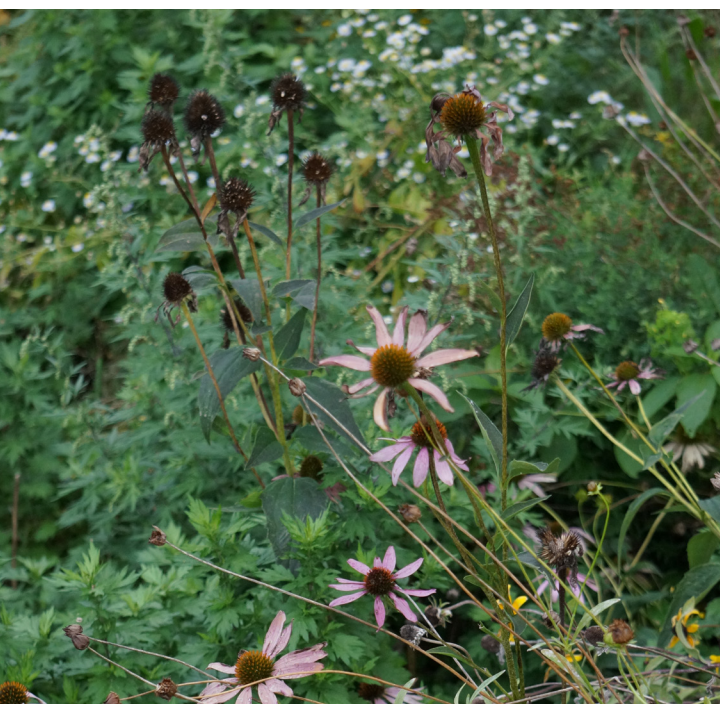


Photo by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

Look behind Colony Hall, and you'll find an abundance of wildflowers.

DRAW FOUR

- Objects That Tell Your Story -

This article marks the start of a new recurring feature, "Draw Four," which consists of a student or faculty member describing four everyday objects that help tell their story. Our first interviewee is **RHEA SHAH '22**, from Rockford, Ill. She's a four-year senior, a Nichols prefect, and the daughter of Indian immigrants.

Rhea's 4:

1. **Necklace**
2. **Sneakers**
3. **Speaker**
4. **Mug**

"It's my mom's — she's an immigrant from India. She really didn't have a lot of jewelry, but this was one of the first things she bought for herself in America. She gave it to me my freshman year of Choate. I came back from break having been missing home and was thinking, 'I wish I had you guys that I could take with me.' She gave me this instead."

"They're Stan Smiths. I've had them since the beginning of junior year, and I think you can tell. But I wear the same shoes every day — pretty simple. And I really like plain white shoes. During the summer before junior year, I was doing back to school shopping with my dad and my brother, and they both picked these Stan Smiths as their favorite of the shoes I tried on."

"Breakfast is big in my family: my dad always drinks chai, my mom has warm milk, my brother has warm milk with sugar, and I would have chocolate milk when I was younger. My dad and I would have tea in the evenings together, up with. I carry this also with that mug. It's one of those mugs that you get and just keep using. Here, I have play music when a Pathways cup we're sitting that represents outside or in a that mug at room."

by **Brian Harder**

Want to **DRAW FOUR** next? Email kbailey22@choate.edu!

ORCHESTRA CHANGES ITS TUNE



Graphic by Zoe Nevel/The Choate News

By **Aria Ramnath '24**
Reporter

For years, the Symphony Orchestra has earned a reputation for being a prestigious ensemble with talented musicians performing challenging repertoires. Being a member of the ensemble requires a large commitment: students rehearse three times a week, attend mandatory 70-minute private lessons weekly, and frequently practice on their own.

In previous years, one audition was used at the beginning of the Fall term to assess students' abilities and to place them in ensembles accordingly — Symphony Orchestra being the more competitive ensemble. Students who were not ready for Symphony or preferred an ensemble with less challenging music had the opportunity to play in Wind Ensemble or String Orchestra.

The String Orchestra traditionally received less performance opportunities, such as concert tours, than Symphony Orchestra, and there was a considerable difference between the repertoire of the two groups — the pieces

played in the String Orchestra were of a much less complex variety. Although the Wind Ensemble did receive similar performance opportunities as the Symphony Orchestra, it lacked a complete instrumentation and thus relied heavily on last minute substitutions from players in Symphony.

While this system seemingly accommodates musicians of all levels, it has one major flaw: it limits the participation of students who want to play music at the level of Symphony Orchestra but lack the free time to join that ensemble. Mr. Gene Wie, the Instrumental Ensembles Director, is making a change to mitigate this issue by eliminating the String Orchestra and replacing it with a new ensemble known as Concert Orchestra.

"There are students at this school who practice a ton, commit to a lesson every week, and invest their free time in practice," said Mr. Wie. "Symphony does serve that population of students, but what we weren't doing as well was serving a population of students who perhaps are interested in playing symphonic music, or-

chestral music, but also have other things going on that they don't want to have to give up in order to have an orchestral experience. There's a balance that has to be achieved here."

Mr. Wie stated the creation of Concert Orchestra is an attempt to find this balance. The difference between the Symphony and Concert Orchestra is much less pronounced than before, and the main difference lies in time commitment. Weekly 70-minute lessons are not required to be a part of the group, and students rehearse only twice a week. "This season, we have a few players who qualified for Symphony, but opted to play in Concert Orchestra because the overall time commitment better suited their schedules," said Mr. Wie.

Furthermore, in comparison to the limited number of students in String Orchestra in past years, Concert Orchestra now has a balanced instrumentation across strings and woodwinds. There are also three percussionists in Symphony who participate both in Concert Orchestra and in Wind Ensemble. Although the repertoire will still be slightly easier

compared to that of Symphony Orchestra, the gap is much smaller than it was the years before.

Besides fostering similar experiences within the ensemble, Mr. Wie also plans to give both groups an equal number of concerts per year. Previously, the Symphony Orchestra was the only instrumental ensemble that went on performance tours. In the future, there will potentially be a separate orchestra for touring so that Concert Orchestra members have the opportunity to participate.

Since the implementation of these changes, Mr. Wie stated that there has been a positive impact on the students' perception of orchestral ensembles at Choate. "I feel that the students are more willing to voice their opinions about how we're approaching things in class," he said. Feedback from students is another factor that will hopefully complement the new changes in creating a better and more enjoyable orchestral experience for all musicians.

Aria Ramnath may be reached at aramnath24@choate.edu

COMMUNITY
WELCOMES NEW
ARTS DEPARTMENT
DIRECTOR

Photo by Sophia Kim/The Choate News

Ms. Parks in front of Ann and George Colony Hall.

By **Lauren Kee '24**
Copy Editor

you can find a better sense of self in your body."

Last month, Ms. Sandra Parks became the new director of the Arts Department, following the departure of Ms. Kalya Yannatos. In her new role, Ms. Parks oversees the visual arts, music, theater, and dance programs while supporting and advocating for artists on campus.

Ms. Parks began her career in the arts with dance training in classical ballet at a young age. She attended the N.Y.U. Tisch School of the Arts where she explored dance styles such as modern, jazz, musical theater, and hip hop. She was on the national and international tours for the Broadway musical, *The King and I*, before switching to teaching dance in high schools and colleges across the country.

In 2013, Ms. Parks started a non-profit organization called Women in Dance, which connects her artistic pursuits with advocacy for gender equality. Through this organization, she strives to highlight that choreographers, artistic directors, and other leaders in dance are still often men despite the mainstream perception that most dancers are female. She emphasized the substantial salary difference between a female and a male artistic director leading a similar-sized dance company. As an Asian woman in a white male-dominated space, Ms. Parks believes in the power of changing the world through a collective movement with allies and like-minded collaborators. She hopes to carry her passion for equity in the arts to Choate.

"As Choate's program head for theater, I can say that we are excited to work with Sandra Parks because of the wealth of leadership she brings to the school from her personal, academic, and professional background," said Mrs. Kate Doak.

Earlier this year, Ms. Parks moved to Choate from Philadelphia with her husband and daughter. The bravery of her previous high school students inspired her choice to teach at Choate. "As an artist, that bravery, that ability to dream, is so incredible," she said.

Recognizing arts as a medium to nurture critical skills for young people, Ms. Parks encourages Choate students to "take an acting class so you'll be comfortable with public speaking; take an easy dance class so

In addition, Ms. Parks aims to promote the process of creating art, rather than simply focusing on the final concert or exhibition. When choreographing a piece for students in Dance Company, Ms. Parks first observes the emotional, physical, and intellectual state of her dancers. She then creates a piece that is particular to this group of dancers. "Once this group of people is not there, is not together, it's not the same work anymore," she said. Although Ms. Parks goes into rehearsals with some movements and ideas in mind, she embraces a collaborative process with her dancers and allows them to shape the choreography.

"When we dance, she won't let us look into the mirror, because she wants us to feel the movement," said Katherine Shumway '24, a Dance and Theatre Arts Concentration student who participated in one of Ms. Parks' pieces.

Ms. Parks also hopes to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to arts at Choate through establishing more connections with different art forms and even between different subjects. For example, she envisions the integration of arts and STEM, two fields that are not commonly seen with each other. "She is clearly focused on collaboration within the performing arts and across the school," said Mrs. Doak.

Furthermore, she strives to broaden the arts community at Choate to our surrounding neighborhoods by bringing in different guest artists to share their work. "I'm really curious as to what kind of work would be relevant not only within our campus, with our students, but also within our community in Wallingford," Ms. Parks said.

Both students and faculty are excited to see Ms. Parks' passion and dedication at work in the new school year. "I really enjoy working with Ms. Parks, and I really like her energy. I'm looking forward to watching her develop her piece and I'm really happy to be a part of it," said Shumway. Mrs. Doak further added, "We all hope to see the arts at Choate even more fully connected in the daily life and development of our students and our community as a whole."

Lauren Kee may be reached at lkee24@choate.edu



Photo by Olivia Siegel/The Choate News

Ms. Parks, on the far left, dances alongside a class.

A LOOK BEHIND THE PMAC



Graphic by Paola Diaz Del Castillo Rosique/The Choate News

By **Claire Liu '24**
Reporter

The Choate Arts Concentration (Arts Con) signature program is an immersing and rigorous opportunity for students with passion and talent for the visual or performing arts to further their expertise. It provides students with enrichment opportunities in music, theatre, visual arts, and dance. Students are given the freedom to choose and focus on a specific field within the program. Here are a few students and their experience in Arts Concentration:

Lara Stone '22, Theatre

Lara Stone '22 specializes in technical theater and produc-

tion. Last year, she had the opportunity to stage manage the spring musical, *Urinetown*. She recalled that it was a rewarding learning experience. This school year, Stone looks forward to a Covid-free theatre experience, including in-person shows. "This is extremely exciting for me because the thrilling, hands-on work of live theater is the reason why I devote so much time behind-the-scenes," she said.

Jarett JeanJacques '22, Music

Despite the challenge many artists faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, Jarett Jean Jacques '22 found ways to use the drastic changes from last year to his benefit. Unable to perform in person,

he decided to pursue musical engineering and recording. Over the summer, he studied at the Eastman School of Music with members of the Rochester Philharmonic. As a third-year Arts Con student, Jean Jacques said, "My overall goal in Arts Con is to not only improve as a musician but also build meaningful relationships with those I might one day work with in the world of music."

ToMino Sun '22, Music

As a voice and composition artist in the music program, ToMino Sun '22 spends most of his time rehearsing, composing, and producing songs. "Arts Con provides me the freedom, time, and resources to thrive as a musician," he said. "I feel so fortunate for joining this program." This past summer, Sun composed a song called "Puer ā Dolore Cruciatūr" and performed his piece in the U19 High School Musician Original Music Festival, which was live streamed on Youku, a video hosting service based in Beijing, China. This year, he is excited to return to in-person rehearsals and singing without a mask.

Macie Simmons '22, Visual Arts

Last year, Macie Simmons '22 produced a glass panel piece by pasting newspaper and magazine cutouts on painted glass. "Last year was really suffocating for a lot of creative people," said Simmons. "[This year,] things are definitely looking up." Simmons is excited to return to a more normal year of Arts Con. "I have a lot of ideas for projects and the senior showcase I'll

make this spring, and I'm excited to see how they all turn out."

Alexis Lien '23, Music

Alexis Lien '23 concentrates on the cello in the Music Arts Con program. For the coming school year, Lien looks forward to participating in workshops with Mr. Matt McLean and Mr. Gene Wie. She also hopes to incorporate more interdisciplinary work with the other sections in her projects. "I would obviously love to collaborate with the dancers because of my dance background, but I think having the opportunity to work with Theater Con or Visual Arts Con [students] too would be so valuable and a really rewarding experience," said Lien.

Nina Kulkarni '23, Dance

Nina Kulkarni '23 joined Dance Arts Con in her sophomore year and has been choreographing every year for Arts Con: from Student Choreograph Shows (SCS) in December to dance company performances in the spring to clubs such as Hip Hop, STEP Squad, and Choate Taps. Recalling the piece she choreographed for SCS last year, which centered around the theme of balance between oneself and the outside world, she said, "It was difficult choreographing and rehearsing online, but the final product made it worth it." This year, Kulkarni is most looking forward to incorporating what she learns in the Dance Composition class to her current pieces and her future works.

Claire Liu may be reached at cliu24@choate.edu



FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record
17 - 8 - 0

Varsity Games

Boys' Soccer (2-3)
vs. Lawrenceville, 2-0

Girls' Soccer (3-0)
vs. Lawrenceville, 6-0

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

Boys' Football (1-0)
vs. Lawrenceville, 35-6

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

Girls' Cross Country (0-1)
vs. Lawrenceville, 21-40

Boys' Cross Country (0-1)
vs. Lawrenceville, 15-43

Boys' Water Polo (1-2)
vs. Suffield Academy, 10-17

J.V. Games

Boys' Soccer (1-1)
vs. Lawrenceville, 1-4

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

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

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

WATER POLO DOMINATES DEERFIELD IN SEASON OPENER

By **Alex Skrypek '23**
Reporter

The Boys' Varsity Water Polo team won their season opener, 11-6, against Deerfield Academy on September 18. The Larry Hart Pool was packed with an electric audience eager to see the first Choate water polo game in two years. Suffice to say, they were not disappointed. Although Deerfield scored quickly at the start of the game, Co-captain Priam Alataris '22 was able to convert on a counterattack, scoring less than a minute later. Alataris was ecstatic and remembered "looking up to see the stands packed with supporters cheering their heads off." He had "never seen that amount of love and support for water polo in my four years at Choate." Shortly after, Choate maintained their aggression, despite a disallowed goal from Sam Anastasio '23. The energy from the crowd only intensified as the boys' team increased their lead by three points. After two more goals from Alataris, as well as one from Co-captain Kevin Chang '22, the first quarter ended with Choate leading 4-2.

Choate continued to dominate throughout the second quarter, growing the lead by two points after both Chang and Alataris scored again. With the aid of a series of stellar saves by goalie Garret Curtis '24, Choate ended the half in the lead, 6-2. Although the team had a deep bench, Co-captain Gavin Doak



Photo by Tiffany Xiao/The Choate News

Co-captain Priam Alataris '22 shoots on Deerfield.

'22 noted that the aggression and physicality that the sport demands played a major factor in the fatigue that players on both sides experienced later in the game.

Halftime proved to be a crucial rest for the Choate team, allowing them to build an even greater lead off of their four point advantage. While Deerfield scored one goal in the third period, Chang managed to put in two, and Jackson Haught '24

and Chris Childs '24 were able to score one goal. To end the quarter, Tyler Kwee '24, scored a buzzer-beater shot over the Deerfield goalie's arms, bumping the score 11-3 going into the final quarter.

By the fourth quarter, both teams appeared sluggish in the water, with Choate losing communication and movement while on offense in particular. Despite Curtis' skill and experience as goalie, Deerfield was able to close

the lead to a five point difference. With only a few minutes left, both Choate and Deerfield had sporadic, yet unsuccessful shots on goal.

The team concluded their game against Deerfield victorious, 11-6. Alataris, a leading goal scorer for that game, described the game in one word: "surreal."

Doak admitted that games could be "pretty nerve racking," but asserted that once in the water, "it just becomes do-

ing something we're passionate about." While beginning the season with a dominant win over Deerfield is always exciting, the experience was even more meaningful for the Captains and teammates who were deprived of the opportunity to play a real game in two years. Chang said, "I've missed playing water polo, and I've missed competing."

Alex Skrypek may be reached at askrypek23@choate.edu

Behind the Lens with Ramsey Scott

By **Stan Cho '25**
Reporter

Go to any sports game and you'll likely see Ramsey Scott '22 squatting along the sidelines behind a large camera. Scott discovered his love for photography at Choate and has since used his skills to capture action shots for sports teams across campus.

A participant in the Arts Concentration program for piano, Scott has always been passionate about art, but he was hesitant to get involved with visual arts because of his self-proclaimed poor drawing abilities. Despite his lack of drawing skills, Scott found affinity in producing visual arts through the lens of photography. "In the spring of 2021, I used [a] camera to start photographing sports at Choate," said Scott. "I mainly did lacrosse in the spring, and after that I realized I wanted to get more serious with [photography]." He then invested in a professional-grade camera after working over fifty hours a week at Dunkin' Donuts over the summer to afford it, a testament to his dedication.

Scott's favorite part of sports photography is providing students with photos depicting their greatest career moments. "A lot of my friends are trying to get recruited by schools, and that is a part of my drive to make [my photography] better," he said. Before attending the games, Scott usually researches the sport so he understands how to capture the best shots.

Although he still attends most sports games, Scott has started to diversify the subjects in his photos by offering to take senior portraits and capturing the daily lives of students at Choate. On a recent trip to the Grand Canyon, Scott spent his time experimenting with landscape-style pictures of natural beauty and close-up pictures of different animals. "I am kind of focusing less on sports entirely and branching out into different areas of photography," he said. "I'm trying to broaden my perspective."

Now that school is back in session, Scott plans to continue focusing on sports photography but is starting to branch out into film. Photography has furthered Scott's ability to observe and identify the magnificence within his life, and he enjoys being able to capture these moments forever. He highly encouraged people to pick up digital photography, arguing that it is the easiest visual art to begin. He explained that while painters and sculptors at Choate are bestowed with experience and talent, photography is lenient towards inexperienced novices. Scott added, "You can go really far with [photography]." One need not look far for proof of this statement: a quick scroll of Choate athletic teams' Instagram accounts or Scott's personal photography account on Instagram (@ramsey.ph) will showcase the true breadth of his works.

Stan Cho may be reached at scho25@choate.edu



Photo by Toffy Prakitthipoom/The Choate News

Ramsey Scott '22 photographs Boys' Varsity Soccer.

"NEDITATION," A CROSS COUNTRY TRADITION



Photo by Sofia Muñoz/The Choate News

The Boys' Cross Country teams lays on the grass during a session of "Neditation."

By **Michael Koryvakov '23**
Copy Editor

Running and relaxing are two words you don't often hear together. That is until you talk to one of the members of the Choate Boys' Cross Country team. For them, the day before a five-kilometer race is a day to wind down, loosen up, and participate in the decades-old tradition of a meditation session.

The typical Friday practice for the team begins with stretching, followed by a light run. Practice concludes with a session of what the team fondly calls "Neditation," which derived from a combination of the word "meditation," and the first name of head coach Ned Gallagher. During "Neditation," everyone lies down on the grass, closes their eyes, spreads their arms and legs, and listens to Mr. Gallagher's calming voice.

This tradition dates back to 1992, in Gallagher's earlier years at Choate, when he also served as the Athletic Director. "Neditation" started as an occasional pre-race ritual, but by the late 90s, it had evolved into a weekly routine, involving music and other relaxation techniques. "We had a bunch of very strong teams then, so a lot of traditions gelled [during that time]," said Mr. Gallagher.

One popular "Neditation" theme is called "flights of fancy," where Mr. Gallagher leads guided visualization of a specific scene: "Everything from sailing across the Mediterranean, to floating over a lake," detailed Mr. Gallagher. In addition, he leads runners through visualization of the racecourse so that they are mentally prepared for the race. For example, in preparation for "Mount Doom" — the steepest part of the cross-country course — Mr. Gallagher describes the hill with descriptive and figurative language and encourages his runners to look at themselves running from the third person. "If you can picture yourself performing well, you are far more likely to perform well," he said.

According to Mr. Gallagher, "While some sports are easier to play when you're amped up, cross country requires a high level of relaxation to perform well." For the team, it's all about conserving energy before getting to the starting line. Different athletes may have different ways of accomplishing this: "Some athletes fall asleep, some enjoy the visualizing aspect," said Mr. Gallagher.

Deven Huang '23, a member of the team, said, "Neditation" gives [me] 20 minutes of peace to relax [my] muscles, clear [my] mind, and just forget about the stress in life."

Ethan Chapman '22, one of the Co-captains of Boys' Cross Country, shared a similar sentiment, "Neditation makes me perform better because it gives me time to reflect on my week and focus on the race." He continued, "It puts me in that competitive mindset."

Similarly, the Girls' Cross Country team holds meditation sessions led by their head coach, Mr. Jim Davidson. "We do guided relaxation exercises and we focus on a different experience each time," he said. Since consistent breathing is critical in cross country, Mr. Davidson puts a lot of emphasis on correct breathing while meditating through techniques he has studied for over 20 years. Similar to the boys' team, the meditation sessions prepare the team for the race by helping them let go of the nerves and jitters they may have before a race.

With races every Saturday, relaxation through meditation will continue to be a key aspect of this cross country season. These sessions serve to improve the mentality of the runners, on and off the course. It's about "feeling ready and confident," concluded Mr. Davidson.

Michael Koryvakov may be reached at mkoryvakov23@choate.edu