

Passing Notes

ParkmontSchool
Sessions 3-5, 2020-2021

The hardest-working faculty in town get a February holiday on the slopes, courtesy of Parkmont. Bridget, Willa, Anthony, and family look grateful!



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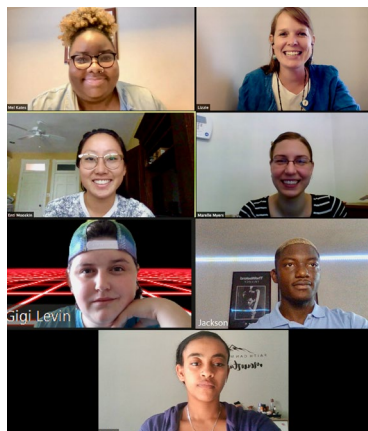
**CLICK
TO GO
DIRECTLY
TO THAT
STORY!**



We're Back!

Since our last Passing Notes, as we emerged from the confinement of homes and Zoom screens to the interim space of hybrid instruction, we have transitioned to in-person classes. During those months, we mastered the technology, stayed in contact even if it wasn't in person, and supported our students with virtual activities, fitness challenges, and extra academic help from our dedicated team of tutors. It feels great to reclaim the building, campus, and surrounding community, all so integral to our program, and to be back in sync as a school. Here are some glimpses of Parkmont life along that journey. ■

Parkmont's tutors Mel, Lizzie, Enti, Marelle, Gigi, Jackson, and Amenti earn the gratitude of students and teachers alike.



Parkmont offers students a choice of outdoor activities for our Adventure Trips. Here's the kayaking group paddling out.

Yanna and Matt signaling that all is well.



Our 2021 eighth grade class preparing to be honored at our Moving Up Ceremony.

Corona Chronicles

In March 2020, shortly after Parkmont Home School launched, students started writing about their pandemic experiences. The “Corona Chronicles” continued through ’20-21 as students reflected upon what it’s like to live through a global pandemic, the election, an insurrection, racial equity, and the importance of exercise, art, and personal connections.

January 4, 2021 | What is something good that happened in 2020? What is something positive you discovered about yourself, your family, your community and maybe even your world this year?

Khalil: Something good that happened in 2020 was that I went driving for the first time and I had a really good time. I was with my dad and brother and it was kinda scary but fun at the same time. And surprisingly, I was not as nervous as I thought I was gonna be. I was actually really calm and it felt good to drive because I had been waiting for that moment forever. Something that I discovered about myself this year is that if I really put my best foot forward and try as hard as I can, I really can become a better me. Because once I actually chose to do better, everything just started to come easier and I wasn’t stressed like I was before and I got better sleep. So I was more prepared for the days to come.

Arsiema: Something good that happened in 2020 is that when the lockdown happened, we helped each other get used to it. I thought when the lockdown happened everyone would stay at home and be in a bad mood. But we managed to make this experience better by helping each other; like if a person couldn’t go outside maybe because of Covid or they didn’t have much money, people volunteered to buy groceries for them. The other good thing that happened in 2020 is even though we had a lockdown, we still fought for things that we think are important. Something I discovered about the world is that even if there is evil being done in the world, the good is stronger.

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Alex: I understand that most people had a pretty bad year last year, but I had a pretty good year. There were many good things that happened in my year. One of these positive events/experiences was how much time I got to be able to spend with my family because we were trapped in our house. We started to play card games, like Uno, daily and started to go on family walks and bike rides. We started doing this in April of 2020, and we have continued to do this up to the present.

March 15, 2021 | What concerts, sports or other live events do you look forward to attending again? What sort of things are you looking forward to doing again in general?

Emily: I am looking forward to ice skating, roller skating, indoor trampoline parks, pools, etc. I miss going to those places with my friends and just having fun. I also want to go to amusement parks and the beach. I am pretty sure some of these things are open, but many people have their masks down and aren't being cautious of their surroundings. It creates more cases. Also, we're in a pandemic and it isn't good to be surrounded by so many people. I am most excited for seeing friends and family who I haven't seen since the pandemic started. Now that most people are getting the shot, the cases will not be as bad. I hope this will end. Being stuck at home and not being able to go to school, places where you would go every day, is sad.

“I am looking forward to ice skating, roller skating, indoor trampoline parks, pools, etc. I miss going to those places with my friends and just having fun. I also want to go to amusement parks and the beach. I am pretty sure some of these things are open, but many people have their masks down and aren't being cautious of their surroundings. It creates more cases. Also, we're in a pandemic and it isn't good to be surrounded by so many people.”

— EMILY, STUDENT

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May 24, 2021 | What have you made this year? Whether you made crafts, played music, baked bread, started a garden or anything else, how did making things help you?

Ronnie: I've made a schedule for work and games. I have 1 hour of game time and 1 hour 30 minutes of studying. This helped because I can play my games and do my work with time management. Me and my mom baked cookies a few days ago. They were very very good (chocolate chip). I also listened to some music with my mom.

Noelle: During quarantine, I have made a lot of things on my own ranging from baking to DIY crafts. One of the first things that I made during quarantine was a chocolate boxed cake with our new mini oven. During quarantine, my mom bought this ninja foodi digital oven which does many things. It can bake, air fry, toast bread, and other things. This was one of my favorite things that we purchased because it lets us try new recipes and good foods. Another thing we made for the first time was a homemade cheesecake. To be honest, for the first time it was a 7/10, but it kept getting better each time we made it. Something outside of cooking is that I crocheted multiple mini hats or mini bowls. For Session 5 Main Lesson I made a kite that I am very proud of. One of the latest things that I am working on is a lantern that is made out of tissue paper and is lit by a candle.

June 7, 2021 | Your final Corona Chronicle! Reflect on this school year — what went well? What was challenging? What can you do better next school year? What are your summer plans?

Alessandra: I am really grateful for finding Parkmont. I've never really been super great at school and I've always been scared to go to school because it was the main source of my anxiety. But now at Parkmont I feel a whole lot more confident. I find it kinda ironic because I have known about Parkmont for 10 years because I live a block away, but I never even researched it. Parkmont has welcomed me with open arms and I feel so cared for by the community. The school is also so fun. ■





Ron McClain and Ailish Hopper led this intrepid band of Parkmont adventurers to the Grand Canyon in 1991.

Learning Around the World

By Ron McClain

This article is the third in our series celebrating Parkmont's 50th Year

My first year teaching was one long trip on *Sea Cloud*, a 350-ft yacht, in Florida and the Caribbean. At Edmund Burke, I got to lead 20 backpacking trips in the Shenandoah, and others in the Smokeys, in addition to biking the length of the C&O Canal. Somerset finished each year with Travel Classes that reached the far west and Europe, and they owned enough vans to take the whole school on a field trip at the drop of a hat. Parkmont had already done its own share of adventuring by the time I arrived in its 10th year, and those adventures continue to generate significant learning opportunities and indelible memories for all involved as we work our way through year 50.

Twenty-five years ago we started referring to our destinations as Parkmont Classrooms, opportunities for significant and memorable learning, about history, culture, science, the world, ourselves, group dynamics. Not to mention stamina, resilience, beauty, opportunity, privilege, poverty. Dozens of students have taken their first flight

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with us, camped in their first storm with us, pulled themselves back into a raft, screamed at their first alligator sighting, learned how to fall (and stand up) before hitting the trailside tree at WISP or Whitetail or the Santa Fe Ski Bowl with us. Swimming with dolphins in the Keys, playing basketball with young adults on the Havasupai reservation in the Grand Canyon, houseboating in Shark's Valley, FL, singing and dancing with Panamanian tribal youth — all were part of someone's Parkmont education.

Our itinerary has always been shaped by staff and student interest. My predecessors made good use of Old Rag, the boulder-strewn highest mountain off the main Appalachian chain in the Shenandoah, and we continued annual treks out there for 14 years in the '80s and '90s. When I told Judy Lentz, a Parkmont parent and Board member who helped hire me, that we weren't going skiing (it was outside my experiential realm), she told me I had no choice, so we've been to WISP and Whitetail for forty years, along with Killington, Santa Fe, Liberty, Hunter Mountain, Blue Knob, and Snowshoe at different points. Rafting and rubber duckies on the Potomac, Lehigh, Shenandoah, and Youghiogheny; canoeing through the DMV and in the Okefenokee, Everglades, Ichetucknee Springs, and Algonquin. Megan Rupp planned and led our first Yucatan adventure in '94, and then Michelle Banks, often with Nijole Gedutis, led a dozen more of them in the next two decades.

Not everyone wakes up in the morning thinking it's possibly going to be a great day, living out of a van with 10 adolescents, but we've found enough such adventurers over the years to make all this happen. I'd inadvertently hired five expert skiers for my

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In 2011, local Panamanian performers welcomed Parkmont travelers and their teachers: Nijole Gedutis, Michelle Banks, and Rachel Schmidt.





The 2018 Alaska trip afforded majestic vistas and one-of-a-kind memories to Matt McClain, Alex Jennison, and their lucky students.

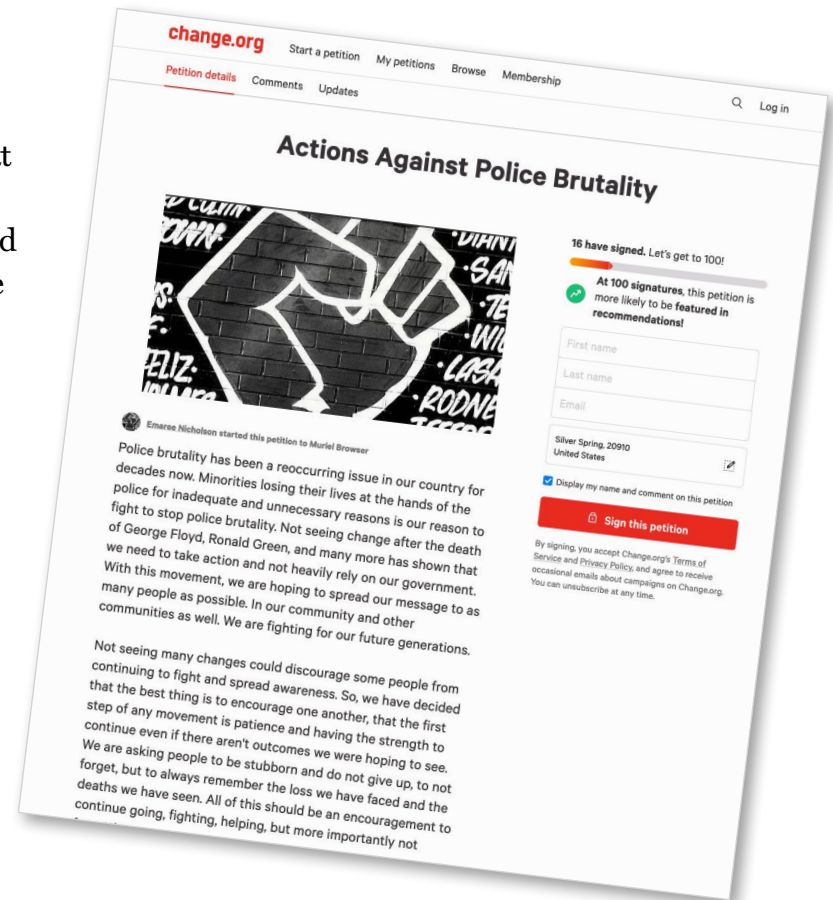
first year at Parkmont, all of whom could shout “Fall down, Ron” as I headed toward my first tree at WISP in ’82. Tom Yoder and I had shared trip-leading at Burke, and that continued when he joined us as Assistant Head to get us kick-started in the ’80s. Debbie van Ryn taught science and co-led our first eight-day adventure with 8th-graders in the Shenandoah. Debbie Williams taught science and helped us get to South Carolina, Florida, Algonquin, and throughout the DMV during her seven years. Paul Hadfield biked, skied, and canoed, and spent much of his life after Parkmont within sight of the canal and the river so that such adventures never ended. Ginger Russell helped launch our high-school adventuring after the merger in ’91 — and got us to the Everglades, Smokies, and Outer Banks — before joining her future husband on a K2 expedition. Wendel Landes was our Adventure Leader from 1998 and Alex Jennison revived the whole program of major trips when he joined us in 2012, adding Alaska, the Grand Canyon, and the Everglades, ably assisted by Matt McClain, and Ethan Kuhnhehn in recent years.

The World is indeed our Classroom. And a greater place to traverse when you have the company and leadership Parkmont’s been able to provide for 50 years. ■

Protect Not Punish

By Mekdi Gebreslassie

While there are many different social issues that affect us as students, Butheyana, Emarée, and I decided to fight for a cause we all know well and care about: police brutality. We want to educate others on ways they can help prevent police brutality and how to spread awareness about this serious subject. We decided it would be a good idea to create social media accounts (Twitter and Instagram: @protectnotpunish) and a website (<https://mgebreslassie.wixsite.com/website>) where we update on current news and information related to this issue. Realizing that this is not a problem that can be easily or quickly solved, we have decided to take the first step in changing our society by putting in the work and getting involved ourselves. Please sign our petition <https://www.change.org/p/muriel-browser-actions-against-police-brutality>



Letter to Mayor Bowser

Dear Mayor Muriel Bowser:

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ronald Greene, and Ma'Khia Bryant are only some of the many people we have lost from police brutality. We have heard stories that many deaths caused by police brutality get covered up by the police departments because they know that the death was unjust. We are three Parkmont students who feel that this

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can't continue any longer. So we are reaching out to you to ask for help in shaping our society and to help us create a safe space for us, and our children to come. Specifically, we need help getting in touch with people that can help us understand the laws we have now better, but also those that are open to wanting to make changes to those laws, so everyone in society is getting the proper treatment.

We believe that creating change starts with one person and that one person can be the start of a movement. We are going to work hard to have others learn about this. This all started with a class project assigned to us by our English teacher for the end of the year project. We were supposed to fight for a cause we cared about, so we all thought about police brutality and how it affects us and is a problem that needs immediate attention. We have decided to create change by first creating different social media accounts (Instagram and Twitter) and a website where we can give people that have been affected by police brutality a place to speak up and seek the help they need. What we need from you is to help us reach people that could change things.

We want to see more things being done, for example, laws changed that would punish officers that abuse authority, but also praise the ones that do well. There should be a way to give public acknowledgment, where officers that have done well for society get the praise and love they deserve. There could also be a raise or promotion to their job/status if the good things they are doing are a recurring act. We know that there are officers like Derek Chauvin, but we also know that there are amazing officers that risk their lives for others and do this because they want a safer society. So acknowledging those officers and punishing the ones that demonstrate misconduct is something that should be done. If people don't see change then they don't want to continue to fight for what they want. If we only talk about this, but see no changes, people might lose the hope of not living under fear.

Let us be the change, even if it starts with three young girls.

Please contact us back at,

Mekdelawit Gebreslassie

Butheyne Dahmani

Emaree Nicholson ■

Zero to 90 (With 100% Success!): Maggie McClain's Pandemic Slam-dunk

By Kim Schraf

Maggie McClain joined Parkmont in September of 2019 to handle the Office Manager position that had been vacated recently. She was exceptionally helpful and kept things in order until we were able to hire the wonderful Zoe McLean. Maggie then took a position at George Washington University Hospital in preparation for possible future medical training – until they shut down surgery to make way for COVID patients.

In the late spring, it became clear that we were going to need more help once staff and then students returned to school, and Ron asked her to become our COVID Health Coordinator. She agreed to take a Certified Nursing Associate course at Montgomery College, and for the next 10 months she was our COVID expert, participating in dozens of weekly Zoom discussions with other schools and health officials and adapting our building practices so that first teachers, and then students who were ready, could work in our building safely. A tremendous service to Parkmont and for all of us who've been on campus individually after March 13, 2020!

Here are some excerpts from my zoom conversation with Maggie in June, 2021:

KS: Once you stepped into this brand-new position, did you do any sort of training or was it all 'learn as you go'?

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Maggie McClain kept Parkmont staff and students safe and sane during a pandemic.



MM: Well, I had my BA from Denison College in Exercise Science and had been gearing up to do more health care work. I wasn't thinking specifically about public health but was definitely interested in it. The hospital job had exposed me to sanitation protocols, and everyone was already masked all the time because they were in surgery. My ears were perked up about the pandemic and I started paying attention to the numbers and what was coming. It was exciting to have an opportunity to dive into it more by way of helping Parkmont. One of my favorite parts of the job was keeping up with the public health situation — the webinars, CDC guidelines, WHO data. And I took a Certified Nursing Assistant's course at the start of the job that was helpful.

KS: We all learned so much from your posts to the listserv. You sifted through the mass of numbers and streamlined it for us!

MM: There were a lot of good resources and I found myself reading the news more consistently than I had before.

KS: How do you think Parkmont did responding to the crisis?

MM: I wasn't here for the pivot to remote instruction, but the shift to hybrid classrooms in the fall of 2020 was impressive. Parkmont's size really helped with that, and also the fact that the staff was so ready to respond and so up to date with the technology that would allow them to teach in this new way. It was so much work for the teachers — just taking attendance was something that had to be done each class period. It's your same job, but suddenly you have five new tasks in each section of your job, all onscreen!

KS: Right! It's not like you could just click offscreen to do attendance!

MM: The pandemic was the test that so many schools passed, but no one should have had to. Everyone — students as well — had to transform and transition.

KS: Was there a moment for you that was anxious or scary?

MM: Oh definitely! With kids coming back into the space. Scientifically, I knew they

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could be here, but the responsibility of making absolutely sure it was as safe as we knew it could be. I definitely felt the weight of that. Around the second or third wave, when the variants were emerging, was an anxious time. Kids were back in, but we wondered “Can we keep them here? And what would it mean to send them back home?” It was hard.

KS: You seemed so even and cool throughout all of it. But as things were spiraling in many directions, how did you address your own self-care?

MM: I had to remember that I’m just one person and I’m getting my messaging out the best way I can. You learn to trust the rest of your community, just as Parkmont staff have to trust each other to get things done.

KS: What an extraordinary opportunity this was for you to step up and provide this service in such a dire moment!

MM: I think about how it will serve me in the future. Having to speak up more, to be the advocate. Saying, “No, THIS is the most safe thing.” Sometimes I had to push back a little.

KS: I bet you learned some things about yourself.

MM: I did. I learned that I am a quite straightforward person. Sometimes you can’t go roundabout and make everyone happy; you have to think about what the most safe thing is, even if you’re creating more work for people. I learned to be direct.

KS: Was there a proudest moment for you?

MM: Well, that we got through that first big phase of it. And in terms of pride in my competency, when I had the majority of our protocol ready, taking the best of what DC Health, the CDC, and various webinars were saying, and then finding the best fit for Parkmont. That was a pridesworthy moment.

KS: It’s an amazing leadership story, Maggie. And all of us at Parkmont are the better for it. Congratulations — and thank you! ■



Positive Minds, Positive Vibes: Parkmont's Inclusion of Meditation and Wellness

By Bridget Mullins

This past year has been an especially difficult year for everyone's mental health; many of us spent less time outside, less time doing physical activity, and less time with friends and family. Several teachers at Parkmont took note of this and dedicated time and focus to helping improve students' well-being. This may have been in a specific class, on a PE team, or just a few minutes in a larger academic space. At the end of the year, we interviewed several students about their experiences.

Yanna

This year some things that contributed to my well-being were the sports hangouts. It was fun seeing people and just really nice to get out and hang out with people. As for my mental health, I'd say my PE class and Bridget's Self-care and Wellness class helped a lot. In the Mind and Body PE class, we always took time on Fridays to do a short meditation, and I thought that was a good thing because at the end of the week, you might be stressed out, and it's nice to take a break from everything and just relax for a bit. Bridget's Self-care and Wellness PM class was just really fun. Even though it was a very small class, it was very serene. Each week we had a different focus and a different goal, and focusing individually on certain aspects of ourselves and our lives that we don't normally take into consideration is helpful. It makes you think about your life, what's going on, what has happened, and the things that are to come. I think the self-care classes are really helpful and are something we should continue to have as a PM class option.

Alessandra

I've found that being social at Parkmont was really helpful. I'm a naturally shy person, so saying hi to people I've never met before was really scary. Parkmont's sports hangouts were a great way to meet people! Meeting people and trying to be social was very

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crucial to my mental health. Also, stepping out of my comfort zone and making the first move to say hi! If I hadn't done this, I'm not sure I would have the friends I do now.

I know it's scary, but I promise it's worth it!

I also think random mental health check-ins should be a normal thing. When doing parent-teacher conferences, we should really talk about the students' mental health and how that is affecting their school work.

Mekdi

This year in my English class, my teacher, Bridget Mullins, did an activity every Monday. It was called Rose Bud Thorn. We would write about our problems (challenges we are currently facing), opportunities or the things we are looking forward to, and also something good that has happened to us. I enjoyed doing this because it was a day where I could express all my feelings about what happened the past week and my weekend. This helped me understand my problems and how I can find solutions. She also made it so we could

receive advice from others. My favorite activity would have to be the morning hug we did every day in English class. In the mornings I tend to be very tired and moody, but giving myself some love in the morning brightened my day and prepared me for what I had to do that day. These activities helped me inside and outside of school by helping me to relax; telling myself that I love myself and that I am a strong person helped me get closer to happiness. Conversations about well-being are something that I want to see incorporated into my other classes at Parkmont. By talking more about it, maybe it could help me understand myself better. ■

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— MEKDI, STUDENT

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Pandemic Astronomy

By Anthony Muehlberger

I was new to teaching at Parkmont last year, but I was attracted to it in part because it was so similar to the school that I had been at for 20+ years prior, in that it encourages faculty to create courses outside of the standard high school curriculum. Standard courses are important for a reason – they are often the necessary foundations of subject knowledge that more creative ideas can be grown out of. But encouraging teachers to think about curating ideas which they have loved learning about themselves to create supplemental courses is equally valuable. It means that the teacher will have a true passion for passing on these ideas, and the students will get to explore outside of the rigid foundational topics, and connect to things that may seem more fresh and engaging.



Anthony and Maggie recreate an ancient astronomical experiment on Parkmont's front lawn.

Astronomy was one of these self-designed courses for me at my previous school, so I was pleased to get a chance to introduce it here at Parkmont. I like to open the course with a discussion of some of the first ancient observations of the heavens and the Earth. We looked at how astronomy is built into places like Stonehenge and the Pyramids of Giza (students recreated some of their own ‘Wonders’).

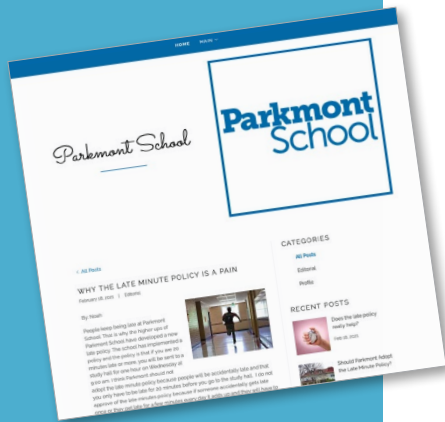
To dispel the myth that everyone thought the world was flat until someone didn’t sail off the edge of it, we looked at how an ancient Greek astronomer, Eratosthenes, not only knew the world was round but accurately measured its circumference without ever leaving Egypt – just by using fairly basic (but clever) geometry. I was still able to have students try this themselves: measuring the length of a shadow cast by a stick at noon and then measuring the distance to a place (on roughly the same longitude) where the sun is directly overhead at noon (and casts no shadow). What was really cool this year was that a student in the class, Brianna Campoverde, happened to be at just precisely such a place, down in Ecuador, for a few weeks. So we not only got to verify that the sun cast no shadow at noon, but could confirm the distance to her location.

Normally this course would include a camping trip into the mountains to demonstrate our knowledge of constellations, stars, and the motions of the sky, and get some hands-on use of a real telescope — but also a good excuse to just camp out in the woods and cook food around a campfire. Although this was not an option this year, we did get to spend time using virtual sky programs and being a little more varied and creative with the assignments and tools we used online.

Students built maps of the ancient world, showing important discoveries. They made slideshows of the Solar System and the Space Race. They wrote creative stories about visiting the most interesting places in the Solar System, and what life might be like on other planets.

I think probably the most valuable aspect of taking an astronomy course, especially at the high school age, is the truly humbling perspective that it gives you. You begin to think, not just outside yourself and your immediate routine, but outside of the world itself, and truly begin to register the vastness of the universe of galaxies — and how we are but one tiny part of that vast sea. ■





The Lives of Journalists

By Ethan Kuhnhehn

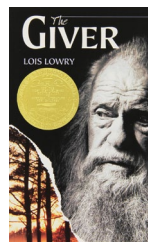
In Current Events and Journalism, students explored national and local issues by reading newspapers and writing stories. We reviewed the different elements of a newspaper, including what goes into a story and what makes a topic newsworthy. Students also learned about the history of the press and its importance in a democracy. We closely followed issues like the Capitol riot, Coronavirus, and social justice topics. Students culminated their studies by interviewing staff for a profile and presenting their views on the new attendance policy in an editorial piece, both of which are currently featured on the Parkmont Blog. Many thanks to Mariam Rose for putting the website together! See the attached Parkmont School Newspaper for our students' features and editorials.

Visit the Parkmont Newspaper website: <https://parkmontschool.godaddysites.com>

Reading Recommendations: Parkmont IRPs

By Nijole Gedutis

A cornerstone of Parkmont's US Reading Group curriculum is the Independent Reading Project or IRP. Many students discover or rediscover a lifelong love of reading thanks to the allure of a beloved book they first meet as an IRP. If you're wondering what to pick up next (or just want to learn what captivated your child), here is a sampling of favorites!



The Giver by Lois Lowry

Reviewed by Khalil

This has to be one of my top 5 books because the way the story builds up is just amazing. It's crazy to think of one person holding all the memories. I could have never thought of that. But what made this book a top 5 for me is that the main character just wants everyone to be able to see and have memories of things like he does. But I will never forgive this book for leaving me on a cliffhanger. Still love it, though.

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Parkmont's
calendar is
available at
Parkmont.org.
Click here!



Bone Gap by Laura Ruby

Reviewed by Mihret

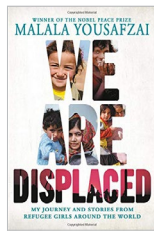
This book is by far the best book I have ever read, and I would recommend it to everyone. I like how it kept me impatient for the end of the story, because of all the unexpected mysteries that were going on in Finn's life.



The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo

Reviewed by Brianna Campoverde

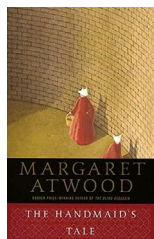
This coming of age book gave me the chills because of how the main character wanted to use her voice.



We Are Displaced by Malala Yousafzai

Reviewed by Firaol

I was thinking about books I know that talk about revolution, government ruling, or just violence that comes from political opinions and I thought of Malala's story. I really was interested in her story when I first read it because it's so amazing how brave and strong she was and still is. I know at a young age, she did a lot, she inspired a lot of young girls and I just wanted to read more of her books.



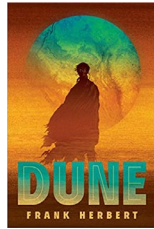
The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Reviewed by Alex H

The best way that I can describe what it feels like listening to this book is a feverish nightmare dream. The main character, Offred, goes through this world disconnected and living in the past because the world she lives in is like hell. In Gilead, women have no rights and are treated like objects, and all of the men are in power. However, all of the characters in this book are miserable, and the book shows all the points of view there are in Gilead. The world-building in this book is amazing with many subtle themes and pieces of symbolism hidden throughout

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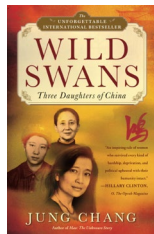
the book. There is also a lot of social commentary in this book, none of which feels forced in. The only criticism that I have is that this book was a little too weird and all over for me, and also the love affair between Offred and Nick feels like it is barely there (even though it is very important to the book). Overall it was 8/10 (great).



Dune by Frank Herbert

Reviewed by Lucas

Dune was a must-read for me, as I'm a big sci-fi and fantasy fan, and *Dune* is one of the most classic sci-fi novels. It was really interesting, and had a bigger learning curve than a lot of other books I've read. It always takes some time to get used to the new sci-fi terms used in a book before you really start to get into the story. Overall, it was a really enjoyable read, and I really enjoyed how it implied this enormous, expanded universe, but you only ever spend time on two planets, one of which was only in the introduction.



Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China by Jung Chang

Reviewed by Nahom

This is a must-read book. At first I wasn't sure that I'd enjoy it simply because it seemed long and boring, but over time I grew to love the characters, and the dynamic they had with each other. It is good literature and it is important history. The author has created an intimate and loving portrait of a close family with strong character and ideals living in a world often dominated by petty and vengeful characters. Written in a straightforward, highly observant and detailed style, it creates a powerful picture of that period. Not to mention, the storytelling is superb as it connects the historical events of the past and how it affected our main characters. To me, this book has tremendous value in that it shows in intimate detail what it was like living in China under Mao, recording a history of how people of all classes suffered and died needlessly during his regime. And further, it shows that people still managed to sustain their dignity and cultural values even through such desperate times. Overall, I absolutely loved this book and my only complaint is that it was a little too long. ■

Staff Summer Scrapbook

Scrapbook



B



A



C

- A Willa and family relax on some deck chairs on Chincoteague Island.
- B Matt and Zoe pause amidst the natural splendor of Puerto Rico.
- C Erin and Kevin watch for whales off the coast of Boothbay, Maine.
- D Zoe enjoys a well-deserved break from the office phones on a Puerto Rico beach.
- E It took only 24 hours for Nijole and Kim to bump into each other in Damariscotta, Maine ... in front of a bookstore/cafe ... where else?



D



E



Students enjoy masked and socially distanced play on a typical Frisbee Friday.

Frisbee Fridays

By Matt McClain

Getting through the week without seeing your friends and classmates was one of the more difficult aspects of school during the pandemic, both for students and their teachers. At Parkmont, this was particularly true because so much of our curriculum is based on experiential learning and social exploration. Early in the year, we decided that students needed a social outlet, a chance to play, and an event to look forward to each week. Frisbee Fridays, an event that eventually shifted to Wednesday afternoons, and that had little to do with frisbee, began in the first week of November and lasted until the end of the year. Each Wednesday or Friday after lunch, a group of 12-18 students would travel to the Parkmont building before walking up to one of the nearby parks to play. ■



Spencer and his kite are just waiting for a good, strong gust of wind.

Congratulations to the Class of 2021!

We couldn't be more proud of the four 2021 graduates. In this extraordinary year of quarantines, second and third waves, testing and vaccines, they navigated it all with remarkable pleasantness, patience, and resilience. On Sunday, June 13, we gathered with them in person, along with their immediate families; we also Zoomed the ceremony for extended family and friends farther afield. We miss you already, Nahom, Firaol, Brianna, and Matthew! Congratulations and good luck in your next chapter! ■

Right: Matthew Kilpatrick, posing with his family after the ceremony, looks ready for whatever comes next.

Below: Who looks more pleased ... Firaol Hailu or her parents?



Above: Brianna Campoverde, who spent a portion of the pandemic in her native Ecuador, makes her family proud at Graduation.

Left: Flanked by his father and Ethan (his Advisor), Nahom Zemedkun flashes the diploma he worked so hard for.

Parkmont Pupils Of Prestige

By Sam Graul

The Parkmont Pupil of Prestige... has a nice ring to it, no? A few years ago, what started as a weekly tradition at the end of Wednesday faculty meetings blossomed into one of the highlights for students each week. Originally, we wanted to end our days by talking about all the great things we'd seen from our student body, as a way of reminding ourselves why we do what we do. That tradition has progressed to become an important part of our school-wide announcements, where we recognize all the 'nominees' for excellence from throughout the week and award one student the coveted PPop for exemplifying the strong traits and habits we look for and appreciate in our students.

Sometimes students were nominated for academic excellence or improvement. Sometimes for a standout performance on a particular project or class activity. Other times PPop went to someone who just exhibited a strong positive attitude, even in the face of hardship, or outright kindness toward others. It absolutely was the highlight of my week, each week, to hear from all of the staff about the people that had left positive impressions on them, and then to convey that to our entire student community. It served both to recognize the excellence we see here at Parkmont on a daily basis, and also to showcase models of behavior and action so we can all aspire to improve ourselves. ■

39th Parkmont Poetry Festival: The Zoom Webinar Edition

By Kim Schraf

Much like Parkmont Home School, the Parkmont Poetry Festival has emerged from pandemic confinement in measured steps. In the spring of 2020, newly quarantined and sequestered, we created a filmed Festival from the self-taped readings of our winning poets. The 2021 Festival, our 39th, found us not yet ready to gather in person, but able to hold a real-time event on the Zoom webinar platform. The poets, by now accomplished at navigating virtual school, shared their winning verse from their homes, their backyards, or from our Zoom studio in the Parkmont Commons. The webinar platform allowed friends and family to enjoy the Festival from across town, across the



country, or even across the world. And because we had the great good fortune to enlist Troy Burki as our web host, everything went more smoothly than any of our 37 in-person Festivals ever did!

Parkmont boasted eight winners among the 40 selected by Finalist Judge Maritza Rivera: Heaven White, Ameen Bekere, Noelle Tesfaye, Jackson Sade, Yanna Contee-Jones, Lucas Whitworth, Karla Rodriguez, and Mateo Ago. We hope that each of them continues to make sense of the world through their writing. They joined winners from Sidwell Friends, Charles Hart, Georgetown Day, E.L. Haynes, Gonzaga, Benjamin Banneker, Field, The Whittle School, National Cathedral School, Ballou, and a home-schooler. Their wide-ranging themes addressed family, identity, equity and inclusion, Greek mythology, body image, poetry, pets, and the pandemic. They wrote odes and haikus, employed alliteration and onomatopoeia, and bared their souls. It was wondrous to behold.

Next year's our 40th, and we hope it will be in person, where we can synchronize heartbeats in a shared space and bask in the frankness and wisdom of 40 new student voices. Mark the date: Saturday, April 30th; you won't want to miss it! ■

