



# Annual Report

2017-2018



## Parkmont School

Fostering Individual Growth and  
Enthusiasm for Learning

Washington, DC | Grades 6-12, Co-Ed

# Parkmont School

Fostering Individual Growth and Enthusiasm for Learning

4842 Sixteenth Street, NW | Washington, DC 20011  
(202) 726-0740 | [www.parkmont.org](http://www.parkmont.org)  
Grades 6–12, Co-Ed

**Ron McClain**

Head of School

**Nijole Gedutis**

Dean of Students

**Willa Reinhard**

School Administrator and Internship Coordinator

**Erin Lidz**

Communications Coordinator

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**Parkmont School** is a non-profit, independent school governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board, which includes the Head of School, draws its members from groups of concerned stakeholders with special expertise, including current and former parents, alumni, key friends, and faculty. The Board sets school policy, oversees finances, makes decisions that shape the long-term goals of the school, and upholds the philosophies, standards, and quality of Parkmont.

The Parkmont School Annual Report is published by the Communications Office after each fiscal year. We have attempted to make lists of donors as accurate as possible. If any errors are found, please contact Erin Lidz, our Communications Coordinator, and accept our sincere apologies.

For more information about Parkmont School's development efforts, please contact Erin Lidz at [elidz@parkmont.org](mailto:elidz@parkmont.org) or 202-726-0740.

## ON THE COVER

(FROM THE TOP)

Alex Jennison explains the autonomic nervous system for his main lesson students.

Basking in the sun at Greenbrier, Jacob Roberts' face says it all.

Parkmont explorers in Wrangell-St. Elias, Alaska.

Parkmont takes on Nora on the hardwood.

Dear Parkmont and Somerset Alums, Families, and Friends,

Here's our thank-you note to the many of you who helped make this past year another excellent one for our current students and staff. As I write, we're well into our 47th year, our 28th with a high school, and my 38th as Head. We hope you enjoy reading about some of our adventures, some of our students and staff, the incredibly generous local businesses and organizations that host our interns (9,000 hours last year for the group), and a budget that pays for remarkable teachers and makes possible the life-changing opportunity that is Parkmont. You will see reports about the Lentz and Pellaton Funds that sent our students to Alaska again last spring and to camp at the shore and in Shenandoah during the year, and about the Friends group whose help allows us to continue cheering on young poets through our 37-year-old Poetry Festival (with more than 1,300 winners since 1983). Thank you for helping us do what we do and for helping us continue to be an invaluable option for the families that find us.

Our current enrollment of 65 (20 in the Middle School and 45 in the Upper School) is the same as Parkmont's in 1980 in Georgetown and Somerset's during its first decade at the Presbyterian Church on the Circle. This is our 7th year working closely with the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which means that our diversities as a community cross not only the racial/ethnic and learning spectrums, but the socio-economic one as well. Somerset was way ahead of its independent school peers when it set aside 20% of its budget for financial aid in 1977. We started the Washington Small Schools Association in 1985 with Somerset, Thornton, Nora and a half dozen other schools, and we still help lead its effort supporting the work of schools, like Parkmont, where relationships are paramount.

At 70, I'm more grateful than ever to be in daily conversation with young people, sorry my rafting days are over but glad Parkmont's aren't. It is a great gift to be part of this community and to contribute to its work. We cannot depend on the world at times for justice, but opportunity always awaits.

Happy Spring,



Ron McClain  
*Head of School*



This past fall we started **Parkmont Past**, a Facebook group for Parkmont Alums and Staff, which will eventually have 400 to 500 members and several thousand photos from our almost half-century history.

## The Graduation Petition: Me and My Path

Sooner or later, students aiming for a Parkmont diploma will find themselves in Head of School Ron McClain's basement office, seated in his chair and facing him and a half-dozen teachers. An important conversation is in store.

The topic will be the student's petition to graduate, a 20-page paper that distills their educational experience and goals. Seniors begin drafting them in March under the supervision and guidance of a committee composed of teachers and advisors who have engaged with the students during their school journey. Over the course of an hour or so in Ron's office, teachers ask the questions and the student digs deep for the answers that will demonstrate a readiness to move beyond Parkmont. "Sometimes we use the term 'defend the petition,' but that might not capture the underlying dynamic," says Ron.

The petition is a carryover from Somerset, an alternative high school that merged with the Parkmont middle school in 1990. At Somerset, where Ron taught before leading Parkmont, self-reflection and talk of "where people were going with their lives" was part of the everyday. Conversation among students and faculty mattered greatly and disciplinary problem-solving was frequently shared in a democratic way.

For example, any person, policy or occurrence that was concerning to someone was simply added to a list of topics for discussion at the weekly School Meeting of students and staff. "It resulted oftentimes in very interesting discussions



Joseph Doyle and Gigi Levin display their diplomas and graduation roses post-ceremony.

between 17-year-olds and 37-year-olds about what was fair and reasonable and made the most sense," Ron states. It was an effort to get students to take responsibility and think more broadly about their personal lives and the life of the school.

As the school began to graduate its first classes, faculty devised the petition as a culminating and reflective essay and tool for advancement, and the petition meetings as an opportunity for students to articulate the course they were charting for themselves.

At Parkmont — where many are seeking an academic fit that has eluded them elsewhere — students work on the petition with their advisor and choose two other staff members to be on their

committee, which provides feedback on structure and content and sets deadlines.

“One of the major goals of the petition, and this school, is to get students more comfortable talking about their own experience,” Ron explains. “Implicit in that is we are all advantaged by being able to step back and look at what we’re doing honestly – sympathetic to ourselves, but realistic about what’s actually going on.”

A candid conversation about your life with people who have taught you, traveled with you, know you and are deeply invested in your growth might turn out to be a rare opportunity. “This is incredibly important and the petition is the structure and process that we use for support,” Ron says. “The size and nature of our school have a lot to do with the opportunity.”

The petitions and conversations help students anticipate and get over some of the hurdles they are going to face, and can be revealing for everyone involved. As Ron notes, “There are all sorts of things you realize: Oh, now we see more clearly the family dynamic. You end up putting together a whole bunch of pieces that come from seeing the story in a more linear and complete way.

And for the kids to be able to say: Oh, a lot of things have changed. I can manage a lot. I’ve turned out to be more resilient, more creative, more able to do what I need to do than I believed for a long time.”

The forward-looking element is vital at Parkmont and perhaps more vital than it might

be in a high school that assumes that students’ next station will be a four-year college. “If everybody is doing that, it’s kind of simpler for people to envision their futures,” Ron says. “But students here end up entertaining a whole range of things.”

School-wide recognition of completed petitions comes with the process. “It’s announced at morning meeting,” Ron says. “It’s one of the things they get applauded for.”

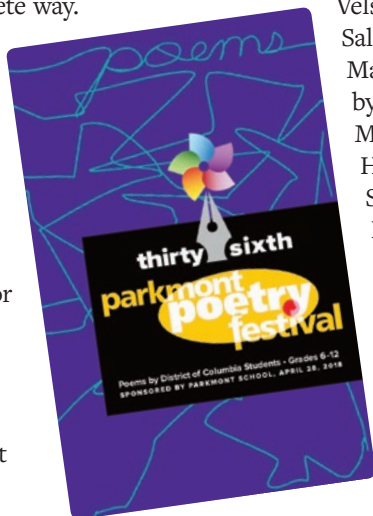


## Parkmont Poets Join Festival Elite

The 36th Annual Parkmont Poetry Festival drew hundreds of submissions from students in public, charter, and private schools across Washington, DC, with Parkmont students penning six of the 40 winning poems.

Parkmont’s top poets — William Aitken, Grade 12; Casper Corsello, Grade 7; Conor Kelly, Grade 9; Graham Velsey, Grade 10; Katherine Salmeron, Grade 11; and Ian Makle, Grade 6 — were joined by winners from Charles Hart Middle, Gonzaga College High, National Cathedral, Sidwell Friends, Capital City Public Charter, Georgetown Day, Ballou Senior High, Richard Wright Public

The Parkmont Poetry Festival, almost as old as Parkmont School, turns 36 with another collection of prize-winning student verse.



Charter, St. Albans, Maret, Sheridan, National Collegiate Preparatory Public Charter, and Washington International. Congratulations to all!

Nearly 120 friends and family turned out for the Festival on April 28 at the Zion Baptist Church Fellowship Hall to hear students present their work. Poet emcee Sharan Strange, an Orangeburg, SC, native and Harvard College graduate who now teaches writing at Spelman College in Atlanta, praised students' flexing of the "empathy muscle." Parkmont teacher and Festival coordinator Kim Schraf, hailing the "quintessential spring day," noted the vital role of teachers in encouraging students to test their creative powers, saying the Festival celebrates not a handful of "bests," but many "excellences," and the raising and connecting of diverse voices. Winning poems are posted at [parkmontpoetry.org](http://parkmontpoetry.org) and also published in an annual Festival collection.

Finalist judge Anne Harding Woodworth, poet and co-chair of the Poetry Board at the Folger Shakespeare Library, provided an integrating twist for the event, writing a poem that wove lines from each of the winning works.

The Festival gained generous support, with \$1,600 donated at the Festival, which helped match a \$5,000 challenge grant for total contributions that surpassed \$12,000. Heading into the Festival's 37th year, we hope that people who recognize the value of activating the voices of young people will help support the Festival. For information about providing support, please contact Kim at [kschraf@parkmont.org](mailto:kschraf@parkmont.org).



## Finding Routes to Independence

As Parkmont students rack up their more than 9,000 collective hours of work at internships over the year, teachers keep an eye out for ways to strengthen the program and meet changing circumstances. Program administrator Willa Reinhard says seniors are taking a bigger role in the search for a placement. The idea is to increase students' capacities for when they have to look for a job on their own, though Willa and other advisors remain supportive. Students learn to follow up with emails and calls,

### INTERNSHIP JOURNAL EXCERPTS

"I think I have changed from the beginning of internship by becoming less shy. In the beginning I wouldn't do a lot of tasks. I didn't ask for more to do because I felt shy. After a month, I started asking for more things to do, and then they gave me new things that I learned how to do."

—Brian Reyes, Fleet Feet Shoe Store

"I would think that my supervisor would see me as a reliable worker, that I always get the job done quickly. I'm very rarely off-task and always finish my work. They would see me as a major help because they have no one to do the invoices, and if I wasn't there, it would be harder for all of them."

—Keonte Jones, The Big Bad Woof

"I have been satisfied with the environment. The people I work with are so laid back, but they still get work done. It's so much fun working with them. I have obviously learned a lot more about computers, and my script-writing techniques are getting better."

—Nubia Montecinos, DCTV



From her desk in the front office, Willa coordinates internship placements and so much more.

of pride in being able to independently get around.”

Adjustments are always in the works to help students grow. Students’ interests change from year to year and new connections must be pursued to accommodate them. New sites added in the past year include DCTV, giving students a chance to tune in to television production work, and a Franciscan monastery garden, providing orientation to vital skills related to horticulture.



keep notes about contacts, and consider how they represent themselves.

Willa says changes in travel options for students to reach their internships pose challenges for the program. Ride-hailing services now offer students easy and direct access, but also take away from an important part of the program — learning to use public transportation. It’s a task and a teaching tool. “They’re looking at maps. They’re thinking about where we are located in relationship to the city,” says Willa. “They’re having to figure out how to navigate. Even if they are nervous in the beginning, you can see their sense

## Oh, Alaska!

**G**rizzlies, a bull moose and glaciers; humpback whales, snowy owls and fjords; hiking and kayaking. The wilderness of Alaska unfolded in Spring 2018 for a Parkmont expedition, with students spending eight days exploring the state as part of the school’s long-standing



Parkmont kayakers raise their paddles in a joyous salute to Blackstone Glacier in Whittier, Alaska.



Alaska again proves to be one of Parkmont's most breathtaking classrooms.

commitment to expand the field of learning with experiences far from home. Led by veteran teacher-guides Matt McClain and Alex Jennison, the group traveled over 1,600 miles across the state, encountering Denali's tundra, the Kenai peninsula, a yak farm in Willow and the abandoned mining town of Kennecott,

along with stops at the Alaska Native Heritage Center and the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center. Students came away with a sense of how big Alaska truly is and the depth and diversity of its scenery and culture.



#### ALASKA JOURNAL EXCERPTS

"I have always had a greater affinity for the man-made than the natural. So this was amazing. Wait, I love nature now. Is that a glacier? Incredible."—**Henry Rosser**

"We climbed aboard the plane. This is the first time I've ever been on a plane. Despite this fact, I was calm as we took off."—**Tomas Rodriguez**

"As we were driving, we saw the most beautiful views ever. All I was doing was listening to music and the tallest mountains I have ever seen started following our van. I mean they were huge."—**Lidya Demissie**

"We saw Hugo, the famous dog from the "Snow Buddies" movie. He was the husky. . . . We were brought to the back of the building where we met Pickle. She had recently become a mom. She gave birth to 7 adorable, yet tiny puppies. I got to hold one and I didn't want to let it go because it was so cute."—**Latisha Bangura**

"We went kayaking. I was partnered with William and he helped me overcome my fear by proving to me that kayaks are really hard to flip. He said to me, "Why would you make it flippable? Then no one would buy or use them."—**Gabe Qualiana**

## Q&A: Dean of Students Nijole Gedutis

**N**ijole's responsibilities include overseeing staff, student advising, managing discipline and class scheduling, along with teaching. Nijole grew up in Houston, which she says was not as cool then as it is now, with a World Series win and a great food scene. She earned a bachelor's from Pomona College and a master's from Catholic University.

### Start-up adventure?

In college, a friend and I edited a literary arts magazine. We had so much fun, and when we moved to Washington, DC, we launched *The Wash* in 1998, a print magazine devoted to "the undiscovered, the unknown, the untapped genius peeking out from behind that grey matter in the back of your head." It lasted two years,



Nijole visits Stirling Castle in Scotland.

until the call to teach had to be answered.

### Why teach?

I was an English major. I love to read. I love to talk about books. I think it's just in my blood; I've just always known. My father was a social worker who taught night school. I'm a teacher who just got my social work degree. I like the combination of getting to know these kids, but that's combined with the

content. I get to learn a lot myself when I teach.

### Why Parkmont?

Luck. I was working as an intern at a non-profit in Takoma Park. My boss said, "You know, my son's soccer coach runs a little school in DC." The rest is history. This is my twentieth year.

### Your approach?

I like the creativity when I'm teaching my classes – not having to teach to a test or someone else's curriculum. I like that I can look at my group of kids and say, "I think this group of kids would really like *The Catcher in the Rye* or this is the right time to read 1984. I love field trips, creating a lesson plan around an exhibit that is in town.

### The secret to engaging students?

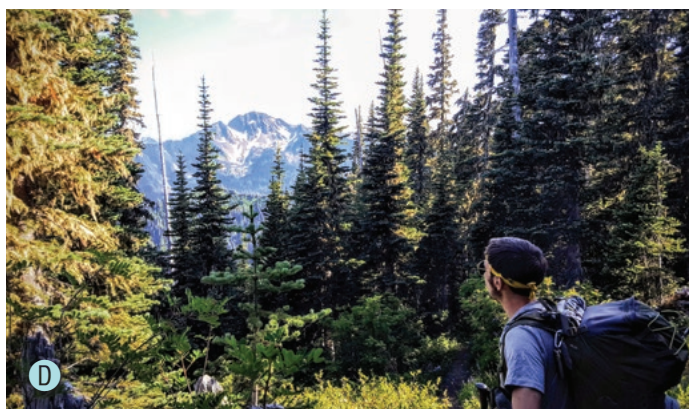
It's not so secret. I like to use humor. Sometimes our kids feel overwhelmed and can't imagine they'll be able to get through things. I see humor as a way to help gain perspective.



Nijole's Civil Rights class meets on Capitol Hill with John Lewis, the legendary activist and U.S. Representative from Georgia.

## Teachers Abroad: Continuing Ed

Getting out in the world is a key theme of Parkmont's approach to education, one faculty members take to heart. They fanned out across the country and the seas over the summer, fortifying their storehouses of experience.



**A** Matt McClain, center, with siblings in Grand Teton National Park.

**B** Bridget Mullins in Petra, Jordan.

**C** Troy Burki honeymooning in Tuscany.

**D** Sam Graul at Olympic National Park.

## Thank You!

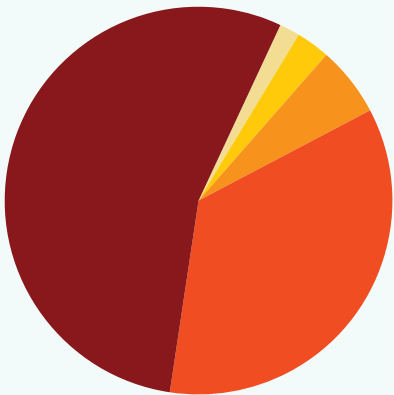
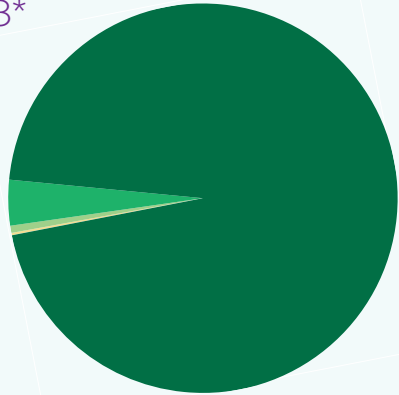
### Gifts for Current Operations

Annual Giving, Unrestricted	<b>\$49,202</b>
Annual Giving, Restricted	<b>\$3,400</b>
The Financial Aid Fund	<b>\$21,000</b>
The Internships Fund	<b>\$7,500</b>
The Parkmont Poetry Festival	<b>\$12,946</b>
<b>Total Voluntary Support</b>	<b>\$94,048</b>

## Fiscal Year 2017-2018\*

Tuition Income	\$2,373,538
Fundraising	\$94,048
School Programs	\$14,816
Financial Income & Other	\$4,975

**Total Revenue \$2,487,377**



Instructional & Administrative	\$1,322,606
Financial Aid	\$850,280
Program & Student Activities	\$141,418
Property	\$68,002
Other Expenses	\$41,384

**Total Expenses \$2,423,689**

\* These numbers have not been finalized by the school audit.

## Voluntary Support

### Annual Giving: \$49,202

#### Current Parkmont Families 2017-18

Laura Middleton and Rich Krauzlis  
Susan Vitale and Henry Levin  
Gavin and Elizabeth Macgregor-Skinner  
Rebecca and Larry Maxwell  
Tara Hodge and J.P. Neal  
Gail Coleman and Mark Yost

#### Parkmont and Somerset Alumni Families

Patricia Jayne and Chris Barr  
Ann Breen  
Sally Pfund and William Bush  
Bob and Rhoda Chanin  
Jane and Robert Cobb  
Jenny Apostol and Marco DiPaul  
William Eby  
Carl Englehart  
John and Terry Fassl  
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Charles and Barbara Gholz  
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Tom Kawecki  
Al and Ann La Porta  
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Paula and Phillip Lantz  
Barbara Clarke and Doug Leslie  
Cintia Lombardi  
Judy and Larry Lorber  
William McInturff and Kate Ragan  
Jacqueline Parker and Paul Meagher



Parents sharing a meal on the school lawn.

Cynthia Miller  
Amy and Paul Moroney  
Arnold Nicholson  
Elizabeth and Stewart Neilson  
Sydney Jacobs and Mark Otto  
Carol and Edward Pace  
Judy Peabody  
Nancy Coleman and Paul Pitkoff  
Eric Randall  
Lisa Nickerson and Nelson Rimensnyder  
Peter Roemer  
Elsa Silverman  
Shanna Smith  
Susan Schwartz and Howard Stanislawski  
Shelley Sturman and Noam Stopak  
Ralph and Suzanne Tarica  
Lee and Fred Tyner  
Peter and Beatrice van Roijen  
John and Kathleen Volpe  
Nancy and George Watson  
Reed Wirick  
Deanna and Douglas Wolfire

#### Friends, Staff, and Board of Trustees

Walter Ailes  
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Troy Burki  
Debbie DuSault  
Joseph Ferber  
The Frelinghuysen Foundation  
Samuel Graul  
Cille Kennedy  
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Geovanka Levine  
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Matthew McClain  
Ron McClain  
Monica Miracky and Jean Mooskin  
Leroy Nesbitt, Jr.  
Stephen and Ruth Pollak through the  
Bench Trail Fund  
Willa Reinhard  
Christy Halvorson Ross  
Kim Schraf  
Michael Shoup  
Christie Trott  
Jacqui Michel and David Weisman  
Tom and Linda Yoder

## **Restricted Annual Funds**

### **Lentz Fund**

(Educational Travel)

Ron McClain

### **Pellaton Fund**

(Middle School Outdoor Program)

Bob and Lynn Pellaton

Ryrie and Kara Pellaton

Amy Ward

Ron McClain

### **Popkin Fund**

(Gift Books for Students)

Ron McClain

## **Immediate Financial Aid Fund: \$21,000**

Anonymous Donors: \$11,000

Clark-Winchcole Foundation: \$10,000

## **The Internships Fund**

The Harry and Zoe Poole Foundation: \$7,500

## **Poetry Festival**

### **Epic Poem Donors**

Paul and Jean Gurman

Ron McClain

Jacqui Michel and David Weisman

Anne and Fred Woodworth

### **Villanelle Donors**

Anna-Karin Dillard

Cari and Bill Gradison

Judy Lentz

### **Sonnet Donors**

Debbie DuSault

Joseph Ferber

Cille Kennedy

Brandon Partridge

Richard Roth

### **Haiku Donors**

Kelly Trippe and Steve Aitken

Karen Ballotta

Amanda Castel

## **Popkin Fund Report**

Established by Belle Popkin's daughter, Susan Willens, during her tenure on the Parkmont Board in 1991. The Popkin Fund enriches our program by covering the cost of our Gift-a-Book program, which allows each student and staff member to receive a book of their choice to read during the holiday season.

## **Pellaton Fund Report**

Established by the Pellaton Family in memory of their son, Randy, a Parkmont alum. The Pellaton Fund supports Middle School outdoor field trips and adventures at Parkmont. These include trips to Great Falls, Greenbrier State Park, and a camping trip in the Shenandoah Mountains.

## **Lentz Fund Report**

Established by Parkmont for John Lentz's training of Parkmont staff and support for our adventures out in the world. The Lentz Fund helps us fund trips, one of our signature programs at Parkmont. In the spring of 2018, a group of Upper School students visited Alaska with the support of the Lentz Fund.

Marjorie and Edward Greene

Matthew Hoffman

Laura Middleton and Richard Krauzlis

Pravin Krishna

Kathy Hollowell-Makle and Stephen Makle

Louisa Foulke and William Newlin

Paul Nissenbaum and Addy Schmitt

Kim Schraf

Sharan Strange

## **Friends of the Poetry Festival**

Anonymous

Sarah Boxer

Sarah Browning

Alan Field

Larissa Korde

Hiram Larew

*Poetry Festival Support continues on the next page*

## Voluntary Support

*continued from the previous page*

Debra Latiolais  
Susan Vitale and Henry Levin  
Faye Moscovitz  
Joseph Ross  
Tzvetelina Dimitrova and Kalin Tintchev

### **In-Kind Donations to the Poetry Festival**

Tom Gavin  
Jacqui Michel

### **Poetry Festival Volunteers**

Jared Adams  
John Bray  
Dana Corsello  
Lidya Demissie  
Nijole Gedutis  
Kathy Hollowell-Makle  
Kathy Hughes  
Genet Lema  
Stephen Makle  
Laura Middleton  
Shauntice Rodriguez  
Emma Schenbaum  
Kimberly Taylor-Logan  
Nebiyu Tesfaye  
Kelly Trippe  
Pamela Whitney  
Biniam Zemedkun

### **Sincere thanks for the hard work and dedication of our Poetry Advisory Committee**

Jean Gurman  
Cille Kennedy  
Judy Lentz  
Jacqui Michel  
Anne Harding Woodworth

## **Gifts in Kind**

American University Mentorship Program  
The George Washington University  
PsyD Program  
Hogan Lovells LLP  
Laya Abduljawad  
Garrett Noeth-Goodman  
Ron McClain  
Ethelbert Miller

## **Internship Sponsors**

*We consider all internship sponsors in-kind donors given the thousands of hours they spend supervising our students and helping them become more job-ready.*

A Wider Circle  
BicycleSPACE  
The Big Bad Woof  
Children's National Medical Center  
City Bikes  
CREATE Arts Center  
DC SCORES  
DCTV  
District Dogs  
Fillmore Arts Center  
Fleet Feet  
For Love Of Children  
Forest Hills of DC  
Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land  
in America  
Friendship Terrace  
Hands on Drums  
Highwood Theatre  
Horace Mann Elementary School  
Humane Rescue Alliance  
HumanitiesDC  
Institute for Policy Studies  
Janney Elementary School  
Kirov Academy of Ballet  
Little Flower Montessori School  
ONE DC  
Oyster-Adams Bilingual School  
Paramount Dental Care  
Parkmont Poetry Festival  
PetMAC  
Petworth Neighborhood Library  
Sankofa Video Books and Cafe  
SED Center  
Shepherd Elementary School Star Achievers  
Silver Cycles  
Sitar Arts Center  
St. Augustine Catholic School  
Street Sense  
The Studio Grooming Salon  
Sullivan's Toys & Art Supplies  
Takoma Park Cooperative Nursery School  
Takoma Park Elementary School  
U.S. Botanic Garden  
Walls of Books  
West Education Campus



Claudia Leavitt-Majors  
braves the ropes  
course at Calleva.

## Our School Philosophy

At Parkmont we build a community where students ally themselves with creative adults whose driving concern is their success and well-being. We challenge them with an academic program that fuses adolescent interests with traditional disciplines and respects the variety of their talents and motivations. We provide them with substantial experience in the world beyond school that invites them to see more clearly the possibilities ahead. Our students get ready to chart their own course, and we make sure they're prepared for the journey.



*Our schoolhouse catches the morning light.*

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