The Choate News

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Dr. Jelani Cobb Speaks on Gun Violence

Photos by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Dr. Jelani Cobb addresses the School in Colony Hall.

By **Erin Li '24**
Copy Editor

On the evening of October 18, Dean of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Dr. Jelani Cobb, gave the 2022 Thalheimer Lecture. He spoke to the Choate community on the topic of gun violence and its pressing threat on social stability and public health in the United States.

Raised in Queens, New York, Dr. Cobb's early fascination with language and story-telling motivated him to pursue a career in journalism. Today, he is well-known for his pieces on race, culture, and politics. In addition to writing for *The New Yorker* for the past decade, Dr. Cobb has received a number of accolades, including a nomination for a Pulitzer Prize in Commentary, and has published multiple books such as *To the Break of Dawn: A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic*. He is also an avid educator, having taught African American History and having served as the director of the Africana Studies Institute at the University of Connecticut prior to starting in his role as Dean at Columbia University.

Dr. Cobb's experience as an educator and writer was evident in his speech, as he created a compelling narrative that tied together the historical development of American cultural concepts — hypermasculinity reflected in westward expansion, personal anecdotes of encounters with gun violence, and modern-day discourse over gun ownership as a political and societal issue.

Drawing from memories of being a college student in Washington D.C., Dr. Cobb elaborated on the distressingly regular presence gun violence had in his life and in others' lives — an issue exacerbated in communities with racial minorities, high levels of poverty, and limited access to education. From discussing the context of the second amendment — the right of gun ownership as a method to quell revolts by enslaved people — to the cyclical nature of firearm purchasing and crime, Dr. Cobb provided a meaningful, thought-provoking address that left students eager to ask questions at the end of the keynote presentation.

Upon hearing Dr. Cobb's experiences, many students who

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Gold Key Resumes

By **Marinna Syms '25**
Reporter

Gold Key tours play an integral role in introducing the Choate community to prospective students and their families. This year, the Admission Office has implemented new changes to improve the experience of campus visitors.

Over the past few years, the Admissions team has been devising ways in which they can further improve the Gold Key program. Throughout the pandemic, the Admission Office has gone from not being able to offer tours at all to working regular routines back into schedules. This year, the program has returned to its full capacity of eight families coming in each session and has loosened other visit regulations such as masking. Admission Officer Ms. Courtney Given said, "I'd say we're getting much more back to normal. I think we're seeing that more families are even coming to campus as we get [further] removed from 2020."

With the return to normal comes new changes. "I think we're always continuing to evolve in terms of tour routes," noted Ms. Given.

A big change for this year has been the addition of the Worthington Johnson Athletic Center (WJAC) to the tour route. In past years, this was

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Choate Quiz Bowl Takes First Win

By **Annelie Hang '25**
Reporter

Choate's Quiz Bowl team has started their season off with an impressive win at the Kickoff Northeast Mirror Tournament. Quiz Bowl is an academic trivia competition where students from different teams compete against one another to answer a wide range of questions as quickly as possible. The topics can range from European history to current events to pop culture. Competing students aim to answer questions before their opponents do with clues that help to guide them.

Since the end of Covid-19 restrictions, online competitions have been held alongside traditional in-person tournaments. During in-person tournaments, the team sits around a table directly across from their competitors, a moderator reads the questions, and all students have access to a buzzer. In an online tournament, the team joins a video conferencing platform, like Zoom, and there is a separate buzzer app.

The Quiz Bowl team has used many different methods to prepare for the Kickoff Northeast Mirror Tournament. Peyton Li '25 said his favorite way to prepare was spending time researching lots of different topics and obscure information that opponents might not know, going down the "rabbit hole" of the internet. Other students use flashcards or Wikipedia to prepare for these competitions.

Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/The Choate News

Furthermore, there are websites that record questions used in past Quiz Bowl tournaments along with their corresponding clues. Students spend time exploring the clues and other questions that pertain to the lesser-known information. The people on the team love Quiz Bowl; talking about his favorite aspect, Li said, "Besides the great people and learning, it is really satisfying when you read about an obscure thing on Wikipedia, for some reason, and you get a question right on the very first line with what you read on the previous day."

The Choate Quiz Bowl team as an entirety were extremely successful. Joy An '23 and Henry Ding '24 won first place in the competition, and a second team composed of Sky Hong '26, Kaden Wu '24, and Peyton Li '25 came in second place.

Attending one or two tournaments a month, the Quiz Bowl team's next tournament is on Saturday, October 15. Boston and New Jersey are frequent places the team travels to, along with other places within New England and the tri-state area. Last year, the team went to Chicago for Nationals and is planning to attend tournaments there again this year. This Quiz Bowl team is full of dedicated participants and is looking forward to many successes in the near future.

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Welcoming Ms. Jennifer Elliott

Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Ms. Jennifer Elliott starts in her new role as Head of Student and Academic Life.

By **Aubrie Williams '24**
Staff Reporter

Ms. Jennifer Karlen Elliott joined the Choate community this past July as the first Head of Student and Academic Life, a position that manages the daily operations of both students and faculty. In this position, she works in partnership with Head of School Dr. Alex Curtis and assumes traditional Head of School duties while Dr. Curtis is off-campus.

Ms. Elliott spent most of her time this summer settling into Jessup House and getting familiar with the School. Since few students were on campus this summer, Ms. Elliott spent her time "meeting folks who are on campus, learning about summer programs, learning about the senior officers, and trying to learn as much as [she] could about the humans without all of the humans being here." Now that students have arrived and the school year has begun, Ms. Elliott is focusing on learning more about students and the greater Choate community. She explained, "Every day, I'm trying to get my brain to take more and more information in: checking names and faces and trying to make sense of what I've heard and who I'm meeting."

While this new position has undoubtedly brought its challenges, Ms. Elliott has been able to rely on her colleagues to help guide her through this transition. "I've been so tremendously thankful both for the mentorship and guidance of Ms. Levesque, who's a tremendous colleague, and for the mentorship, advice, and partnership with Dr. Curtis, who's been so generous with his time and counsel," she noted.

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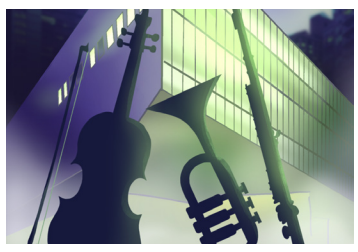

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Visuals by The Record Journal, Yujin Kim '23, Ms. Laura Pace, and Melody Qian '24

Emergency Drills Ensure Community's Safety

By **Tyler Kuo '23**
Copy Editor

Emergency drills on campus are an integral part of campus security. Without them, the School would be unprepared in the event of a real emergency. These drills consist of various protocols, such as lockdowns, shelter-in-place, as well as gatherings in Colony Hall. To ensure students are adequately informed of these protocols, the School utilizes text messaging, emails, and phone calls to reach the student body.

In order to ensure these emergency drills run smoothly, there is a tremendous amount of effort put in by the School behind-the-scenes. Director of Operations Mr. Bill Wright said, "There is a lot of careful thought on the planning for emergency drills. The date and time are scrutinized to ensure that we are not disrupting the time that students are in class."

Students are adequately informed about what to do during real emergency situations. Mr. Wright shared, "Each of our emergency protocols (lockdown, shelter-in-place, gathering) are gone over at the beginning of the school year and then again as needed over the course of the year."

In addition, Mr. Wright values feedback on how to improve the emergency protocols. He stated, "We often hear about ways to improve the drills and other thoughts and observations that students and faculty have." He believes that the current protocols can continue to be improved upon throughout the year, sharing that this "[updated] information can be delivered at school meetings, on the school portal, and at the times when students meet in their dorms."

In light of the recent all-school emergency drill gathering, students expressed their gratitude for such drills. Constanza Aportela '24 shared, "I feel like emergency drills are necessary since they help you know what to do in case of an emergency. For instance, when I was in a destructive earthquake in Mexico City, I had done a drill earlier that day which helped me be calm." Aportela also noted, "I think it's always hard to fully prepare for an emergency, but drills help you get a sense of what would happen in a real scenario which somewhat makes me feel safer. Knowing that there are drills lets me know that the School takes emergencies seriously."

On the other hand, some students believe that while emergency drills are critical for the community's safety, they should be coordinated even more carefully so that students can fully participate in them. Student Body Vice-President Lex Njomin '23 said, "Emergency drills, particularly fire drills, during class blocks for specific buildings should be coordinated so as not to interfere with testing. Drills are absolutely necessary, but they are only useful if people take them seriously, and being dragged out of a test environment to do a drill is not conducive to a serious atmosphere."

While work continues to be done to improve existing protocols, the steps the School has already taken to protect the community are amirable and provide a sound foundation for ensuring greater safety at Choate.

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Choate Takes On International Events Week

By **Erin Li '24**
Copy Editor

As an institution with students from all over the world, Choate prides itself on its diverse student body. During the week of October 15–22, clubs and organizations hosted a myriad of events in celebration of International Education Week, a nationwide joint initiative organized by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education. Planned events ranged from "In the Kitchen" with the Caribbean Club to a Diwali Celebration hosted by the South Asian Student Association.

Throughout the week, students attended events hosted by different cultural clubs and gained new experiences from their peers. Director of Global Engagement Ms. Ashley Sinclair explained, "I wanted to highlight for the whole school what a contribution our international students make to this campus, and I wanted to promote opportunities for students to learn about new countries and cultures."

At a school with such a large international student population, International Education Week provided a great opportunity for students from different cultural backgrounds to learn from one another. Ms. Sinclair added, "I hope that students find opportunities to connect with students that they haven't yet met or don't know well. I hope that they try something new, whether it be food, a dance, singing in public, or beading."

International Education Week commenced on Saturday, October 15 with a dance hosted by the Hispanic Latiné Forum (HLF), where students danced to the rhythms of salsa, bachata, reggaeton, and cumbiamusic. President of HLF Ixchel Hernandez '23 said, "We decided to host this event because music and dance are large aspects of our culture. By hosting a dance, we could not only embrace our culture, but also share it with other members of the Choate community."

On Sunday, October 16, the Caribbean Club hosted "In the Kitchen with Caribbean Club," where participants learned to cook traditional Caribbean foods such as jerk chicken, rice and peas, and plantain. President of Caribbean Club Cory Williams '23 shared, "I hope that people learn that the Caribbean is made up of multiple countries. Although it's one cohesive thing, each country has a lot to offer — whether it be food, culture, music, or history."

Later in the week, The Caribbean Club also sponsored a film showing of "Out of Many," which studies the political issues related to privilege in Jamaica. Williams said, "It's important to acknowledge that the Caribbean isn't all beach. There are really serious underlying issues." He hopes to share his culture while educating the Choate community on common misconceptions about the Caribbean.

On Friday, October 21, Africanah Club sponsored the Bead Making event, during which students could learn about an art form that is integral to the African diaspora. President of Africanah Club Delcy Asienga '24 shared, "I hope students will get to learn about the decorative aspect of many African cultures and be able to celebrate the beauty of the jewelry that they create." With this event, students were able to get insight into one component of African culture while also having fun with their friends.

Cabinet members of the Choate Korean Friendship Association performed in a busking event where they shared Korean songs. Club Officer Danny Yoon '24 said, "Music is a large part of my life, and I wanted to share that with my peers. The audience could interact through the music, and it was a good opportunity for us to share Korean music with the School."

Beyond these club events, students attended activities including Global Lunches hosted by SAGE Dining Services, a trip to the Yale Art Gallery, a Flamenco Workshop with Bélen Maya, and a Chinese Dance Workshop hosted by Nico Li. Ms. Sinclair added, "International Education Week is meant to be a starting point. It encourages students to continue that path of growth and learning from others whose backgrounds may be different than their own."

As Choate continues to strive towards building a more inclusive and well-educated student body, International Education Week gives students the opportunity to learn about different cultures and share experiences with their peers. Beyond cultural exchange, these events also provide a space for students to connect and build new relationships. Ms. Sinclair said, "This year feels different, and the time is ripe for rebuilding our traditions and community after global Covid-19 restrictions have limited the ways we can connect. The week is intended to celebrate our community, to learn from one another, and to try something new."

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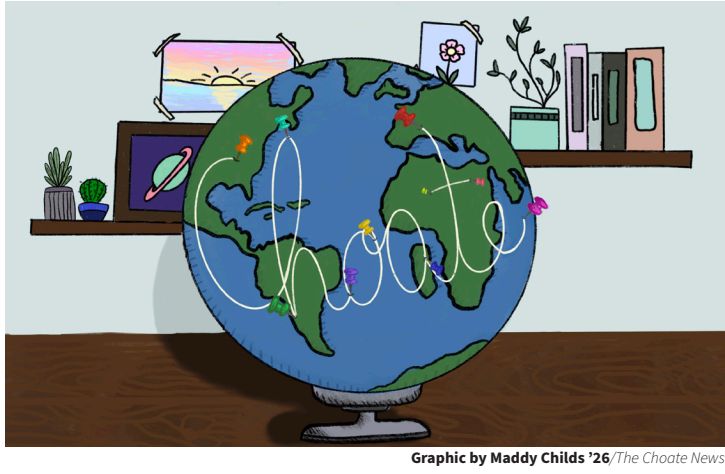
Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/The Choate News

Students enjoy International foods during International Events Week.



Graphic by Maddy Childs '26/The Choate News

Gold Key Tours See Changes

Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/The Choate News

Gold Key tour guides tour visiting families.

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avoided due to the limitations in time, especially since students have to rush to their next period classes after finishing their tours. These changes were largely a result of the feedback the Admissions team received from visiting families. "We heard from our families that there was a big area that they were missing, so we added that back in," explained Mrs. Given. Other changes include conducting the interview and information session portions of the visit prior to the tour so that families can get a feel of the campus before going on their actual tours.

Students have offered a wide range of feedback regarding these tours. "I think it's a better system because we are able to show more parts of campus and having the tour after prospective students are stressing about the interviews is good, so they're enjoying the fact that they're on the tour with you and asking good questions," said Sofia Muñoz '23, a Gold Key Leader.

On the other hand, Lex Njomin '23, believes that instead of adding more stops on the tour, there should be a larger focus on the personalization of the tour based on the students' academic and extracurricular interests. "Touring the athletics building should be optional. When I was touring, if I had been offered a little bit more personalization based on my interests, I would have really appreciated it. I think that this is something Admissions may want to consider moving forward," Njomin said.

Isabel Maida '23 agreed, saying, "I think the new tour route is a bit inconvenient as we have to walk all the way around campus. I often run out of things to say since there's only so much you can talk about. The tours should be more catered to the students whether that be focusing attention on athletics, arts, or language."

Overall, the new changes shine a light on a new set of questions and improvements for the Admissions team to consider. "I think the program is always evolving very naturally as we see what our visiting families are looking for, things that they're missing, and then on the other side, see what our tour guides are saying about things that we can improve on," said Ms. Given. "We're always really open to that, and our program is constantly evolving as a result."

The Gold Key program consists of 192 Choate students "whose job is to meet prospective students and their families and show them around the campus," explained Ms. Given, who has been overseeing the Gold Key Program for the past two years. Students are selected from a large pool of diverse applicants to ensure a greater representation of the Choate community. Among them are 25 Gold Key Leaders who mentor tour guides and help with any new programs or initiatives in the Admission Office.

"They're the best community masters that we could have for our prospective students that are excited about Choate," noted Ms. Given. "They're on campus, they know what it's like in the dorms, they're on the sports teams. I think there's such value in having that tour program and learning from students so that prospective students are able to really get that connection and hear about those experiences."

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Ms. Jennifer Elliott Joins Choate Community

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Ms. Elliott is eager to prioritize her time with students and to get involved in the community despite the administrative nature of her new role. She is currently teaching a section of Honors U.S. History but will also be coaching squash this winter and teaching a senior elective in the spring. "For me, those feel like really important daily touchstones with those sets of kids ... I get a little pulse of how the term is going," she explained.

So far, Ms. Elliott is enjoying the sense of community and the supportive nature of Choate. She said, "I do think Choate is a place with high expectations around teaching and learning for kids and adults, and it also feels really caring and joyful." One of her favorite times in her busy schedule is office hours in Hill House, where she can "see the activity and movement and the flurry around what's going on."

In terms of new initiatives, Ms. Elliott is focusing on implementing changes that would improve students' experience at the School. "My natural inclination is to lean into projects that allow us to be more responsive to what kids are needing," she explained.

Ms. Elliott also strives to collaborate with other faculty members and to learn more about the work they've done in previous years. "There are excellent folks who have been working on things for a long time here," she said, "so, in some way, part of my job is just to seek ways to be supportive of those efforts."

With that in mind, Ms. Elliott is also focusing on teaching students healthy ways to manage stress and how to utilize the resources around them. She wondered, "What is it that we need to be doing better or differently to help young people who are super motivated and capable navigate challenges in healthy ways?"

Ms. Elliott aims to be an active and positive presence in the Choate community. For now, this means getting familiar with community members to improve her understanding of what needs to be done to make the Choate experience better day by day.

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Columbia University's Dean of Journalism Visits Choate

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hadn't previously been exposed to situations relating to gun violence gained a new perspective. Journalism student Nicholas Ng '23 shared, "Dr. Cobb captured a story that needed to be shared. While I never really considered gun violence attending Choate and coming from a place where guns are illegal, his speech not only introduced the subject but also gave insight into the implications that come with accessibility to firearms."

The speech also deepened students' understanding of the role of firearms in America with regards to politics and culture. Cassatt Boatwright '24, a member of the John F. Kennedy '35 Signature Program in Government and Public Service (JFK), said, "I learned that when it comes to guns, it is mainly about culture rather than anything else, which really shows how our history affects us to this day."

Another student in the JFK program, Aubrie Williams '24, added, "I thought Dr. Cobb's speech was very inspiring, and I liked how he touched on the nuances of gun violence in America. It really made me think about how it affects our daily lives and individuals from different backgrounds and environments."

Preceding his speech to the entire student body, Dr. Cobb attended a Q&A session with students involved in journalism, politics and government, and sociology, where he answered questions on issues including the future progression of journalism and the democratization and power of media.

One particularly intriguing discussion topic was Dr. Cobb's career experience as a journalist in the digital age. Leila Sheriff '24 said, "He was so knowledgeable on the state of modern journalism, especially in a world where there's so much misinformation circulating."

Through both his keynote address and Q&A session, students were given the unique opportunity to delve into timely and critical dialogue around gun-violence — a subject they might not have been as knowledgeable about in the past. Ng reflected, "I think Choate tries to find relevance in the speakers they invite. In today's age of political polarization and heightened interpersonal conflicts based on identity, welcoming speakers such as Dr. Cobb allows the student body to gain insight into pressing societal problems through meaningful discussion."

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CELEBRATE WALLINGFORD RESUMES PRE-PANDEMIC FESTIVITIES

Photo courtesy of The Record Journal

Wallingford community members enjoy the annual Celebrate Wallingford event before the pandemic.

By **Eva Li '24**
Copy Editor

On the weekend of October 1, the local community and Wallingford Center Inc. joined forces to hold the 30th annual Celebrate Wallingford festival on North Main Street, South Main Street, and Center Street. As Wallingford Center Inc., the main organizer of the event, described on their website, "Celebrate Wallingford is a two-day festival featuring the Taste of Wallingford — where one can sample the foods of local restaurants. There is live entertainment, arts & craft shows, children's activities, and so much more!"

This year, the festival committee of Wallingford Center Inc. made significant changes to the tent arrangement, such as moving around food and placing more businesses, civic groups, and crafters next to each other. Ms. Liz David, Executive Director of Wallingford Center Inc., explained, "It's going to be more open, more accessible for people walking, and you'll really be able to view all the vendors and the exhibitors.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Celebrate Wallingford was canceled in 2020 and had significant limitations in 2021 — the event was moved from its usual location and shortened to one day. While the change discouraged many vendors, other businesses, such as Catalyst Art Studio, took advantage of the new setting. "Last year was pretty awesome for me! They moved it down Center Street, which was right in front of my storefront. This was great because the setup was very easy, and I also had the opportunity to invite guests inside the studio so that they could check it out," said Ms. Alyssa Marquardt, owner of the studio.

Nonetheless, this year's Celebrate Wallingford served as the perfect opportunity for local vendors to gain exposure after the pandemic and promote their organizations or recent activities to the public.

"The weather wasn't ideal, but we were happy to see lots of friendly and familiar faces coming to visit our booth. We also seized the opportunity to kick off our 3rd Annual WRR-RAFFLE (Wallingford Rotary Restaurant Raffle) by selling raffle tickets at the event," said Ms. Sara Taussik, Directory of Programs and Training of the Wallingford Rotary Club.

As a longtime participant in Celebrate Wallingford, the Wallingford Public Library also took the two-day event opportunity to expand its "A Tree Grows in Wallingford" community art project that took place over the summer. People were invited to write or draw a response to the question, "How has the Wallingford Public Library helped you grow?" on colorful leaves and place them on the community tree. "The leaves people made were wonderfully diverse, and they were affixed to a mounted tree that we created using the new poster printer that's also available for the public in the Collaboratory," said the Library Director, Ms. Jane Fisher.

To highlight their button makers, one of the tools that the Library has in its Collaboratory, the Wallingford Public Library also offered "fresh squeezed" buttons as a unique feature to this year's tent. "We had four fall-themed bookish designs ready, and we made the buttons requested on the spot," Ms. Fisher said.

Apart from civic organizations, many restaurants and other food vendors, including the Lyman Hall Food Truck, were excited to showcase their cuisines as a part of Taste of Wallingford.

The Healthy Drive is a food truck managed by students enrolled in the Lyman Hall Culinary Arts and Hospitality program. Ms. Sharon Drossopoulos, the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Program Director, commented on their anxiousness to get back to serving the community and emphasized the significance of the festival for the students. "It's important for the community to see what the students are doing in class, and it's important for the kids to be able to feel confident in the skills that they're learning. When they're able to take it outside of the classroom and into the community, it really reinforces all of their confidence and their technical skills," she explained.

To ensure diversity, the Wallingford Center Inc. requested that food truck vendors provide different foods. While they always offer their classic sandwiches, such as the fan-favorite Magnus Madness, two other options are typically custom-made by local students themselves.

"They practice them in the classroom and in the kitchen, and then the students vote on which ones they feel that we should put on the menu," explained Ms. Drossopoulos.

Each year, Celebrate Wallingford designates a zone for children and young teenagers: Wallingford Community Women is a non-profit civic organization that promotes educational, philanthropic, and community service work, leads the event. "We rely on high school students to help us run the games, but we also need to be there to supervise and to talk with the parents," said Ms. Kathy Schave, who is part of the membership committee.

Wallingford Community Women also receives a budget each year from Wallingford Center Inc. to plan the entertainment, such as magicians and a balloon twister. This year, they adopted a Halloween theme. "We usually do a nylon string bag that says 'Celebrate Wallingford,' and we changed the color scheme this year to do more of a Halloween theme, so we used orange and black."

Among the numerous vendors participating in Celebrate Wallingford are also sponsors providing financial support for the event. One such longtime sponsor is Choate Rosemary Hall, which occupies a larger tent at the center of activities, where the Communication team and volunteers share information about the School with the community.

"Obviously not everyone in Wallingford is going to be an applicant or good candidate to come to the School ... so we try to find ways that we can kind of connect with people in different ways," said Chief Communications Officer and Board Member of Wallingford Center Inc., Mrs. Alison Cady.

"The art center has always been a really good way to [bond with the community], because a lot of our performances are open to the public ... summer programs can be offered to kindergarteners through 12th grade here in Wallingford, so there's opportunity there for a wider range of people."

This year, Choate's robotics team participated in the event as well. Led by team coaches Mr. Andrew Murgio and Ms. Dee Clark, students in the Advanced Robotics Concentration (ARC) signature program showcased their robots. In addition, they shared information about the Lego League competition that students have organized to engage younger students in the Wallingford community through robotics.

Choate's community participation in the event, Mrs. Cady said, "really benefit from having restaurants and shops and lots going on down in that area, so that festival [Celebrate Wallingford] really helps to bring people to town to show off the businesses that we have in Wallingford, which in turn helps them do well and keeps that vibrancy."

As a board member of Wallingford Center Inc., she concluded, "The event draws awareness to and promotes our local Wallingford businesses, and it is a really fun celebration of community."

Eva Li *may be reached at eli24@choate.edu*

Community Calendar

Introduction to Sewing: Quilted Potholders
November 16th
7:00 - 8:30PM,
November 17th
3:00 - 4:30PM
@ Wallingford Public Library

Furoshiki (Japanese art of wrapping objects in cloth) Basics
December 3rd,
2:00 - 3:30PM
@ Wallingford Public Library

LED Laser Cut Acrylic Snow Globes
November 7th
7:00 - 8:30PM
December 8th
3:00 - 4:30PM
@ Wallingford Public Library

Holiday Artisan Market @ The Library
December 11th
10:00AM - 3:00PM
@ The Library Wine, Bar, and Bistro

Talk to Santa on Ham Radio
December 20th
10:00AM - 2:00PM
@ Yalesville Firehouse

Trail of Terror
Friday 7-11PM,
Sat 7-11PM,
Sun 7-10PM for the entirety of October
@ 60 N. Plains Highway, Wallingford CT

Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

SPANISH COMMUNITY OF WALLINGFORD TURNS 50

By **Emily Scandrett '26**
Reporter

Founded in 1972, the Spanish Community of Wallingford (SCOW) has become the leading force in unifying the Hispanic community in Wallingford. It has dedicated the past 50 years to "responding to the needs of the Latino Community by assisting them to succeed in U.S. society and enabling Latinos to maintain and share their rich varied cultures with the broader community."

SCOW was created to offer valuable yet previously absent resources such as translators, interpreters, employers, and medical support within Hispanic communities. Over the course of 50 years, it has helped create a multitude of programs and resources for all community members.

Currently, the organization provides for 2,500 people and hopes to keep growing, according to Executive Director Ms. Adriana Rodriguez. SCOW has built strong partnerships throughout the town, including one with Choate students in the Teach Music club.

In anticipation of its semi-centennial celebration, SCOW hopes to highlight its accomplishments and commemorate the support it has provided for the Hispanic community in Wallingford. "As a child, I came to scout for services, so it's like that full circle story," said Ms. Rodríguez, highlighting the positive impact the organization has had. "I think that I'm just very proud to be celebrating 50 years of service and responding to the community as a whole. It's very heartwarming."

Leading up to the event, SCOW hosted an annual fundraiser attended by a range of guests, including Mr. Ned Lamont, the Governor of Connecticut. Through outreach and collaborative programs with organizations all across Wallingford, SCOW has ensured the formation of a lifelong, supportive community.

The Spanish Community of Wallingford's outreach events have been spotlighted in various local news organizations throughout the state. Ms. Rodríguez shared plans to open new offices and service programs, continue to serve its community, broaden its ability to support, and branch its community out into new towns.

Emily Scandrett *may be reached at escandrett26@choate.edu*

Graphic by Yujin Kim '23/The Choate News

Master's Manna Serves Life's Essentials

By **Brendan Beng '26**
Reporter

Located in Wallingford, Master's Manna is a food pantry and a resource center that serves food-insecure residents of the greater Wallingford/Meriden area. As articulated on the organization's website, its mission is "to assist homeless, near homeless, low to moderate-income families and individuals obtain essential life needs."

Master's Manna works with various organizations that provide services, such as "vocational and educational opportunities to decrease poverty" and "providing intervention, mental and physical health support services" to low-income families.

"Our main goal through all of these agencies is to collaborate and support each other where we can, when we can, and to ask for help when we need it," said Ms. Gail Powells, Director of Administrative Services at the non-profit.

Founded in the mid-2000s by Cheryl Zuki, she remained Master's Manna's head until 2016. During her time, notable collaborations with organizations such as the Community Health Center (CHC), were formed.

According to Ms. Powells, "Health support services we have within our facility provide appointments for the uninsured and the underinsured, and they don't need to be registered with the food pantry."

Master's Manna's most recent fundraiser, the first since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, took place at Farmer Joe's Gardens in Wallingford on September 29. "It was very successful ... people were mingling together and enjoying fellowship and having a good time," Ms. Powells said. The next big event planned for this year will be a Thanksgiving event called "Turkey Tossing Two Days," where Master's Manna will be distributing Thanksgiving meals to everyone who's a registered shopper over a span of two days.

Master's Manna distributes over 300 tons of food a year to residents of the greater Wallingford/Meriden area. Regarding the scale of their operations, Ms. Powells stated, "You look at the two parts of our operation. One is food and one is money." Regarding the food side, "I would have to say we probably get the larger portion of our food for distribution from food banks and food drives, but we couldn't do without the private donations either." She said that they receive "almost 10,000 pounds of food a week" through private donations and food reclamation alone.

Ms. Powells explained, "Our donations come in from the private sector, probably, I'm gonna say 70% from private individuals and 30% from our grant writings and corporate partners."

Running a non-profit organization is a complex and multi-level operation that requires everyone to play a part.

Ms. Powells explained, "For me, and I suspect for a lot of people, it's a need to give back to the community ... I've always been a believer in those that have, have a responsibility to help those who do not."

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Graphic courtesy of Master's Manna

The Choate News

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SAC Dances: Superspreaders or Super Fun

By **Lucy Drier '24 and Aubrie Williams '24**
Opinions Writer and Opinions Staff Writer

A mob of bodies dripping with sweat join together in a clump, jumping up and down excitedly while everyone tramples over the boundaries of interaction that often exist between students in different grades. This is the SAC dance.

Whether you love them or hate them, we can all agree that SAC dances are a fundamental part of Choate life. This informal dance is a long-held tradition that kickstarts the year for the entire student body, riling up energy and boosting spirits. For two hours, St. John Hall is filled with screaming students forming mosh pits and showing off their best moves.

SAC dances are enjoyed by many, but a sizable faction holds animosity toward the event, resenting the ramifications that come from the dance: mysterious illnesses, getting trampled in the mosh pits, and being covered in sweat that doesn't belong to them.

So, with the balance of praise and criticism, it's plausible to argue that SAC dances are an overhyped pillar of Choate's social scene.

Throughout one's Choate career, the consensus on the SAC dance goes through different phases. For the freshmen, the event is something they heard about on their tours and often can't stop asking about once they get on campus. During the first few weeks of school, freshmen await the dance eagerly and get there right when it starts, only to typically be confused, let down, or terrified of the actual party. As the smallest people in the School, SAC dances weren't necessarily made for freshmen to thrive.

Disillusioned by the SAC, sophomores and juniors typically enjoy the dances for 45 minutes to an hour before deciding they'd rather hang out with their friends. Finally, the jaded seniors of the School tend to either commit themselves to being the most hype people in the pit or choose to pop in and out as they please.

A source of criticism linked to the dance is the inevitable spread of the infamous "SAC plague." Whether it's a light cough, a nagging sore throat, the flu — or what this year's variant seemed to have in store (a mix of all three?) — it appears almost everyone who attends the dance develops some sort of sickness in the following weeks.

Although this seems to slip people's minds as they are transmitting spit and sweat, students are soon faced with regret for their past actions. If you are lucky enough to not get sick from this event, perhaps it's because the rancid stench of body odor was enough to stop you from getting too close to the dancing bodies around you.

On the positive side, SAC dances are a great way to release the stress of the school week. After five days spent doing hours of homework, attending dozens of club meetings, and playing a sport every day after classes, SAC dances are sometimes the perfect solution.

SAC dances allow you to tune into your fun side as you shift out of your academic mode and enter your carefree one. The music provokes energy and excitement among students, encouraging them to let loose and dance their hearts out. Getting together with friends and classmates without worrying about schoolwork and extracurricular activities is cathartic for many students and highlights the value of weekend activities.

So, no matter if you're a fan or hater, Choate students can all agree that we have a realistic view of SAC dances—fun in some ways but consequential in others.

Lucy Drier and Aubrie Williams *are fifth-formers from Woodbridge, CT and Wayne, PA respectively. They may be reached at ldrier24@choate.edu and awilliams24@choate.edu*

Photo courtesy of Tiffany Xiao '23

Students show off their moves at a SAC Dance.

Censorship: A Growing Threat to the American Education System

Graphic by Carolyn Chen '25/*The Choate News*

By **Sydney Alleyne '23**
Campus Opinions Editor

Freedom of Speech is a concept so deeply ingrained in American civil society that its opponents are constantly searching for loopholes to disprove its legitimacy. Debates of ethical righteousness have long existed at the forefront of American media and politics; however, a new era of censorship has extended into the classrooms and libraries of the American Public School system, hindering students' abilities to receive a comprehensive and inclusive education.

The power of media is its accessibility, both in its consumption and creation. In the digital world, where the potential for that consumption is increased ten-fold, constraints on published content serve to harm audiences. Censorship has no place in the classroom: it serves only to disadvantage its victims, misrepresent its perpetrators, and disguise — not address — issues evident in society.

September 18–24, 2022 was Banned Books Week, an annual celebration of diverse literature and a protest against the harms of censorship. Created in 1982, the event's goal was to bring attention to the surge in the number of restrictions in classrooms, bookstores, and libraries. This year's theme, "Books unite us. Censorship Divides Us," is a relevant commentary on the current spike in the controversy surrounding banned books and censorship within all forms of media.

PEN America, an organization dedicated to protecting the freedom to write, defines a book ban as occurring when an "objection to the content of a specific book or type leads to that volume being withdrawn either fully or partially from availability." In schools and libraries, books are deliberately chosen by the educators or librarians in charge in order to enrich the education or literary enjoyment of a specific population.

Scholastic curricula and library selections are often modified and updated. But, when school boards, administrators, teachers, and politicians override these choices, the selection of offerings diminishes, oftentimes without the consultation of the individual who originally made the choice to include them.

According to the American Library Association's (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF), between January 1–August 31, 2022, there were 1,651 official attempts to ban individual books from libraries across the country. This is the highest number of attempted book bans in a single year since the ALA created the list over two decades ago.

This uptick in challenges specifically attacks and minimizes the presence of books highlighting marginalized identities and young voices. PEN's Index of School Book Bans, recorded from July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022, shows that of the titles banned, 41% of them contained "LGBTQ+ Themes, Protagonists, or Prominent Secondary Characters," and 40% included "protagonists or prominent secondary characters of color." The study also found that more than half of the enacted book bans during this period were the product of interest groups: an ever-evolving tactic used to disguise deep-pocketed political partisanship as campaigns for grassroots organizations. These organizations use local chapters to push their agendas more efficiently with specific legislatures or school boards.

The current political pressure spurred by upcoming elections, a country recovering from a pandemic, and the aftermath of a major racial reckoning, is perhaps the most pertinent reason that these book bans are gaining traction. Of the book bans and restrictions listed in the PEN Index, 41% have a direct tie to political pressure.

To further emphasize the power non-educators have over the collection of books offered in schools, 96% of the bans listed in the index were not initiated by officially recognized policies, displaying that the voices and opinions of decision-makers who aren't in the classroom — members of school boards, politicians, and school administrators — are given much more weight than those of the teachers who directly engage with students.

The motivations of politicians shouldn't dictate the educational opportunities of students, especially those too young to know what they are deprived of. It's common for students to live in the same school district from kindergarten through 12th grade. With most book bans occurring throughout an entire district, these students will spend their young and impressionable years reading a selection of books that is heavily influenced by factors they're unaware of.

Especially because these bans disproportionately target narratives of BIPOC and Queer identities, students in restricted districts looking to find characters or authors they resonate with will feel chronically unrepresented within their school systems. For individuals who aren't of a marginalized identity, their ability to learn about, and empathize with diverse narratives will be hindered significantly due to their inability to interact with them through literature.

In the digital age, students luckily have the ability to find representation in other ways, but a book read in a scholastic setting connotes a certain caliber of excellence and significance that a Netflix movie or a magazine cover fails to possess. Book bans not only hinder representation, but they perpetuate systemic inequities in the educational system: not giving queer students and students of color the opportunity to feel like they can relate to, and thus care more about, the topics covered in a classroom setting.

When the Dean of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Dr. Jelani Cobb, visited the School, on October 18, I had the opportunity to ask him about his beliefs on censorship and the ways he thinks it impacts how students of marginalized communities engage with academia. Of censorship, he said that those looking to ban certain texts are abusing, "the social utility of speech that targets people, demeans people and antagonizes people."

Recognizing the influence that restrictions on literature has, Dr. Cobb noted that groups around the country are taking action to mitigate the effects of censorship. Ava DuVernay's media conglomerate, *Array*, created a universally available online catalog of films that have been censored or are not available in certain libraries. Additionally, the Brooklyn Library recently gave out 5,100 free virtual library cards to teens across the country to help fight the censorship occurring in their local schools and libraries.

When the quality and efficacy of a student's education is no longer in the hands of their educators, a key pillar of freedom — the freedom of education — has been lost. As students at a private institution, with the freedom to learn what and how we choose, it's important that we recognize our privelege and take advantage of the opportunities we have to explore our intellectual interests. In a time when progress is being made to support the historical and contemporary narratives that have often been disregarded by the American public, the issue of censorship and book bans is holding the country back from becoming a truly free and inclusive union.

Sydney Alleyne *is a sixth-former from West Hartford, CT. She may be reached at salleyne23@choate.edu*

Kate Tortorella
Third-former from Westport, CT

"It was a great conversation and I learned a lot, especially about the history of the issue. But, I think the severity of the conversation really caught some people off guard. I mean, it was a deep lecture, and I appreciated what he had to say, but I think we should've been given a warning before the talk because it left a lot of people overwhelmed. "

Peyton Li
Fourth-former from Beijing, China

"I have never heard a similar perspective on the topic, so I found it pretty enlightening. It was a new take to presenting a topic that, unfortunately, we all hear and know a lot about."

Pippa Wolfson
Fifth-former from Mount Kisco, NY

" I think he spoke knowing the crowd he was speaking to was full of super diverse opinions. He invited people to disagree with him, which was super refreshing."

David Hallal
Sixth-former from Irvine, CA

"I think Choate has done a really great job of bringing in speakers like Dr. Cobb that I, and, I believe, the majority of the community align and agree with. What he said was interesting, but it didn't provoke me to question my own beliefs or change my opinions in any particular way. I'd like to see speakers with a wider diversity of viewpoints."

Chloe Chan
Sixth-former from Hamden, CT

"Overall, I really liked it, and the statistics he brought up were really impactful. Something that I feel was missing was any mention of how the issue corresponds to the recent surge in Anti-Asian hate. I would have really liked for him to mention something about that or take that into account."

Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/*The Choate News*

Choate Takes: Dr. Jelani Cobb's Lecture

On October 18, the Dean of the Columbia University Journalism School, Dr. Jelani Cobb, visited Choate to give the 2022 Thalheimer lecture. In his speech, he addressed the issue of gun-violence in America and, afterwards, opened up the forum for students to ask questions.

Julia Xu
Sixth-former from Cheshire, CT

"I think hearing him talk about the frontier was probably the highlight of the speech. Normally, when we talk structural racism, we talk about the prison industrial complex and the institution of slavery, but I've never heard it explained in this particular context. Also, I was wearing cowboy boots, so I felt a little called out."

Leyee Dai
Fifth-former from Shanghai, China

"Personally, my biggest takeaways from the talk were the comparisons and the way he drew upon the creation of myths and social norms. I think it was relevent, especially as we begin to trace these modern political issues like gun reform, and police brutality to the roots of BIPOC liberation movements throughout American history."

Dominique Welcome
Third-former from New York, NY

"I liked the way he added personal experiences into the conversation because I think that they helped engage the audience. I think a lot of students might believe that these types of issues aren't close to them, but it helps them see that that is not the truth of the matter."

The Choate News presents...

The Great Debate

SHOULD SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES REGULATE MISINFORMATION?

PRO

By **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Copy Editor

Misinformation gets clicks. According to a recent study at New York University, misinformation got six times more clicks on Facebook than factual information during the 2020 election.

Simply put, fake news is the cement that serves as the foundation for social media. It is the main source of our intellectual, behavioral, and emotional influences. This corrupt institution is designed to support and promote fake information over factual information; thus, our sense of reality and self is being shaped by lies and bias. How did we let this happen? How did we let lies become more prevalent than the truth? How may this misinformation further destroy our lives, our trust, and, ultimately, the entire fabric of our democracy?

The most straightforward example of misinformation contributing to the destruction of lives was when social media literally told people to poison themselves as a means of protection.

On April 23, 2022, former U.S. President Donald Trump P'00 stated at a Covid-19 Press Conference, "I see the disinfectant knock it (Covid-19) out in a minute, so is there a way we can do something like that by injection inside or almost a cleaning?" In other words, the misinformation provided was, "Drink bleach, and you will be cured of Covid-19." After that announcement, hundreds of Americans drank Lysol or Clorox in hopes of eliminating or avoiding Covid-19. According to statistics from the Center of Disease Control (CDC), household poisonings that month shot up to 77%.

According to a study performed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), only 25% of Americans feel they can identify fake news, and nearly 70% of Americans reported that fake news creates confusion in their lives. Trust, comfort, and factual awareness are slowly disappearing because of the illegitimate information that social media and online news feed us each day. No one knows what is real.

"Misinformation fuels physical harm, mental harm, confusion, ignorance, and the destruction of democracy."

Another form of widely present misinformation, which is not born as a false truth, but evolves into one, is a "single story." People tend to post their individual perspectives, opinions, and observations on any sort of matter, often a political one. Like a game of telephone, these individual truths are transmitted from one person to the next and morph into information posing as a universal conclusion. This practice destroys the boundaries between a single perspective and an objective truth, infusing it with bias. This sort of misinformation peaks at voting times, influencing people's votes and tainting the integrity of our democracy.

If the devastating effects of misinformation are so apparent, then why are social media companies unwilling to combat this issue? The answer is not surprising: money.

Misinformation provides social media companies with their largest chunk of profit, and, without it, they could not afford to continue operations. Fake news spreads faster and attracts more viewers than real news because it tends to be more interesting and controversial. As stated by the MIT Sloan Research Center, "Falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than the truth, and reach their first 1,500 people six times faster." Social media institutions were designed to work this way.

Misinformation must go. It fuels physical harm, mental harm, confusion, ignorance, and the eventual destruction of democracy. Social media companies have a responsibility to the public to crack down on harmful misinformation.

Amelia Sipkin *is a fourth-former from Rye, NY. She may be reached at asipkin25@choate.edu*

CON

By **Stan Cho '25**
Copy Editor

When social media platforms gained popularity decades ago, they promised an automatically tailored medium where anyone could speak to an interconnected and personalized audience. Though these companies have provided users with these benefits, they also came with certain drawbacks. Social media platforms have exacerbated the spread of false information, wreaking conflict.

In response, many governments have begun to consider implementing policies to limit the spread of misinformation though policies such as China's highly sophisticated form of information censorship or Sri Lanka's temporary ban on social media. Yet, social media censorship has shown to be an ineffective measure of controlling the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

For instance, former U.S. President Donald J. Trump was held accountable for his support of the Capitol Riot in 2021 by a permanent suspension from social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Trump and his ardent supporters weaponized social media to spread misinformation about the U.S. elections, which was possibly the catalyst for the mob invasion of the Capitol Building.

Even though Trump's exile from social media led to a significant decrease in the number of public statements he made, researchers from the Global Disinformation Index, a nonpartisan nonprofit that studies disinformation, showed that Trump's statements continued to travel just as effectively on all social media platforms after his removal. His messages were spread by both right-leaning accounts and left-leaning accounts, as the increased user engagement led social media algorithms to push Trump's message on their platforms.

"The censorship of misinformation will not help people understand the dangers of misinformation."

Similarly, while efforts in censorship in the media have made significant strides in decreasing the spread of misinformation and disinformation, removing individuals from social media platforms does not solve the spread of false information. Studies have found that censorship merely disrupts harmful networks and blurs the influence of these individuals; false information spreads amidst censorship because people don't know how to engage with sources of misinformation.

Moreover, the censorship of misinformation and policies implemented to punish individuals who spread false information will scare individuals from engaging in free speech on social media platforms. For instance, multinational financial technology company PayPal received severe backlash after implementing a policy that would fine users up to $2500 if they send, publish, or post misinformation. PayPal's policy change is a peek into how private companies can exploit its users regarding their freedom of speech. Instead of giving its users a warning, PayPal has demonstrated the dangers of allocating absolute control of the spread of information to private companies.

It's without a doubt that misinformation has caused much harm, disruption, and chaos throughout the globe; however, the censorship of misinformation will not help people understand the dangers of misinformation or cultivate methods of distinguishing between legitimate and misleading articles. It will merely encourage individuals to find new, creative methods to spread misinformation. Though censorship on social media may be a step in causing long-term prevention of false information, there must exist policies and regulations to ensure individuals understand how false information spreads, the severe impact to communities, and methods to encourage logical analysis of false information.

Stan Cho *is a fourth-former from Busan, South Korea. He may be reached at scho25@choate.edu*

Taiwan Could Take a Lesson From Ukraine's Resistance

By **Tyler Kuo '23**
Copy Editor

The Ukraine-Russia War has changed the course of the Taiwan Strait war from all sides — the People's Republic of China (PRC), the U.S., and Taiwan. For more than 70 years, the threat of Chinese invasion has loomed over Taiwan. Ironically, the persistent pressure of invasion led to the popular assumption that the invasion would never happen. This complacency was shattered with the onset of the Ukraine-Russia War.

The resistance and success of the Ukrainian people has led to an increased focus on how Taiwan may better prepare its national security to deter invasion; this sentiment has led to Taiwan adopting the "porcupine" approach. This strategy, introduced by former Chief of the Taiwanese Armed Forces Lee Hsi-Ming, is known as the "Overall Defense Concept."

At the heart of this system is a recognition that Taiwan cannot compete with the militarily superior China. Thus, the strategy highlights that Taiwan must adopt strategic warfare through nimble and light strikes. The porcupine does not need to be larger or stronger than a predator; it only needs to have sharp quills that make it difficult for predators to approach.

Historically, Taiwan's military expenditures have been on larger ticket items with offensive capabilities such as fighter jets, tanks, or battleships. According to experts, this equipment, while politically popular, is less effective in an actual war. Alternatively, defensive weaponry, such as the HIMAR system and Javelin or Stinger missiles, have been used to great success in Ukraine. These are mobile systems that fall under the "porcupine" approach and are more agile and more concealable than conventional weaponry.

The responsibility falls on the U.S. to maintain arms sales and work closely with Taiwan to deter China from invasion; however, the U.S. is obliged to also adhere to the "One China" policy, conceding that China has claim to surrounding territories, to prevent a pretext for China to launch an invasion.

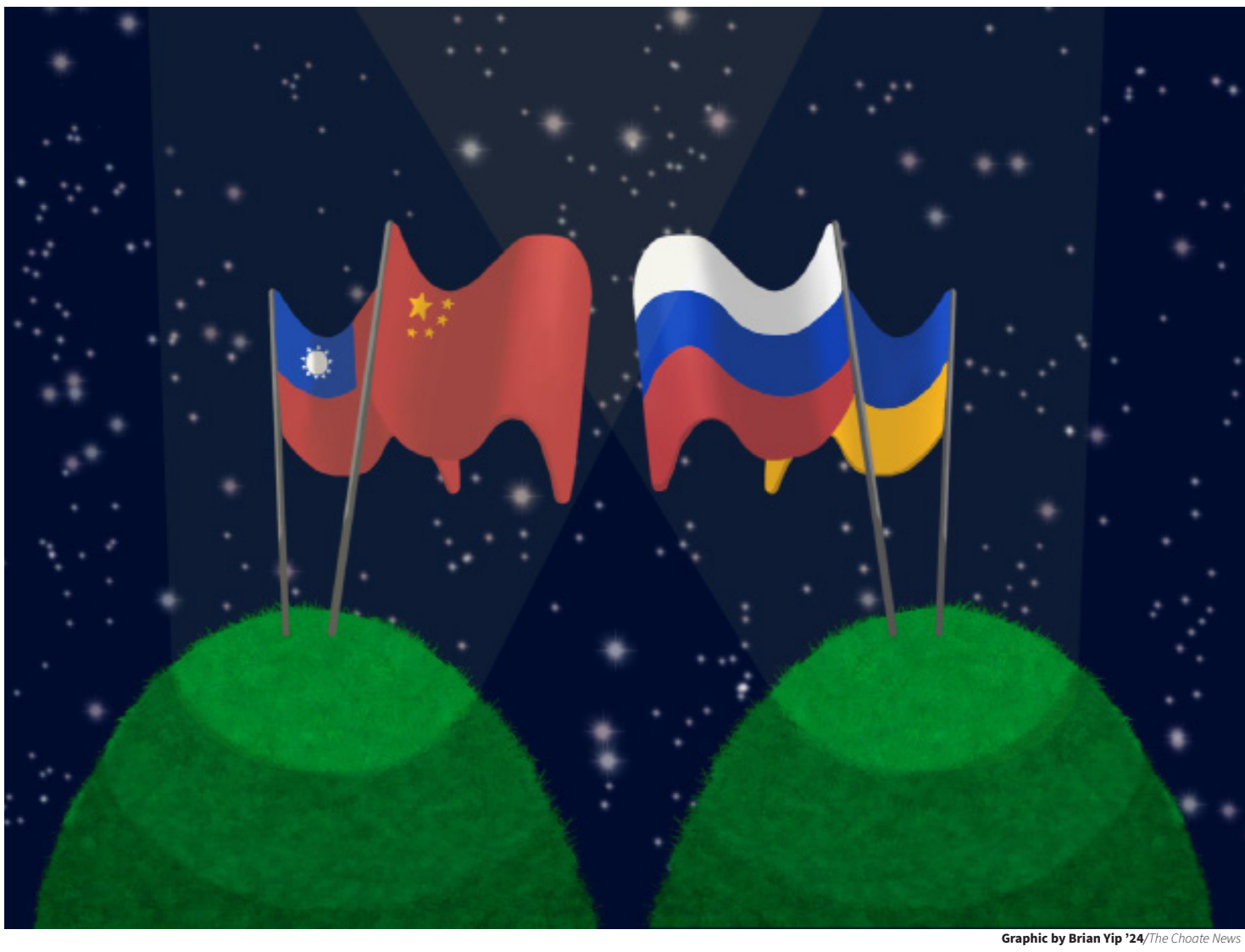
The critical question is: will the U.S. be able to support Taiwan without inducing a Chinese invasion? Currently, legislation approved in Congress has allowed the U.S. to bolster military support for Taiwan, including provisions for billions of dollars in additional security assistance. While China viewed this as a very provocative step, it would also reaffirm the United States' ongoing commitment to Taiwan's defense while still not straying from the "One China" policy, adopted in 1972 where the U.S. "acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China" and "does not challenge that position."

The other question is whether the U.S. ought to gradually move from a stance of "strategic ambiguity." The U.S. has not publicly stated whether they would come to Taiwan's defense in the event of a Chinese invasion, to one of "strategic clarity," in which the U.S. would commit to deploying troops and arms to the defense of Taiwan.

There seems however, to be a creeping policy toward strategic clarity in that Biden has made four public comments since becoming president that the U.S. would support Taiwan in circumstances of Chinese aggression. This seems to build upon similar commitments that the U.S. has in other regions, including member nations of NATO or Asian allies such as South Korea and Japan. Nevertheless, Biden has also made clear in the Ukraine situation that the U.S. does not want to come into direct conflict with another nuclear power which would be the case if U.S. troops were to defend Taiwan's territory.

The U.S. shift toward strategic clarity is a necessary shift in foreign policy. The United States needs to send a message to the rest of the world that aggression toward sovereign nations will not be tolerated — with rising tensions, standing on the sidelines and not taking a stance is no longer an option for the United States. While moving to strategic clarity can and should be done in a way that adheres to the "One China" policy, words must be matched with actions if they are to have the intended effect of deterring China and reassuring allies. The U.S. needs to ensure continuous financial and military support for Taiwan to dissuade Chinese aggression while sticking to the long-held "One China" policy.

Tyler Kuo *is a sixth-former from Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR. He may be reached at tkuo23@choate.edu*



Graphic by Brian Yip '24/*The Choate News*

Cats at Choate

By **Erin Li '24**
Copy Editor

While dogs are often observed racing each other across Memorial field, barking up a storm while being tied to the lampost outside of the dining hall, or huddled around and cooed at in the dorms, their feline counterparts often go unnoticed. Residing in several dorms across Choate's campus, students can find the cats of Choate relaxing on a windowsill or napping under a bed.

Photo Courtesy of Mr. Ian Wollman

Carlitos

This playful seven-year-old black cat currently lives off-campus but has resided in Memorial House and Nichols in the past. Belonging to Chinese teacher Mr. Ian Wollman, Carlitos loves snacking on catnip and "making biscuits." Always scampering around the apartment, Carlitos is big on chasing feathered objects. Carlitos loves exploring his surroundings from the view of his owner's shoulders and watching birds and neighborhood dogs from the window.

Photo Courtesy of Ms. Cahaley Markman

Baby Ruth & Bunina

Belonging to English teacher Ms. Cahaley Markman, these cats' names reflect their owner's love for reading. Baby Ruth is named after the character Ruth in the book *Housekeeping*. "It just felt kind of perfect because the main character's a little awkward, and my cat is awkward and weird," Ms. Markman shared. Bunina is named after a Russian poet honoring Ms. Markman's previous cat, which was named after a Russian author. Born in Jordan and now residing in Hall, these cats have seen the world.

Photos Courtesy of Mr. Will Morris

Kiki & Cali

This pair was rescued at the same time from the Meriden Humane Society. When science teacher Mr. Will Morris's daughter discovered them while volunteering at the animal shelter, the family fell in love with these fluffy creatures and started the adoption process immediately. Although the pair has contrasting personalities, Kiki's sense of adventure complements Cali's sweet and simple nature. They can be found snacking on tuna or chasing each other through Mr. Morris's apartment in Tenney House.

Timothy Hank Woody De Leon

Although Timothy was found abandoned on the side of a highway, he now has a loving home with his owner, English teacher Ms. Leela Woody in the Library dorm on campus. This rambunctious cat has a hobby of tearing up furniture, as well as pouncing on his dog brothers. Known as the "king of Library," Timothy loves lounging on his "throne" (a cat bed shaped like a crown) and watching over his subjects from the fourth-floor window.

Photo Courtesy of Ms. Leela Woody

Ginger

An eight-year-old tabby, Ginger has definitely had his fair share of challenges. Battling "scaredy cat syndrome" and kidney health issues, Ginger does not have much opportunity to explore beyond his home in Nichols with Associate Dean of College Counseling Ms. Michelle Thompson-Taylor. When not scratching up furniture or sitting by the window, Ginger can be found cuddling up with his favorite toy caterpillar. Although Ginger has a fear of humans, he has no problem entertaining himself by chasing a ball or rolling around.

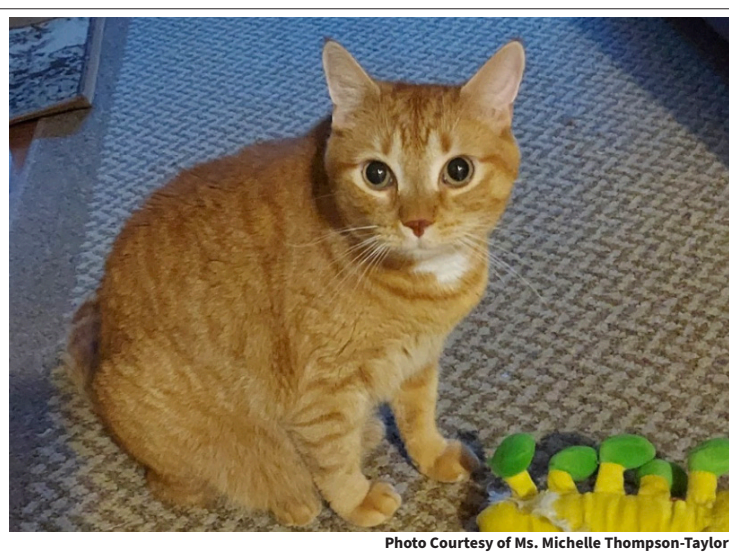


Photo Courtesy of Ms. Michelle Thompson-Taylor

Photo Courtesy of Ms. Emily Kaplan

MJ & Yukon

With their eighth birthdays coming up, MJ and Yukon are definitely among the wiser cats of Choate. Yukon has accompanied history teacher Ms. Emily Kaplan since her previous job at Tabor Academy, and MJ joined later as a companion for Yukon. While Yukon always initiates playtime, MJ does not tend to reciprocate the energy and prefers to lounge around. While these cats have distinct personalities, they both run to greet her by affectionately rubbing against her leg at the end of each day.

Photo Courtesy of Ms. Laura Pace

Josie & Kevin

This dynamic duo consists of two orange tabby siblings: Josie and Kevin. Hailing from Charlottesville, Virginia, these little kittens have traveled long distances. Kevin can be found escaping from history teacher Ms. Laura Pace's apartment and wandering the halls of the Logan Munroe dorm, while Josie is more shy and much prefers watching the action from a distance.

Erin Li *may be reached at erli24@choate.edu*

THE DUAL LIFE OF COACH AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICER MR. DARRYL MAYER

By **Ada Tieanworn '26**
Reporter

A former jiu-jitsu coach and a current wrestling coach and Community Safety officer, Mr. Darryl Mayer has done it all. He has become a welcoming and appreciated presence on campus as he enters his second year at Choate, helping students and faculty alike.

As an officer, Mr. Mayer feels strongly connected to the community. "I love taking care of people," he shared. "I have so many faces to watch out for, and I try to keep them safe like they're my own family."

Interestingly enough, Mr. Mayer often handles popcorn-related incidents while on duty. Based on his experience, students are prone to setting off the fire alarm when microwaving, and accidentally burning, their popcorn. However, according to Mr. Mayer, there is always a silver lining. "You'll smell like popcorn!"

Once after handling a popcorn-burning situation, Mr. Mayer's jacket smelled so strongly of popcorn that he had to get a new one.

Another side of Mr. Mayer that students often see is his job as the Wrestling Assistant Coach. Mr. Mayer believes that there is something special about helping student-athletes achieve their goals.

"Winning myself wouldn't even feel as good as watching a student-athlete do what they wanted to do," he said.

Mr. Mayer's sports endeavor started in high school. After wanting to try something other than basketball, he started working on wrestling. Mr. Mayer acknowledges that wrestling is a tough sport.

"The first week of the first year of wrestling is miserable," he said. "Your body will hurt, and throwing up during practice is not an uncommon occurrence," he said. "However, as time goes on, you build upon your foundation and improve."

Mr. Mayer started by setting small goals for himself, including making it through practice and learning a new skill. Overtime, the small achievements accumulated into big progress.

He feels like many things he learned from wrestling translate to other aspects of his life. "There's nothing that can beat me down," he said confidently.

After coaching for 14 years, Mr. Mayer believes wholeheartedly that "once you've wrestled, everything in life is easy." By taking things step by step, it is possible to get through any challenge, no matter how difficult it may seem to start.

Mr. Mayer's favorite aspect of Choate is its diverse community. Coming from a public school, he was used to everyone being from the same town. Seeing people from all over the world gathering in one place is a fascinating experience. "You have people from countries 20 hours away. It's amazing," he said.

Mr. Mayer's one message to the Choate community is to take care of each other. "It doesn't hurt to be nice to everybody," he said. With all his life experience, Mr. Mayer feels that being nice is an easy thing to do — so why not do it?

"Just take care of each other and be nice. Hopefully, that translates outside Choate and makes the world a better place," Mr. Mayer concluded.

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Photo by Junho Lee '24/The Choate News

Mr. Darryl Mayer balances his two roles in the Choate community.

Choate Musicians Take on Juilliard Pre-College

By **Amelia Sipkin '25**
Copy Editor

At the crack of dawn on Saturdays, the alarms of seven Choate musicians ring for their early morning shuttle to New York City. Every week, they embark on the two-and-a-half hour drive at 6:30 a.m. to attend the rigorous Pre-College program at The Juilliard School. After an action-packed day of back-to-back rehearsals, private lessons, and high-level training courses, they carpool back to campus, returning to their dorms as late as 10:00 p.m.

The Pre-College program is highly selective. Gigi Chen '24, an avid violin player since the age of three, auditioned twice with their friend Shawn Yang '24 before being accepted into the program this year. "We both auditioned together in freshman year and then didn't get in, and then we both auditioned last year and got in," they explained.

Percussionist Jason Chang '26 was surprised when he received his letter of acceptance after auditioning in the spring of last year. "I wasn't really expecting to get in. It was more of something that I just did for fun," he said.

The audition process is elaborate and extensive. It consists of three components: a video submission, an in-person callback, and a brief interview. Grace Yoon '26, a passionate bassoon player, auditioned in the spring of 2021. In her video submission, she played an etude of her choice, three movements of a concerto she had been practicing, and scales. In her callback, which was online due to Covid-19 protocols at the time, she completed a sight-reading test and a short interview.

Days in the Juilliard Pre-College program are fast-paced and extremely demanding. Schedules among students vary. Chen's day consists of a morning chamber music class, a private lesson, a music theory class, an ear training class, and a two-and-a-half-hour orchestra rehearsal. Their jam-packed schedule contains back-to-back classes without a lunch break.

As a percussionist who loves playing the xylophone and is adept in marimba, bass drum, snare drum, timpani, triangle, and more, Chang attends percussion-focused ear training classes, percussion ensemble rehearsals, and private percussion lessons on top of the other general music courses. Studying under the five percussion faculty members that span different specialties, Chang is able to hone in on different percussion techniques.

Yoon, a long-time music lover, also attends a reed-making class, which is specific to her instrument. She only started learning the bassoon in early 2020 after deciding to switch from the oboe in middle school. She described the well-rounded experience she has had with her teachers and classes at Juilliard, saying, "It really goes beyond just an hour[-long] lesson. They try to help you within all facets of your music career, and I think that education has helped me build up my own motivations and my own passions as well."

Another challenging part of the program is the loss of a day for relaxation, hanging out with friends, and all the Saturday fun that goes on at Choate. These students have chosen to give up sports games and school dances to attend the Juilliard Pre-College program, but they all agree that the sacrifice is well worth it.

Chen emphasized how extraordinary, valuable, and inspiring the program is. They expressed appreciation for their teacher's dedication to their craft. "My private teacher, he basically stays and teaches pretty much every day of the week from 9 a.m. to sometimes midnight," they said. "They're just as dedicated to teaching as they are to music."

The program also allows participants to meet and play with other musicians hailing from all different backgrounds. Chen explained that some students travel hundreds of miles weekly just to attend the Pre-College program for the day. "I know of other people from Canada who fly in weekly just to do the program," they said.

Touching on the atmosphere at Juilliard on Saturdays, Yoon said, "The kids there are insanely talented. Everyone is so passionate about what they're doing, and the same goes for all the teachers."

Although Juilliard's Pre-College program is designed for aspiring professional musicians, some musicians who devote their Saturdays to Juilliard do not necessarily want to pursue music in college or as a career. While Yoon, Chen, and Chang are unsure where their musical journeys will lead them, they will continue to immerse themselves in the invaluable Juilliard Pre-College experience.

"Practicing with Juilliard faculty and with Juilliard students — it's a completely different level," Yoon said. "It's helped me improve so much. It's given me so many new experiences that I wouldn't have been able to try out otherwise."

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Graphic by Melody Qian '24/*The Choate News*

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK DANCE PROGRAMMING

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

Flamenco Workshop: Renowned flamenco dancer Ms. Belén Maya led a flamenco workshop on Monday and Tuesday afternoon in the Colony Hall Dance Studio. Ms. Maya introduced faculty members and students in attendance to basic flamenco steps and hand gestures, common flamenco rhythms, and poses that represent the strength and history of the art form.

Photo Courtesy of Choate Flickr

Chinese Dance Workshop: Ms. Nico Li taught attendees a combination inspired by Mongolian Dance on Wednesday afteroon in the Colony Hall Dance Studio. Students used chopsticks as a prop. After learning the combination, students performed it to each other in small groups.

Photos by Ramsey Scott '23/*The Choate News*

Flamenco Lecture and Demonstration: In the Paul Mellon Arts Center Recital Hall, Ms. Belén Maya introduced her audience to modern flamenco and how it differs from its traditional form. She performed short excerpts and analyzed them to illustrate her innovative approach to the art form.

Chinese Traditional Artist Paints with a Contemporary Twist

By **Laya Raj '24**
Copy Editor

The Paul Mellon Arts Center transformed into an art gallery on Friday, October 16, as it displayed Chinese ink paintings by renowned artist Mr. Zhimi Li. A graduate of the China Academy of Art, Mr. Li explores the fusion of traditional Chinese ink painting techniques with modern subjects from everyday life. Colorful depictions of familiar objects such as teapots, persimmons, and even a cell phone on a tripod constituted the illustrations the Choate community admired. Hosted by Yoyo Zhang '24 with the help of Kelly Li, a high schooler from Massachusetts, "Bringing Chinese Traditional Culture into Contemporary Art" showcased some of Mr. Li's recent works.

Over the summer, Zhang began planning this event with Mr. Li, a family friend, under her organization, TEDx@Choate. While the event serves as an exhibition of Mr. Li's artwork, Zhang also envisioned it as a space for the artist to share his eclectic approach to traditional Chinese ink painting. "Bringing Chinese Traditional Culture into Contemporary Art" was planned for mid-October, which happened to kickstart a thrilling lineup to Choate's first International Education Week.

Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/*The Choate News*

Mr. Li signs postcards with his work on them after the Q&A Session.

Photo by Ramsey Scott '23/*The Choate News*

Students admire Mr. Li's artwork in the Paul Mellon Arts Center Gallery.

All of the paintings exhibited were drawn while Mr. Li was in the U.S. "They reflect things I see and feel in my daily life," he shared. "It feels like a diary of images depicting my feelings about the little things in life." Many of his paintings are accompanied by Chinese poems.

Rebecca Denhart '23, who is Chinese and learns Mandarin at Choate, appreciated the cultural aspects of the exhibition. "I loved seeing Chinese culture highlighted within the walls of Choate, feeling connected when [I] saw familiar Chinese items and values I have in my own life, and the openness of Mr. Li and his family in talking to everyone at the event," she said.

The exhibition was followed by a Q&A session with Mr. Li, which was hosted by Chinese Club Vice President Lauren Kee '24, Choate Korean Friendship Association Cabinet Member Danny Yoon '24, and Art Club President Denhart. Mr. Li's responses were translated from Mandarin into English by Zhang.

After the discussion, Choate community members each selected a postcard decorated with Mr. Li's work and received his autograph. Along with his signature, Mr. Li also drew a doodle on the back of the postcards. "Sometimes it can be hard to maintain creativity, so it's helpful to hear his experience using art as an outlet for expression. Just to see his little doodles on everything he signed seemed like even a small aspect of that," said Mikayla DaSilva '24, an artist and poetry enthusiast who attended the event.

Reflecting on the event, Mr. Li said, "The most memorable moment for me was when every teacher and student there was able to choose their favorite notecard, which just shows that the appreciation of beauty is not restricted by the differences in language and culture."

During the Q&A session, Mr. Li explained that he finds peace and positivity through creating art. He compared the joy of revisiting the same seemingly ordinary subjects in multiple paintings to the happiness he derives from eating the same type of bread every day.

"His work showed me that there is so much more significance that can be found in small items when we acknowledge how our emotions can be tied to them," said Denhart.

Choate community members can learn more about Mr. Li and his work through the eight books he gifted to the Andrew Mellon Library. "Each book in the selection is also unique and leans on a different perspective — beautiful scenery, food, longing, family, nostalgia, and other emotions — and they represent my emotional journey in the past few years," said Mr. Li.

"Bringing Chinese Traditional Culture into Contemporary Art" aimed to share a traditional form of visual art with the school community and spark conversations about its transnational significance. The exhibition executed this goal beautifully: "It was a really immersive way to learn about Chinese poetry, art, and life," said DaSilva.

Note: Quotes by Mr. Li were translated from Mandarin Chinese to English by Yoyo Zhang '24 and Lauren Kee '24.

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SPORTS

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FIELD REPORT

Choate Fall Record

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Varsity Games

Boys' Soccer (8-2-1)
vs. Kent, 9-0

Girls' Soccer (7-1)
vs. Taft, 4-0

Girls' Volleyball (8-2)
vs. Taft, 3-0

Boys' Football (4-0)
vs. Taft, 35-0

Girls' Field Hockey (2-6)
vs. Taft, 0-6

Girls' Cross Country (2-2)
vs. Deerfield, 21-34

Boys' Cross Country (0-5)
vs. Deerfield, 44-15

Boys' Water Polo (6-2)
vs. Westminster, 19-10

J.V. Games

Boys' Soccer (3-3-1)
vs. Kent, 7-5

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

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

Girls' Field Hockey (3-1-2) *vs. Taft, 5-1*

Team Managers: For Love, Spirit, and Everything Else

By **Madeleine Detray '24**
Reporter

While we often highlight the achievements of successful athletes, the crucial role of student managers is frequently overlooked.

To gain insight into these leaders' responsibilities, stressors, and time commitments, Jack McGuane '26, Austin Zhao '23, and Adama Sowe '23 shared their respective experiences as student managers.

While McGuane has been interested in football from a young age, his parents' disapproval of the high levels of contact associated with the sport prohibited him from actively participating until his freshman year. Initially, he planned on contributing as an athlete but, later, jumped at the opportunity to be on the managing side of the sport.

As a manager for Boys' Varsity Football, McGuane's responsibilities require him to "work with the equipment and prepare everything, whether that's footballs or help with getting their pads on." In addition, McGuane helps upload and edit video footage, acting as an all-around assistant.

Similarly, Zhao and Sowe, the managers of Girls' Varsity Volleyball and Girls' Varsity Soccer respectively, became involved in managing due to their love for the community and appreciation for the sports.

"Volleyball was a really big thing in Texas, and so we would often go watch volleyball games. I didn't really play myself, but I thought it was fun," said Zhao.

While these three may not contribute athletically to Choate's victories on the field or court, they work hard to make sure everything runs smoothly behind-the-scenes.

Though often overlooked, being a student manager is a time consuming responsibility.

According to Sowe, "I have the exact same time commitment as an athlete, just no physical activity." Similarly, in response to the relative time commitment between athletes and managers, McGuane shared, "We have to be there before most of the players who are on the field to set up."

Their favorite part of managing is unanimous: the team. "It's just really great to be part of a team where I can feel like I'm actually contributing and helping them out," explained Zhao. McGuane added, "I know the guys. I feel like they are comfortable with me. We respect each other, and it's just a good time. If you're there for them, they're there for you."

Despite the significance and difficulty of their positions, some team managers feel that they are underappreciated. While McGuane, Zhao, and Sowe each feel recognized and acknowledged on their respective teams, Zhao shared, "There's a lot of people who I would tell, 'Oh, I'm going to manage,' and they would scoff at that. They're like, 'Oh, so you do nothing.'"

Yet, this could not be farther from the truth.

Zhao spends afternoon practices with his team, keeps scores during scrimmages, ensures balls stay pumped, and retrieves medical kits and towels when needed.

Sowe works tirelessly to ensure that all the Girls' Varsity Soccer athletes are adequately prepared for games, have their equipment, and feel supported.

As displayed by McGuane, Zhao, and Sowe's thoughtfulness, commitment, and consideration, team managers are indeed crucial leaders in our athletic department and valuable members of our Choate community. They are undeniably critical contributors to the teams' success and in the future, they should always be recognized as such.

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Graphic by Maddy Childs '26/*The Choate News*

SACHI MEHRA '23 MAKES VARSITY FOOTBALL HISTORY

By **James Levien '24**
Reporter

Playing football has always been a dream for Sachi Mehra '23. Her perception was forever changed after watching a Nickelodeon show one day in the fourth grade. She saw a girl playing football on the television screen and instantly became inspired to try it herself.

This dream was, unfortunately, put on hold due to the absence of a team at her middle school. However, her passion for football was reignited during her sophomore year at Choate during the annual Girls' Powderpuff Flag Football Tournament. Mehra learned from a team manager that Varsity Football was open to all genders.

One obstacle down, she still had another to tackle. The summer before her junior year, she spent every day convincing her parents to allow her to play such a high-contact sport. Finally, she succeeded and had the go-ahead to email Varsity Football Head Coach Lawrence Spinatto and was soon confirmed to play for Team 122.

Mehra's most significant challenge in playing football, aside from the physical size difference and physical aspects of the game, was finding a sense of belonging on the team. Fortunately, her confidence grew quickly after observing the fellowship of the squad.

"My favorite part is the family aspect of football and feeling really supported throughout my whole journey. I stopped questioning why I was on the team and never felt excluded," she explained. Her hard work and intense determination during practices paid off in Choate's game against Kent on October 1.

Late in the fourth quarter, with a significant lead built up, the coaches called for number 87 on the sidelines. Mehra had been waiting for this moment and rushed onto the field with the rest of the offense.

On her first drive, the play was called: a screen pass designed for her; however, she dropped the pass due to an awkward release from the quarterback and light reflecting in her eyes. After the incompletion, the offense was forced to punt.

Mehra's immediate reaction was frustration. "This was my one opportunity, and I wasted it," said Mehra. Nevertheless, with the encouragement of her teammates, she rallied her spirits and readied herself for the next pass.

That chance came on the second-to-last play of the game. A screen pass was designed for Mehra once again, and this time, she seized the moment. Describing the play as a blur, she recounted "seeing the ball and catching the ball" before getting tackled by the Kent safety.

Mehra made history in this play by becoming the first girl to ever log a reception in a game for Choate Varsity Football.

"It wasn't until seeing the pictures on Sunday that I processed what had happened. I think the coaches were happier than I was at that moment. Coach Spinn knows how much I put into it and how much I love it," Mehra shared.

In catching that screen pass, Mehra not only lived her dream but made her mark in Choate history.

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Photo courtesy of Choate Flickr

Sachi Mehra '23 makes history as she catches the ball.

Fernanda Opazo '25 Dazzles Choate's Volleyball Courts

Photo by Toffy Prakittiphoom '24/*The Choate News*

Fernanda Opazo '25 serves during a home volleyball game.

By **Sophie Li '26**
Reporter

Fernanda Opazo '25, a new sophomore from Chile, has quickly become a star setter for Girls' Varsity Volleyball. Born and raised in Chile, Opazo just set foot in the U.S. a month ago.

Opazo came to the U.S. in hopes of experiencing what she could not experience at home. Luckily, she has found that here at Choate. "The education here is amazing. The courses are amazing," she said.

At the same time, moving to a foreign country has been a challenge. The language barrier is one aspect that Opazo struggles with. "It's hard to communicate on the court because English is definitely not my first language."

Thankfully, many of the other Latinas on her team have helped her communicate with teammates and coaches.

She also shared that American volleyball is entirely different from what she is accustomed to playing at home. Opazo commented, "It's a different game. The biggest difference I encountered was the speed in which the game was played and the difference in setting technique." Although transitioning to a new setting has had its difficulties, Opazo has thoroughly enjoyed her experience so far.

Despite having only been on the team for a few weeks, Opazo has found great joy in the sense of camaraderie she shares with her teammates.

She said, "I really like the people here. The volleyball team is so nice. They are so amazingly good."

The team has had an successful season so far and Opazo is proud of how they have learned and grown together in the past few weeks.

Although it is not Opazo's goal to go pro, she aspires to play volleyball in college, whether it's D1 or D3. Opazo is an exciting new addition to the team and has settled in quickly. She is excited for what's to come having already had a great start to the season.

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