

ParkmontSchool

Fostering Individual Growth and Enthusiasm for Learning

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



Annual Report 2018-2019





ParkmontSchool

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

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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 strives to maintain 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 or (202) 726-0740.

On the Cover (from the top)

Sam and Alex confer one-on-one. Parkmont students and staff in front of our home-base classroom on 16th Street. Abe vs. mountain: a worthy match. Jared takes to the street on an internship assignment. Dear Parkmont and Somerset Families, Alumni, and Friends,



Ron and Holly at Roosevelt Island, 12/25/19.

Here's our annual thank you to the many of you and hundreds of others in the area who helped make our 2018-19 year a stellar one for our students and school. This is Parkmont's 48th year, number 29 on 16th Street after five years in Virginia and another 15 moving from Georgetown to the Cathedral to Temple Sinai. We are forever indebted to the Somerset folks who did all the remarkable work to purchase 4842 16th Street NW in 1984, and the Parkmont and Somerset Boards who agreed that a joint enterprise gave us the possibility of a future in 1991. So far, so good!

In June of 1972, Parkmont parents were planning the opening of their brand-new middle school, I was moving to DC and Edmund Burke School to begin my almost half-century in education, and the country was wondering why someone would

break into the Democratic Committee offices during one of the most lopsided campaigns in American history. But you have to go back to that decade to find political discord that matches what's at hand.

The gifts appreciated in this report helped our students work 10,000 hours at businesses throughout our community, receive 2,000 hours of tutoring and study help, as well as five weeks of summer school, go on 100 field trips, and visit coastal beaches that may not be reachable when they are my age. Most importantly, they allowed us to perpetuate the student-staff relationships that are central to our mission of building confidence and preparing young people for the worlds of work and higher education.

See *Just Mercy* if you haven't yet and enjoy the generosity and good works captured in this 18-19 Annual Report!

Ron McClain Head of School



Join us on **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.

Alumni Views



Alum In Action: Wyatt, with his forest-fire-fighting crew.

Wyatt Qualiana, '15

Running with the wrong crowd in the wrong direction was taking him nowhere. "I'm going to wind up homeless. I'm not going to have anyone left in my life who wants to be around me."

For Wyatt Qualiana, the realization provoked change. Parkmont was a pivot, where he found a key that had been missing at school – "people letting you, in a very personal way, explore your own creativity and aptitudes. I felt that here, and I started blossoming pretty quickly in a way that I didn't even know I had within me."

Wyatt, a 2015 Parkmont graduate, stopped by Parkmont at the end of 2019 to say hello before heading back to Oregon, where he's managing a kitchen and rebuilding a food truck so he can afford to return to the University of Oregon to finish his degree.

"Being here, without the social pressures of a large school and not having the same type of distractions, it just kind of gave me time to focus on myself," he said in an interview about his Parkmont experience. "I still had some negative habits." But he said he sensed that he "should probably make the most of this."

"This" started with an interview with Ron. "It wasn't so much an interview as it was a conversation. Maybe he was trying to gauge how serious I was going to be." Wyatt says he recognizes Ron's point: "We can make it work for you if you want it to."

The Parkmont internship program "landed me the best job I've ever had," Wyatt said. Wyatt worked at the National Zoo, in the invertebrates department. After graduating, he rolled into a paid job as a contractor cataloging fossils for a Museum of Natural History project examining how climate changes affect plants.

Relationships with teachers were vital, as were their engaging courses, such as a human evolution class taught through cuisine, which tapped into his interest in cooking. He already had taken



Amanuel at Virginia Tech.

Amanuel Duga, '15

Amanuel Duga graduated last May from Virginia Tech and is working at Catholic Charities as a program coordinator for the Financial Stability Network. "Parkmont played an important role in preparing me to succeed in college. Parkmont was like a bridge between DCPS (it was a great time but not so great in academics) and college. I got to learn from great teachers that helped me raise my standards and pushed me to be the best student I can be." Amanuel says he fondly recalls that at Parkmont "most semesters, my last class was PE, and I used to enjoy playing either soccer or basketball."

Zoe McLean, '12

Zoe McLean has returned to campus as the front office manager after backpacking across Southeast Asia, working on a wildlife rehabilitation center in South Africa, a farm in Wales and as an au pair in Australia. She is preparing to pursue a degree in social work. Zoe, recalling her Parkmont experience, reports that what makes a difference is that "you're in a classroom with five other people instead of 20. So the teachers know how to work with you. They really focus in on a course that works with your learning skills. It's nice to see so many people are benefiting from Parkmont and being able to thrive in their own way."



Zoe in Montreal.

a chemistry class before arriving at Parkmont. So Alex enabled him to move ahead at his own pace. "The teacher ratio allowed it. I ended up getting a very holistic understanding of chemistry, beyond the scope of the regular class."

Wyatt said that what's in the roots of Parkmont played an important part in his growth. "When you have a troubled kid, it's not that they don't want to learn. There is always something going on in their life that's blocking them from wanting to succeed or just succeeding in general.

"Encouragement and trust are so important to people who aren't necessarily in the easiest spot growing up. You realize that as you get older. It starts for a lot people here, when they are young. The teachers put faith in you. I'm grateful. It worked for me."

Roughing It: Parkmont Goes Coastal Carolina

In May, Coastal Ecology Main Lesson students packed their bags and headed south on an epic nine-day journey through the coastal Carolinas. Their trip, the first to the region in decades, was the culmination of five weeks of intense studying and field research into different coastal and marine habitats and the important ecological webs that make these environments unique.

The class was constantly on the move, spending only a night in each location before packing their gear and heading farther up the coast. Most nights were spent in tents! Many students had never camped before, but embraced the opportunity to learn how to make do without the comforts of mattresses and air conditioning.

The goal of the trip was to get students to engage physically, intellectually, and culturally with the amazing places they had studied and now had the privilege to visit. Over the course of a week and change, they explored the charming southern city of Charleston, South Carolina; took naturalist-guided boat tours and kayak trips; biked around the sleepy backwater town of Ocracoke; and spent countless hours fishing and catching



Graham proudly displays his catch.

waves on some of the East Coast's most gorgeous, undeveloped beaches.

Engaging in these environments, by taking tours, talking to locals, or simply by camping under the stars, allowed students and teachers to gain perspective on a part of this country that is often overlooked as one of the nation's cultural and ecological resources. Hopefully, Parkmont won't let too much time pass before making another trip down South.



Ethan, Matt, members of the Coastal Ecology class, and a Carolina lighthouse.



Students in the Marfield Young Writers cohort pose with Kim, Nijole and Ito before returning their attention to writing about art.

Marfield Young Writers' Brush With Greatness

It must have looked a little like an art studio: a finished oil painting was propped on an easel, a miniature model of a skull was nearby, and as the painter discussed his technique, middle-school hands shot into the air with questions and observations.

- "How did you get the eyes like that?"
- "It looks like it's cold."
- "What did you paint with?"

But this was a Parkmont classroom, and the assembled students weren't about to learn to paint; they were about to commence a four-month writing workshop with Ito Briones, in partnership with the Marfield Prize, to help young writers respond thoughtfully to art. Ito, in addition to being an accomplished painter, scientist and medical doctor, heads up the Marfield Prize Committee, part of the Arts Club of Washington, which awards a \$20,000 prize to a published non-fiction author each year for a work about the arts. This past year they wanted to expand their outreach to invite middle-school students into the process with bi-monthly workshops and hands-on exploration. And Parkmont was game.

Nijole and Kim coordinated the sessions and joined Parkmont students and a few parents at the Prize announcement and dinner at the Arts Club in May. Distin"Dear Mom, I saw these two elegant flowers and thought of you but I don't know why. I also don't know why I thought



the flowers were elegant. So I decided to take a moment to just sit and admire every detail. As I admired the dancing petals and the wavy stems I understood why I thought the flower was so lovely. They danced in the wind with grace and their colors were mesmerizing. It was just so stunning. The pattern on the petals are as beautiful as you."

- YANNA, GRADE 7

guished writer Susan Orlean (*The Orchid Thief, The Bright Unknown, The Bullfighter Checks Her Makeup*) was this year's winner for *The Library Book*. Parkmont students met Ms. Orlean, posed for some photo ops, and even interviewed her in front of assembled guests. It was all very literary and grown-up and yet another chance for students and teachers to be out in the world, having new experiences, being recognized for their efforts, and building community!

Getting Wise to Work

On a sunny December afternoon, in La Sala Amarilla, on the second floor of our schoolhouse, it was time to let the insights fly. Six students took time out from their busy days to talk about one of Parkmont School's pillars of learning: Internship. Each year, students commit thousands of hours to getting their feet wet in the workplace. They must make their way to and from the job, meet new people and new standards and test their ambitions as they move to different internships. It can be a rude awakening. But it's better to be aware and prepared for the work world, say our panelists, Rob Allen, Grade 12, at Keegan Theatre; Karla Contreras, Grade 10, at Oyster-Adams Bilingual School; Lily Aguirre, Grade 9, at Round House Theater; Tigist Gebreslassie, Grade 10, at Howard University Hospital; Lucas Whitworth, Grade 10, at Lost Sock Roasters; Dei Antoine Ballenger, Grade 9, at Rock Creek Park Horse Center. Challenges and opportunities to learn abound.

ON THE TO AND FRO ...

- "I was very scared the first time on the bus. But Lucas went on the bus with me and sat in front of me to make sure no one came up to me." – LILY
- "I got a map and was supposed to follow it. I was nervous about that." – KARLA
- "Now I'm used to going on the Metro bus myself. It gives me independence. I can go to my internship or I can go to Starbucks, but, of course, I go to my internship." – LILY

ON EMPLOYMENT ...

- "I had never had a real job before and I was like, this is a lot to be responsible to go somewhere. I was used to the bus, but going somewhere and getting a task to do and expecting it to be done in a certain amount of time, that was new." – **ROB**
- "It's weird to meet new people. When you see people from afar they are really scary, but when you get to know them, they are really nice." **– TIGIST**
- "I'm learning a lot about business, a very small business. I've learned a lot about the intricacies of the coffee industry. I'm actually getting a paid job there, packing and selling, working on Fridays and Saturdays." – LUCAS



Tigist, Karla, Lucas, Dei, Rob and Lily (kneeling) hold forth on the ups and downs of the working world.

Parkmont Poetry Festival

ON THE CLOCK ...

"Most of the time, when I come in, she has things ready for me to do. I know if I'm late, if I'm supposed to make a prop, then it sets the show back if it's not ready." – **ROB**

"I've always known that being late can cause you some trouble. I'm always across the street ready for my bus. It's better for you to be early." – **DEI**

"You can't work on your schoolwork there. You have to work. I used to work in a bookstore and there was always something to do. It's not really hard. You have to adjust." – **TIGIST**

ON STRESS MANAGEMENT ...

"When I'm frustrated at the barn, I go to Hip-Hop, a pony. It likes to lick you on your hand. It's my place to calm down." – **DEI**

"It helps to have tolerance and humble yourself and help somebody else out. Instead of always worrying about what you want to do, it helps build endurance and stick things through." – **ROB**

ON SILVER LININGS ...

"After seeing what being a chef actually entails, I realized it's not for me. It completely changed what I was thinking about my future. I likely would have gone to culinary school and realized later in life it's not for me. It's really helpful to learn that earlier." - LUCAS

"They are also helping injured veterans. Being able to see injured veterans with no legs get on horses is quite amazing." – **DEI**

ON DRESSING THE PART ...

"I wore a white shirt and I was working with little kids. So I was not using my brain. All the kids were coming up to me with glue and sparkles. I can bring that shirt in and show you. It's hilarious." – LILY

"It's more like how you present yourself. Some people are more feeling and others are more formal in introduction. It depends on what kind of person you have as your supervisor." **– TIGIST**

ON FACULTY ...

"The teachers are strict, but they're fun and kind. Their honesty is very harsh, but they just want you to make it in the real world when you go off to college or get a job. They help you take that first step into reality." – LILY



Casper commands the room at the Parkmont Poetry Festival.

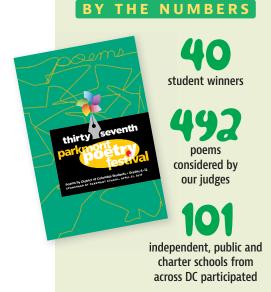
Meeting Your Public: Student Poets Ascend to the Podium

Most poets would probably call the act of writing poems a private one, and many would consider themselves largely private people. Recognition, however, has a way of thrusting the poet into the public eye in ways that are either energizing or daunting. The forty finalists in Parkmont's 37th annual Poetry Festival made friends with the microphone and faced an audience of 100-plus eager faces on a beautiful April day. Some had never read their winning poems aloud. And all were brilliant.

Parkmont was proud to boast four finalists, two middle-schoolers, Casper Corsello and Alex Harry, and two upper-schoolers, Henry Rosser and Jordan McNair. In case you missed them, here are some details and a few reflections on their experiences.

Casper was a crowd favorite with "A Radical Grammatical Rap," his dizzying, dazzling spoken-word declaration of his linguistic enlightenment. Henry confessed that though he's a confident writer and speaker, he "had some nerves and butterflies, but the good nerves and butterflies. It was exhilarating. And hearing all of the other winning poems, like Casper's, made me think about my own craft in new ways." Jordan claims it was "really nerve-wracking at first, but once I got through the first few sentences, I realized there were a lot of people there for me, and I did OK." He felt like it was a big

2019 Parkmont Poetry Festival



deal to gain public speaking experience and to "just get my words out." And Alex, in his first public appearance as a poet, lightened the moment when, after reading his poem "Bully," he assured the crowd that this was not based in any way on his real family.

Central to the mission of the Parkmont Poetry Festival is the opportunity we afford student writers to listen to their inner voices, share those voices in their written verse, and raise those voices in a community reading. The experience validates and empowers them and uplifts and inspires each listener. We'll be doing it all again on May 2, 2020, and hope you'll come check out the poets at the podium!

Summer Hooky? Approved.

For Parkmont faculty, come June, July and August, it's time to pen another entry in the travel log and gather string for the next year's classrooms. Curiosity, adventure and the lure of R&R carried teachers this past summer to many splendid locales.

"I've never been the type of learner who learns well by just reading facts. I learn best through conversation exchanges with locals and tour guides, visiting historical sites and museums, and experiencing another person's daily life (as best as I can as a tourist)." – BRIDGET



Bridget hit Southeast Asia, with the Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, among the stops.



"When I am out there hiking a mountain, or kayaking down a river, I am always in awe of what nature has created. There is an intrinsic connection between the patterns out there in the 'real world' and the ones we investigate in every math class, all the way from our start of counting objects to creating mathematical models and equations at the highest level. I hope to pass this on to my students each year: the world is amazing, and we can use math to better understand it, and appreciate it." – SAM



Sam enjoys a post-camping-kayaking-trip morning along Virginia's Blue Ridge.



Sania checks out an ever-evolving art installation at Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas.

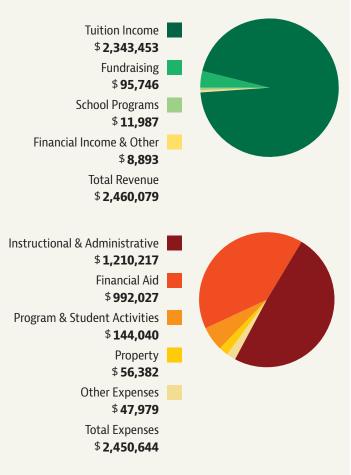
Ethan fishing on Lake Champlain, Vermont.

Thank You!

Gifts for Current Operations

Annual Giving, Unrestricted	\$ 42,603
Annual Giving, Restricted	\$ 3,750
The Financial Aid Fund	\$ 10,000
The Internships Fund	\$7,500
Support Services Fund	\$ 20,000
The Parkmont Poetry Festival	\$ 11,893
Total Voluntary Support	\$95,746

Fiscal Year: 2018-2019*



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

Voluntary Support

ANNUAL GIVING \$42,603

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Dining out in DC: an upper-school field trip swings by Ben's Chili Bowl.

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Lentz Fund (Educational Travel) Ron McClain

Pellaton Fund

(Middle School Outdoor Program) Ron McClain Bob and Lynn Pellaton Ryrie and Kara Pellaton Amy Ward

Popkin Fund (Gift Books for Students) Ron McClain

IMMEDIATE FINANCIAL AID FUND \$10,000

Clark-Winchcole Foundation

INTERNSHIPS FUND \$7,500

The Harry and Zoe Poole Foundation

SUPPORT SERVICES FUND: \$20,000

The John E. Fowler Memorial Foundation

Lentz Fund

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 2019, a group of Upper School students visited the Coastal Carolinas with the support of the Lentz Fund.

Pellaton Fund

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 camping trips to the Shenandoah Mountains and the Eastern Shore.

Popkin Fund

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.

POETRY FESTIVAL \$11,893

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

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GIFTS IN KIND

American University Mentorship Program Megan Burns The George Washington University PsyD Program Helena Lazich Hogan Lovells LLP



Troy instructs Noelle, Mekdi and Parkmont parent Julie Gess in the art of flying ring crafts.

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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.

Kieran is in the zone in his upper-school main lesson.



2019 graduates pose for the "after" shot as Parkmont bids them farewell, but not goodbye.

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