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Parkmont students explore the world of textiles and fiber, with activities and projects led on Wednesdays by art teacher Khadijah McKaskill.
Speech & Debate On The National Mall
By Bridget Mullins, Teacher
This fall, Parkmont students embarked on a journey to enhance their communication skills; specifically, students were challenged to find ways to manage anxiety, embody the physical and vocal characteristics of a good speaker, use research to support their opinions, and persuade others to see their points of view. Throughout the eight-week course, students were challenged to write several original speeches, engage in debates, and make presentations in front of a variety of audiences. As always, the course culminated with the students’ presentations of their final persuasive speech in a public setting.

On Thursday, October 26, 2017, the Speech and Debate class piled into the Parkmont van and set off down 16th Street, unaware of their final destination. The class had heard rumors of presenting their speeches on the National Mall, so they weren’t surprised to find themselves at the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 14th Street, just a stone’s throw away from the White House.

The students did an amazing job of recruiting passers-by to be audience members, and were rewarded with praise and words of wisdom. A standout memory from the day came when Asa Nugent, a senior, prepared to present his speech on healthcare and, more specifically, why the Affordable Care Act shouldn’t be repealed. As he introduced his topic, the class was shocked to learn that the passer-by recruited to listen to his speech had a meeting with the president later that day to discuss this very topic.

Asa delivered an excellent speech, only to learn later that the passer-by had an opposing opinion on the issue. This experience proved to be an excellent culmination of the course, ultimately giving students firsthand experience with using the new skills that they had obtained and embracing Parkmont’s mission to make the world our classroom.
Student Internship Interview: The Entertainer

During the first few weeks of the session, Parkmont upper schoolers work with advisers and internship coordinators to find a job site that matches their interests and skills. For many students, this first step into the real working world provides an opportunity for hands-on learning about responsibility, hard work and organization. For some, these internships can also be a source for creative inspiration, a therapeutic outlet or a place to collaborate with people who share similar interests. Passing Notes sat down with Graham Velsey, a 10th grader and music enthusiast, to catch up with him about his experience at Forest Hills of DC Retirement Home.

How did you find your internship?
I work best in social situations and I wanted to be able to incorporate music into the internship. They do have music there and they accommodated a Friday piano concert in the schedule for me.

Who do you work with?
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undergrads and grad students who are studying to be nurses and doctors.

**What do you do?**
On Sundays they do Internet Travel, on Mondays to Wednesdays, they do Bingo for Cash, Ice Cream Floats and Corny Jokes and Trivia. I do the bingo. I choose Ping-Pong balls out of the machine with the hand crank. I also get to play the piano during the ice cream social. I play old classical songs from the ’40s, but I also mix in Justin Timberlake and Lil Uzi Vert when I get to use the synthesizer. It’s just me and the piano/keyboard. I would like to eventually use the organ.

**What are the positives you take away from the experience?**
I like talking to people and wheeling them around because I feel like I’m part of the community.

**Could you see yourself doing something like this as a full-time job?**
I feel like I could work there if I could play the keyboard. It would be a part-time job. Thanks for chatting with us, Graham, and good luck with the rest of your internship!

**A Walk In The Haunted Woods**
*By Sam Graul, Teacher/Chaperone*
One cool October evening, on one of the last Fridays of the first session, Parkmont piled a troop of upper schoolers into the vans and headed out to Markoff’s Haunted Forest in Poolesville, Maryland. During what has become an annual tradition, we geared up to enjoy some of the best scares that are offered in the area. After chowing down on some local pizza, we waited for darkness and headed into the haunted trails.

As we walked through each scene, the students’ grips tightened and screams became more frequent and more shrill. We thought we were doing fine, until the first rev of the chainsaw. Everyone took off running, but we all made it out, life and limb intact. Definitely a night to remember.
Chasing Shenandoah Clouds
By Ethan Kuhnhenn, Teacher/Chaperone

As is tradition, when the leaves begin to change and cool weather descends on the nation’s capital, Parkmont middle schoolers pack up the vans and head for the hills in what, for many, is their first campout. Although the campsites change, the general location of these autumn outings remains the same, the spectacular Blue Ridge of the Appalachian Mountains.

This past October we camped at Matthew’s Arm in Shenandoah National Park. Half of the fun was making our way up to the campground, located some 3,000 feet above sea level. It had just rained when we departed on Friday and, as we approached, the front range was shrouded in mist. Winding our way up scenic Skyline Drive was a surreal experience as we drifted in and out of the clouds. We arrived at the campground in damp circumstances, but the Parkmont group quickly got to task, setting up tents and sleeping arrangements before exploring their surroundings in the spooky twilight fog. Did I mention it was Friday the 13th? After a campfire dinner that the students prepared themselves, we huddled around the campfire until, with heavy eyes and full bellies, we hit the hay.

The next morning was a stunning mixture of sun and fog. At three and four
thousand feet, we were privy to an amazing vista of the clouds blanketed below us. We drove an hour south to the Hawksbill trailhead where we began a hike that would lead us to the summit of the mountain, at 4,049 feet, the highest point in the park. After an hour of steady uphill hiking, we made it to the exposed summit under sunny skies and the same billowy clouds below us. We posed for pictures, ate some lunch and headed back to the vans. With time to kill, we decided to make a pit stop at Stribling Orchard outside of Front Royal. On our way back, the clouds parted and we enjoyed a gorgeous afternoon at the orchard, picking apples, tossing the frisbee and soaking in the autumn air.

Can’t wait for our Spring trip!

The Road: Places Along The Way
Parkmont School students wasted no time this fall in spreading out around the region to experience places rich with history, culture and beauty. Here are the places visited in the first two months of school.
Teacher Spotlight: Mike Shoup

Classes: Middle School Math, Algebra 2, Electricity and Magnetism, Upper School Advisor

Years at Parkmont: 4

College Major: Economics and Mathematics

Fastest Marathon (26.2 miles): 3 hours, 26 minutes

When did you know you wanted to be a teacher? When I was 21 and in college. It was the way for me to travel internationally. I wanted to become a math teacher to move to another country and understand a different culture. It was a means to an end.

What has been your favorite Main Lesson to teach? Psychology. There are a variety of projects, including making videos, advertisements, writing self-reflections, and having the students think about themselves and learn about the mysteries of the brain. It’s all about making connections.

You taught in Ghana. How is school there different than Parkmont? Did you learn skills that you use in the classroom here?
In Ghana, there is a focus on rote memorization to the exclusion of critical thinking. Here, I try to incorporate real life intangibles so students can relate to things in their own lives. Some of the things I learned are the basics of classroom management, and that having an intro and a hook and a lesson plan to execute are important.

**What is your message to students who want to be successful at school?**
Work hard and don’t give up.

**You got married over the summer. What other awesome things did you do during your break?**
I rode a camel in the Sahara Desert with my wife. We ate all the pastries in Portugal and I went skydiving.

**What exciting things do you have planned for 2018?**
I’m going helicopter skiing in February in British Columbia.

**What is a goal you’ve set for yourself this year?**
I’m incorporating a variety of assessments to see if students can understand and incorporate a portfolio that shows their proficiency, as opposed to taking a test.

**Last Question: Ramen or Pho**
Ramen
See Me After Class: Faculty On The Go

Dean of Students Nijole Gedutis attended a showing of Hamilton in Chicago.

Math and science teacher Sam Graul accompanied his brother on a six-day backpacking trip in Rocky Mountain National Park, which included a stop overlooking Andrew’s Glacier.

Teacher Bridget Mullins attended the Feria in Malaga, with two friends showing the traditional Andalusian dress.

Teacher Matt McClain and his sister, Maggie, spent five days hiking the Salkantay route to Machu Picchu, Peru.

School Administrator Willa Reinhard and her family enjoyed soaking up the rays at Martha’s Vineyard.
PSAT: Standardized Test Practice

On October 11, upper-school students took the PSAT, which provides practice for standardized tests in preparation for the SAT as part of the college admissions process. The first test results will be available online on December 4, for the school, and on December 11, for students. On that date, students can access scores by signing up at https://studentscores.collegeboard.org. We will receive hard copies later in the month and mail them to families. We are always happy to discuss particular results with individual students and/or families, as needed.

Soccer Gains Ground

By Matthew McClain, Teacher

The Parkmont soccer team returned to top form this year, thanks to the help of senior Asa Nugent and junior Joshua Logan. The team competed in two official matches in its third season led by technical director Matthew McClain.

Our season opener was a dramatic tie against local rival Nora School. Our team this year was incredibly talented, but it took a half of open play to develop our shape and chemistry among players. The result of the game was a 3-3 tie, our best result of the season. Our midfield was spearheaded by junior playmaker Melvin Lazo, an absolute general on the ball with the ability to take games by the scruff of the neck and end them himself. Behind him we employed a strong back four of Tarik Khanjari, Gigi Levin, Katherine Salmeron, and Victory Nnam. These four have spent the last three years studying brick walls around the country in order to transform into one themselves.

Senior captains Asa Nugent and Yann Atchole led the attack, proving the perfect combination of brute force (Yann) and technical prowess (Asa). Nugent was an important link between our midfield and attack, and oftentimes the play ran through him. Logan, a relatively inexperienced free-agent transfer out of the Academia de la Recta Porta, was our wildcard player this year. Although he had only been with the team for a few months, by the first game he had already recorded three assists. He is a deadly asset in the open field, a combination of blinding speed and godlike strength, and we look forward to watching him improve next season.
Poetry@Parkmont: Open Mic Wins Audience

By Kim Schraf, Parkmont Poetry Festival Coordinator

Parkmont School and poetry are comfortable bedfellows. After 35 years of sponsoring the Parkmont Poetry Festival for area writers in grades six through twelve (still going strong!), we debuted Poetry at Parkmont, a series of readings featuring published poets from this writer-rich community, last April. Our second event was held in the Parkmont Commons on Thursday, October 26, and has affirmed the interest and value of this venture.

Three poets, Nawaf Ashur, Kate Young, and Sarah Browning, shared the podium following an open mic that featured Crestwood neighbor Brian McMasters and Brookland-area writer Susan Scheid, a student Festival judge. Whatever negative stereotypes anyone might have held about open mic were promptly put to rest as we heard these moving spontaneous readings. Whatever negative stereotypes anyone might have held about open mic were promptly put to rest as we heard these moving spontaneous readings. What followed was a serendipitous conversation among three poets who had no inkling of what the others planned to read.

But the resonances among the verse of Ashur, a Yezidi immigrant, Young, a translator of Russian works, and Browning, a poet activist who founded Split This Rock, were palpable. It was a lively room afterwards as readers signed books, mingled with our audience of 22 listeners, and enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies. By a unanimous consensus, we’ve agreed to do it again in the spring!
**Parkmont Poetry Festival Call For Submissions**

Submissions are now being accepted for the 2018 Parkmont Poetry Festival. The festival was founded in 1982 by Parkmont School and funded in part by the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Poets in grades 6-12 at any school located in DC can submit up to two original poems to poetry@parkmont.org or to a Parkmont English teacher. Entries must be typed and accompanied by an entry form, available on the website, www.parkmontpoetry.org. The submissions deadline is **February 26, 2018**. Winning poems are selected by a distinguished panel of poet-judges in the spring and published in the festival’s annual booklet. The 2018 Parkmont Poetry Festival will take place on Saturday, April 28 at Zion Baptist Church on Blagden Avenue, across the street from Parkmont School.

**2017-18 Annual Giving Campaign Launches**

Parkmont School’s 46th year is well underway, with plenty of engaging activity and good humor in our very full house and home on 16th Street. For the past three decades, alums, parents, staff, foundations and generous friends have helped us come up with the resources we need, beyond tuition, to do all that we do.

We’re again asking for such help, as we launch our Annual Giving Campaign. Our goal of $55,000 is ambitious, as always, for such a small school. Parkmont’s Annual Giving gifts, in their various sizes, will again help us stay on the road and help our students stay on course for brighter futures.