

Passing INotes

ParkmontSchool

Sessions 1-2, 2016

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Upper School Students get excited at Calleva, Fall 2016.



Middle Schoolers pose for a photo deep into our hike through Big Meadow.

Reaching New Heights in The Shenandoahs

This fall, for the first time in several years, our middle school ventured out into Shenandoah National Park to watch the turning of the leaves. Students woke up early on the morning of October 12th for an early departure to the park, where we spent the morning hiking up to Hawksbill Peak. The view from the highest point in the park was spectacular, and after a break at the top we hiked back to the vans and drove to Big Meadows, where we ate our lunches and played frisbee by the visitor's center. Afterwards lunch, a group of students ran through the meadows, exploring the rock outcroppings and getting spooked by deer skeletons in the process.

We returned to the valley two weeks later with a smaller group of middle schoolers for an overnight camping trip — a truly memorable experience. We set out at noon on the 31st of October to Hone Quarry Campground, tucked deep in George Washington National Forest. Students set up camp and prepared a campfire

Check out our weekly blog on happenings at Parkmont School! Visit our homepage at www.parkmont.org.



LOOKING AHEAD

DEC. 21
End of Session II

DEC. 22-JAN. 1
Holiday Break

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Session III

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MLK, Jr. Holiday
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feast of beans, corn, asparagus, sausages and hot dogs. After a s'mores dessert, we took our kids on a night hike up to Hone Quarry Reservoir. Our kids got their first look at the milky way, and we made our way into the clearing we saw an enormous shooting star sear across the sky. The following day, students hiked up to the observation tower at High Knob before heading home.



The view from the top of the old fire tower at High Knob, with our brave campers down below.

Annual Fall Potluck Dinner

This November, Parkmont families joined our staff in our favorite event of the year, the Annual Parkmont Potluck Dinner. This event is special to us because it allows such an excellent visual representation of how diverse our student body is here at Parkmont. Every year, we have a beautiful array of ethnic foods and dishes, and students and parents get to learn about the different cultures represented here at school. This year we enjoyed, among other things, El Salvadorian pupusas, delicious Chicken Matza Ball Soup, a variety of homemade Mac & Cheese dishes, a wonderfully spicy fish dish, Peruvian chicken, and a potluck staple — Kentucky Fried Chicken.

The trivia game this year was hosted by the excellent Kim Schraf, an english teacher here at Parkmont and a famous actress in the area. The competition was fierce, with families and students rushing to answer questions taken from their main lesson classes. A big thank you to all families and students for participating and being a part of the wonderful evening.



Abbie, left, and Emma share a laugh during the three legged race from our field day!

School Spirit

School spirit is at an all-time high this year! In an effort spearheaded by spirit specialist Bridget Mullins and sophomores Grace Nimley and Giselle Reyes, Parkmont is incorporating advisory challenges into our curriculum. Spirit Week kicked off with twin day, and students got advisory points throughout the week for dressing up with spirit. We spent the month of October celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month — each morning students learned about important Hispanic leaders, artists, scientists and activists — and we had a school wide advisory trivia challenge during the first week of November.

This past week, our spirit challenge continued with our first Field Day of the year! Students broke up into their advisory teams and stormed the Carter Barron fields. Donning their advisory colors, they competed against their classmates at a number of stations, including a semi-messy egg toss, a heated three-legged race, a chicken relay and a school-wide game of capture the flag. Already looking forward to our next field day in the spring!



Matt and Giselle, virtually identical for our twin day.



The gang circles up to discuss their accomplishments and fears from their day at Calleva.

Upper Schoolers Go to Calleva

In early November, Parkmont's upper school students got out of the classroom for a day and found themselves 30-feet up in the trees. They were experiencing one of the most exciting days of the fall, when Parkmont students head out to the Calleva farm in Poolesville, MD, to challenge themselves and their fears on the ropes course. Students spent the morning flying down zip lines, charging up tree trunks and battling their way up a giant ladder in teams of two. One of the best parts of the day was the farm-to-table lunch. During the lunch break students also observed the goats, fed the pigs and saw what it felt like to hold a chicken. They also had a firsthand opportunity to see where their lunch was grown and prepared. It was a beautiful and sunny day, perfect for being in the woods, cheering on classmates, and working together in advisory groups.

Nathan and Graham
conquer Jacob's Ladder!



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American University Superstars

For the last several years, we have partnered with the American University Intern Program, where we work with several of their students as Interns at Parkmont. This year, we had a wonderful experience with Devin Kuhn and Loie Faulkner as interns here. We loved working with them and will miss them when they go back to being full-time students in the new year.

Intern Devin Kuhn:

Hello! My name is Devin Kuhn and I am a freshman at American University. I am majoring in neuroscience and following the pre medicine track in the hopes of becoming a neurosurgeon. I am currently enrolled in a semester program called Washington Mentorship Program. I have core classes three times a week like politics in the U.S. and intercultural understanding and an internship two times a week.

I have been working at Parkmont since September and am unfortunately near the end. Working at Parkmont has allowed me to work in a professional environment but also allowed me to build a relationship with students. I am incredibly pleased with my placement and couldn't ask for a better place to work. Even though I have worked with younger students before, I was skeptical at the beginning, as I never worked one on one with so many students. Things have been going amazingly and I believe that I have grown as a person. Along with me helping students with what they are learning, they have definitely taught me countless lessons. I am extremely thankful for this opportunity and experience and I can't wait to visit everyone next semester!

Intern Loie Faulkner:

I am a Freshman at American University, pursuing a major in Psychology and a possible minor in Childhood Education. I hope to pursue a career in child and adolescent therapy. I am from Ithaca, New York, a small town upstate that houses both Cornell University and Ithaca College. Coming to DC has certainly been a culture shock; there hasn't been any snow yet, it was 50 degrees on December 1st, and streets with more than 4 lanes are scary. In my free time, I love to sing in choir and read. I have absolutely loved interning at Parkmont — it's such a posi-

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tive environment, and I love being able to build relationships with such smart, capable students. I've been working in English, Science, and Reading classes, as well as tutoring and helping out around the office. I'm having a blast, and I hope to be able to stick around or come back and visit! These kids are the best.

Internship Spotlight

Abbie Jones: The Studio Grooming Salon

My internship is at The Studio Grooming Salon at Four Corners. My internship is a dog salon that caters mostly to nervous dogs, hard to handle dogs, and high maintenance customers. Other dogs that come in are usually when the owner has two dogs. Some of the services are full coat groom's which is a bath and a little tidying up of the fur. They also do regular baths, custom grooms, and handstripping.

Most of the jobs I do are washing and drying dog, cleaning (vacuuming, mopping, cleaning off the tables). I answer the phone and make appointments sometimes, which I think it a good skill for any job. I play with the dogs during the extra time I have and make sure that they aren't fighting. I really do anything that is asked of me.



Abbie on the job!

PSAT

On October 19, ninth through eleventh-grade students took the PSAT, providing them with a chance to practice standardized tests in preparation for the SAT as part of the college admissions process. Students who provided their email addresses on their test answer sheets will be able to access online scores in mid-December at <https://studentscores.collegeboard.org>. We will also receive hard copies of scores by the end of December, and we will send a copy home to families soon after. We are always happy to discuss particular results with individual students and/or families, as needed.

NaNoWriMo

Starting November 1, Parkmont middle schoolers participated in National Novel Writing Month (“NaNoWriMo”) in their English classes. Students set a word goal for the month and wrote writing between 200 and 667 words per day (every day!) until November 30. Cumulatively, students in the two classes wrote just under 276,000 words! Their novels range in topic from love stories to horror tales, in genre from dystopian future to small town Liberia, and in location from Yale’s campus to a typical high school. In early December, students started editing their own and their classmates’ novels, ultimately publishing them so that they can share them with the world. The experience has been enriching and educational for all students, and it has been exciting to watch their writing skills develop.

Class Roundup

There is always a lot of exciting learning taking place at Parkmont, and it’s impossible to cover it all! Here is a glance at a few of the things that have been going on in various classes.

Ecology: Middle school students learned about many different types of organisms and their interactions within unique ecosystems throughout the world. They explored the complex relationships and flow of energy between producers, consumers, and decomposers. Students then had the opportunity to choose an endangered species to research and create a plan to help save the animal. Ecology students were able to witness these concepts in person with a trip to the National Zoo.

Psychology: Parkmont students learned about Operant Conditioning — using reinforcements and punishments to change behavior. In small groups, they developed different reinforcement schedules, or how often a certain behavior earns a reward. Students then created a script to film real-life scenarios for the different reward types. Finally, they filmed four different segments based off of their scripts to show mastery of Operant Conditioning ideas.

Research Writing: Students spent the first half of session two learning MLA form

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and the standards of college writing by working on a five-to-seven-page research paper on a common topic. We chose to explore whether same-sex or mixed-gender classrooms served the student better. The good news: the prevailing thesis is that Parkmont is doing it right! Mixed-gender education was shown to be more practical for shaping students to enter a mixed-gender working world and no less academically beneficial than same-sex schooling. What a relief!

World Geography: In World Geography, we focus on a different continent each week, studying the physical and human characteristics of each one. We are learning about how our earth evolved, how current events and systems are affecting it in our lifetimes, and how what we do now will shape it in years to come. We're also indulging in some of the tastier aspects of the cultures of the world. Our journey through South America has been a highlight so far, as several students prepared particularly delicious food — homemade Colombian empanadas, Ecuadorian ceviche, steak with chimichurri sauce from Argentina, and Chilean leche asada. Que rico!

Mechanics: Mechanics is for many students, the very first steps as they enter into the world of Physics. Core concepts of the class include understanding the nature of linear and projectile motion, Newton's Laws (Inertia, $F=m*a$, and action/reaction forces), momentum, and types of energy. We spend time in the classroom looking at many different aspects of what would otherwise seem like something very simple: a book sitting on a table, a ball rolling down a ramp, or an object flying through the air. By the end of the course, students will have completed several experiments and written lab reports verifying physical laws that govern nature around us. The class culminates with students building a working model-size version of a catapult or trebuchet, and calculating its ability to store and transfer energy.

Spanish: In Spanish 1A, students learned to introduce themselves, speak about their homes, and their families. We spent time in the classroom telling stories, acting out situations, playing games, and listening/watching Spanish dialogue. Stu-

dents have also explored the Day of the Dead, Latin dances, and Hispanic foods. By the end of the course, students will have gained real-world experience conversing with Spanish speakers and be able to engage in basic polite conversation.

Chemistry: The upper school Chemistry students have been spending the beginning part of session 2 learning about the intricacies and unique properties of the 118 elements found on the periodic table. We have been examining the material world, both natural and synthetic as a context to frame and exhibit the individual properties of each element. As we develop a deeper understanding of atoms and their components, we will use atomic energy as a scaffolding to help in understanding part of the chemistry that powers and enables our lives in the 21st century.



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