

# Passing INotes

**Parkmont**School

Session 1, 2018

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STORY!



- Session I: Deep Diving Into Main Lessons
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- Poets! Start Your Pens
- 2018-19 Annual Giving Goal: \$57,000



Overcoming fears at Calleva.

## Session I: Deep Diving Into Main Lessons

Parkmont simplifies the class schedule to help students focus, but teachers keep courses rich and diverse. The history of U Street; America's food system; "Encountering the Buddha"; pH testing; *Como Agua Para Chocolate*; human body function. Students covered many topics as they plunged into a challenging array of Main Lessons this fall, testing interests and skills and tapping into Washington's ample resources for hands-on experiences.

Main Lessons, a distinguishing element of the Parkmont academic program, are in-depth treatments of specific areas of study that complement year-long English and math classes, internships, arts and sports offerings, and adventure trips.

Session I Main Lessons included:

**DC History.** Our city has a rich, vibrant, and often shameful past. We framed the city's current issues in historical context and used class field trips to give life to our understanding of what makes Washington, DC so unique. We also focused on issues and events that affect the city today and drew parallels between the policymaking of today and the past. Highlights of the course included lengthy class discussions about the meaning of "gentrification," a field trip to the historic center of 1960s African-American culture on U Street, and a final project students presented to classmates on changes that have occurred in a specific DC neighborhood over 200-plus years. — **Ethan Kuhnhenh**



Parkmont students step into the sunshine after eating lunch at the iconic Ben's Chili Bowl, a staple of U Street since 1958.

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**Spanish 1A.** Students learned to use the Spanish language to greet others and ask for information regarding time, names, and phone numbers. They learned to describe themselves and their families using a variety of verbs to convey action, with daily practice to increase their communication skills. Highlights from the session included a trip to the Gala Theatre to see a stage adaptation of *Como Agua Para Chocolate*, Laura Esquivel's novel of Mexico and cooking, and a Spanish-language scavenger hunt in the American History Museum. In addition, students explored aspects of history and culture, which included adopting and learning more about a Latin American country. The session ended with everyone's favorite activity — eating! First, students learned about the popular foods from their chosen countries. Then they cooked samples of the food. It was a *delicioso* end to an excellent session. — **Bridget Mullins**



Leigh Golumbic and Brian Reyes identify bones in the skeleton in Anatomy class.

**Anatomy and Physiology.** This class is fun because it deals directly with our bodies and how they work. Each week a different body system is examined through lecture, film, games, and field trips. One of the more competitive games is the chance to steal bones from one another in head-to-head rock-paper-scissor matches. Students spend a lot of time seeing what they learn in class about human anatomy in a different context on trips to the zoo, where they take on comparative anatomy challenges. This all comes together in the last week when students spend a day working on fetal pig dissections. As a group, they investigate and identify each of the systems covered over the session. It is always amazing to see what is really going on inside the human body. — **Alex Jennison**

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**Health.** Students took on a subject close to home — their own health, along with the larger context that affects their well-being. The topic of personal health spanned mental, physical, and social health. They explored how those personal health metrics can be impacted by influences such as the American agricultural and healthcare systems, the “War on Drugs,” and the opioid epidemic. The course was divided into five units: Happiness and Positive Psychology, Nutrition and the American Food System, Sexual Health and the Reproductive System, Sexual Identity and Attraction, and Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco. We also got outside the classroom, practicing meditation skills at recharj studio downtown, learning about local organic farming at Common Good City Farm, and visiting SMYAL in DC to discuss sexual health, inclusion, and the struggles faced by LGBTQ youth. — **Matt McClain**



**Abe Silverman, Jacob Roberts, and Alex Harry** work together to investigate how gummy bears react to different solutions.

**Scientific Discovery.** Middle-school students explored the scientific method through experiments and investigations of many different topics. Students examined surface tension, checked out the effectiveness of different cleaning solutions, and compared the pH of various household items, among many other hands-on activities that allowed them to implement scientific inquiry. For their final project, students designed and carried out their own experiments to demonstrate their understanding through the use of a project-based assessment. Students conceived a research question based on a topic

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of personal interest, conducted background research, designed their inquiry, collected data, and presented their findings to the class. They experienced the entire process of the scientific method. — Troy Burki

**World Religions.** We explored a variety of faiths that have had a lasting impact on world history and focused mostly on five different belief systems that have followers all over the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We explored similarities and differences between the great stories of these traditions, basic religious practices, and basic religious beliefs. Field trips were the highlight! We visited the Holocaust Museum; the Sri Shiva Vishnu Hindu temple in Lanham, MD; the National Cathedral (where we got a behind-the-scenes tour!); the National Basilica; the Islamic Center of Washington; and the “Encountering the Buddha” exhibit at the Freer/Sackler Gallery of Art. For their final project, students created their own religions, “worshipping” a variety of ideas/personages, including Fortnite, beloved pets, and, of course, themselves! — Nijole Gedutis



Middle School World Religions students visit the Sri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, MD.

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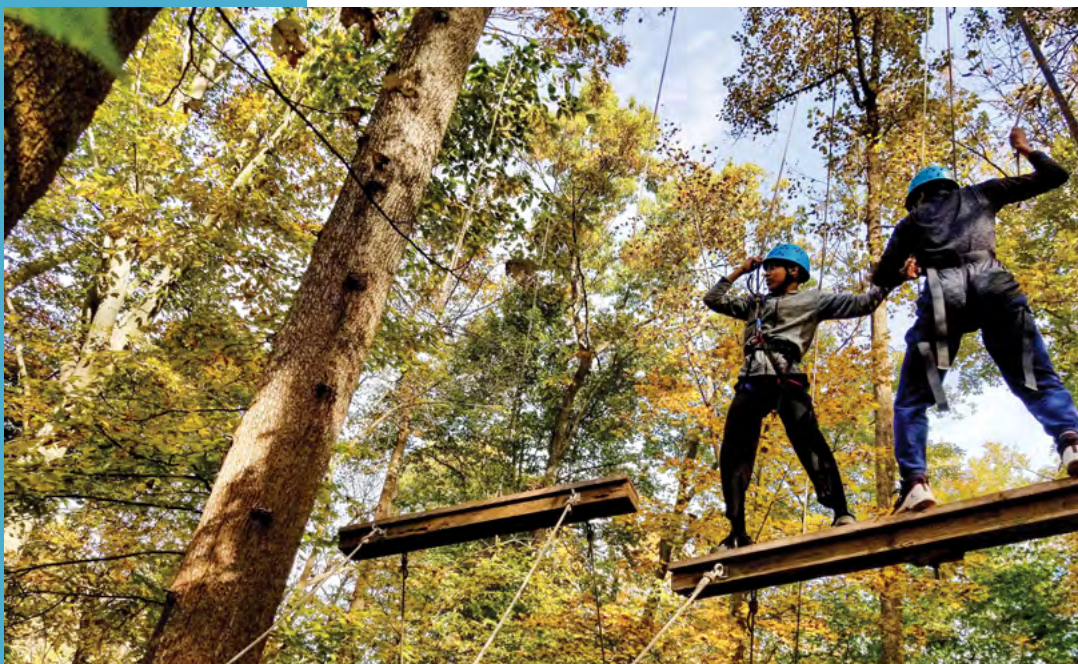
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Students find a value for gravitational acceleration by measuring distance and time of a ball rolling down a ramp.

**Physics: Mechanics.** Mechanics is an introductory course about motion of “large objects,” generally objects that are much larger than the atom. Our goal is to learn about the physical behavior of these objects and to improve our understanding through experiences and experiments. We covered topics including linear motion, speed, velocity, acceleration and vectors, as well as momentum and kinetic/potential energy. One of the greatest aspects of a physics class is that it provides an area of application for concepts that many students have learned, or are learning about in their math courses. The course culminated in a construction and analysis of a model medieval siege weapon, such as a catapult or trebuchet. — Sam Gaul





Above: With the balance beams raised high, a delicate duet unfolds during our annual trip to Calleva to test our limits.

Right: What's impossible for one becomes attainable through Parkmont teamwork.



## Calleva: Fear Not

By Alex Jennison, Teacher

In early November, Parkmont's upper-school students got out of the classroom for a day and found themselves 30 feet up in the trees. They were experiencing one of the most exciting days of the fall, when Parkmont students head out to the Calleva farm in Poolesville, MD, to challenge themselves and their fears on the ropes course. Students spent the morning swinging high above the ground, charging up tree trunks, and battling their way up a giant ladder in teams of two. One of the best parts of the day was the farm-to-table lunch. Students observed goats, fed pigs, and held chickens. They also had a firsthand opportunity to see where their lunch was grown and prepared. We got very lucky with the weather in November. It was a sunny, 70-degree day, perfect for being in the woods, cheering on classmates, and working together in advisory groups. ■





Parkmont middle-school campers test their hiking skills along a George Washington National Forest trail.

## The Flight Of Our Stars

By Matt McClain, Teacher

When the leaves begin to change color and cool weather descends on the nation's capital, Parkmont middle schoolers pack up the van and head for the hills in what, for many, is their first overnight camping experience. The general location of these autumn outings remains the same, the spectacular Blue Ridge of the Appalachian Mountains. But the list of specific campsites keeps expanding.

In October, we camped at Hone Quarry, nestled deep in George Washington National Forest. Our group, brave souls all, sat quietly as we followed winding roads into the Appalachian heartland. After a quick stop to pick up supplies, we arrived at camp at 4:30 p.m. and quickly set up for the night. This year, two students opted to sleep in hammocks, which they rigged onto a single tree in a bunk bed-like operation. The rest of us organized our equipment into tents.



Ethan primed the fire, and before long we were roasting sausages to pair with baked beans, corn and, for dessert, s'mores. The dinner conversation gravitated toward the divine nature of the campfire meal. It remains true that there isn't anything better than a hot, hard-earned meal, consumed while huddled together on a chilly fall night. After dinner, Ethan and I gathered the students for a nighttime hike, a tradition at this location. We turned our headlamps off and climbed the hill, as our eyes adjusted to the moonlit path in front of us. Upon reaching the quarry, we lay flat on a slab and took in the stars. For many of us, this was our first time seeing the Milky Way (crazy!) and we only spoke to point out the shooting stars we saw hurtling through the sky. It was truly incredible.

The following morning, we packed up camp and drove 45 minutes to the High Knob Tower trailhead. We quickly traversed the two-mile trail up to a wonderful lookout: a WWII-era fire tower with a 360-degree view of the surrounding mountains. We ate lunch and got back on the road for a 90-minute drive to Stripling Orchard. Students collected three bags of apples, tossed the baseball and frisbee, and picked up some of the best pumpkin and apple pie we've ever had.

Why is camping part of our curriculum? There is something unique about the bonds forged on an overnight camping trip. These trips provide fertile ground for new friendships, borne out of the shared experience of doing something new, exciting, and often challenging. They are an opportunity to get away from the stressful paradigm of social life in and outside of school and reach a place where students are confronted with the stark reality of human connection and our relationship with the natural world. My closest friendships, including the one with Ethan, were fashioned on the outdoor trips my father led when we were young. It is an honor and a pleasure to continue that tradition today. ■



It's mountains as far as the eye can see from the World War II-era fire tower on the High Knob Tower trail.

## Parkmont School

Calendar 2018-2019

Aug. 27	Parents Welcome
Aug. 28	Open House
Aug. 29	Open House
Aug. 30	Open House
Sept. 1	Open House
Sept. 2	Open House
Sept. 3	Open House
Sept. 4	Open House
Sept. 5	Open House
Sept. 6	Open House
Sept. 7	Open House
Sept. 8	Open House
Sept. 9	Open House
Sept. 10	Open House
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Dec. 30	Open House
Dec. 31	Open House

Parkmont's  
2018-19 Calendar  
is available at  
[Parkmont.org](http://Parkmont.org).  
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## Getting Into The Swing

By Bridget Mullins, Teacher

Picture this: Students trying to catch balls in a basket positioned on their heads, walking like chickens to drop balls in buckets, playing field hockey with pool noodles and beach balls, and silently acting out hilarious pictures.

Twice a year, Parkmont students participate in a fun-filled week, aimed to increase school spirit and unite advisory groups. Spirit Week and Field Day typically coincide and take place when the weather is nice enough to visit nearby Carter Barron park, where field day takes place. During this week, students are encouraged to participate in daily dress-up activities, which this year included Twin Day, Class Color Day, Dress to Impress Day, Black and White Day, and Pajama Day! By participating, they help earn their advisories points in the Parkmont Advisory Challenge game. They can continue to earn points by winning activities on Field Day. We carry the spirit throughout the year by having monthly challenge activities and dress-up days. Although the Parkmont Advisory Challenge is a competition, the overall aim of these days is to have fun, work together, and support each other through challenges. This is most evident in the semi-annual Capture the Flag game, which occurs at the end of every Field Day. During this activity, advisories come together to compete on larger teams and capture “the flag,” represented this year by a stuffed panther. ■

Right:  
Parkmont  
students  
Alex Krauzlis  
and Dwayne  
Latimer burn  
off some steam  
at a Field Day  
challenge.

Below:  
Alex Jennison  
leads a Field  
Day cheer.



Leigh  
Golumbic  
and Isaac  
George  
celebrate  
Spirit Week  
in style.



Has Salem  
Tsfaye  
turned into  
Firaol Hailu,  
or the other  
way around?  
Confusion  
abounds on  
Twin Day.





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Ethan explains his course covering the history of Washington, DC.

## Here's How We Roll

By Sania Tildon, Teacher

At Back to School Night, parents, faculty and staff gathered to talk about plans, hopes, and expectations for the school year. After everyone assembled in the Commons, Ron McClain ushered in the new academic year with remarks and introductions. Parents then navigated an abbreviated academic day, spending 15 minutes in each class and advisory. Teachers discussed curricula, class activities, and goals for the session. Bridget kept parents in stitches in her introduction to Spanish 1A, while Ethan walked parents through his plans for DC History. Everyone reassembled in the Commons for a Q & A session and a potluck of refreshments, capping off the year's first family event. While we missed some families that were unable to attend, it was an engaging and informative evening. ■



Parents pause for a laugh on Back to School Night, with Bridget introducing her Spanish-language program.



## Where In The World?

As Summer 2018 arrived, Parkmont teachers departed, heading for points across the globe to explore and build their capacity to enrich students' learning with first-hand knowledge of life elsewhere. ■



**A** Willa cruises with her husband and son at Chincoteague, Virginia.



**B** Lizzie makes a berry stop on the Roan Highlands of the Appalachian Trail.



**C** Bridget ascends along the path at San Juan de Gaztelugatxe, near Bilbao, Spain.



**D** Ethan takes a breather atop the Andes near La Paz, Bolivia.



**E** Sam scans Olympic National Park, Washington State.



## New In The House: Sania Tildon

By Ethan Kuhnhenhenn, Teacher

Like many teachers at Parkmont, Sania Tildon, our school's most recent arrival, draws experience from a diverse educational and professional background. She earned an undergraduate degree in history at Yale University. She then moved back to the DMV, where she grew up, and earned a master's degree in social work at the University of Maryland.

Her first teaching gig was being a long-term sub for physics at a private school in Baltimore, tapping into her strong interest and coursework in math and science.

Sania moved to provide therapy at a mental health clinic in Atlanta. After two years, she came to join us at Parkmont and has approached teaching here with confidence in her ability to incorporate what she's learned in the academic and professional world to the interdisciplinary structure of teaching at Parkmont.

She teaches Paragraphs and Essays, a Main Lesson, crafting interesting writing prompts for students who are developing their own writing techniques. Her experience teaching physics in Baltimore prepped her for the challenges of teaching math to Parkmont students in multiple grades who have many different skill levels.

Sania credits staff like Kim Schraf and Nijole Gedutis for guiding her through her first few months on the job, but we think she has eased into life here at Parkmont seamlessly.

Although not exactly a new arrival to the DMV, Sania still considers Washington, DC, an unknown and is excited to explore the city. On her list of things to do? Check out the downtown theatre scene, visit the Newseum, and find some new spots to practice one of her favorite hobbies, roller skating. Welcome to Parkmont, Sania. We are so happy you're with us and look forward to getting to know you better! ■



Sania Tildon pauses between classes on our porch, with her first year of teaching at Parkmont well underway.

## All Hands On Deck

By Nijole Gedutis, Dean of Students and Teacher

Our full- and part-time teachers are fortunate each year to be able to draw on a variety of talented people who provide additional support for our students. This fall, we have three American University students who are serving as interns.



Enti Mooskin offers some tutorial support to ninth-grader Karla Contreras.

Helena Lazich, a junior majoring in communication science and disorders; Phoebe Hamori, a freshman majoring in sports medicine; and Megan Burns, a freshman majoring in Spanish, have worked as aides in the classrooms, chaperones on trips, and tutors with individual students. Biniam Zemedkun, a Parkmont alum who is studying computer science at Montgomery College, and Enti Mooskin, who recently returned from work helping students in Colombia develop their English-language skills, are back in action at the school tutoring students. Veteran Parkmont teacher Lizzie Sampson provides tutoring, as well as special instruction in art, and leads workshops. Nina Zuriff, a licensed

clinical social worker, is in her third year supporting our students and working her magic. And longtime tutor Meggin Rose completed reading assessments on all of our students to help us target our teaching. We are, as always, grateful for their expertise, patience, and commitment to our students! ■

## To Work We Go

By Willa Reinhard, Administrator and Teacher

Students at Parkmont learn about the world of work by going to work. During a typical year, our students will fulfill internship requirements by putting in more than 9,000 hours at businesses and organizations around the area. We

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have been fortunate to form partnerships with more than 60 enterprises, where students can orient themselves to the workplace, build skills, and test their interests. While we are always scouting for new sites, a remarkable range is represented in our files. Here are samples of some of our longstanding partnerships:

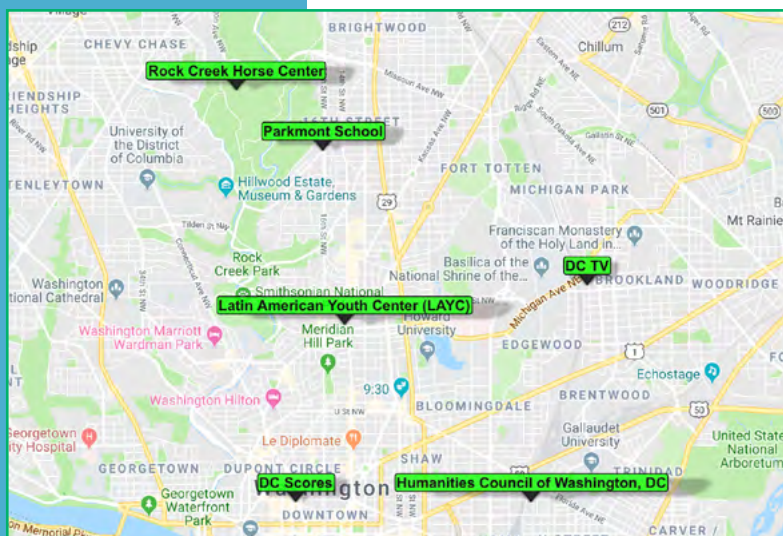
**Rock Creek Horse Center:** A former Parkmont teacher who now works at the stables helped make the connection for this opportunity. Interns help clean and maintain the barns and get some hands-on experience grooming and feeding horses and cleaning tack. Our current intern is an experienced rider, and after internship, she stays on to take lessons.

**DC Scores:** an organization that works with area youth on soccer, poetry, and community service projects. Our interns have learned how to referee youth games around the city and have helped organize DC Scores' annual youth poetry event.

**DCTV:** a studio where interns have assisted with in-house production of public television shows. Interns learn about editing and production software, select subjects of interest, and then go out to film in the city, ultimately putting together their own pieces.

**Latin American Youth Center (LAYC):** Our relationship with LAYC has grown. Interns initially worked with the Teen Center, helping out with after-school programming, but we were fortunate this year to add two more offices to our roster, with interns working to bring attention to drug and alcohol abuse among teens and educate youth about safe sex and STD testing.

**Humanities Council Of Washington, DC:** a non-profit focused on promoting the history and culture of the District through its programs and grants. Student interns learn about their grant programs and help organize related data. Interns have also had the chance to attend staff and citywide meetings to get a behind-the-scenes look at how a small non-profit runs. ■



## Poets! Start Your Pens

A river of verse flows through the Parkmont Poetry Festival that seems always to sparkle and nourish in unique ways. We've come to expect it and look forward to the new currents with great anticipation. What special gleam awaits us in our 37th year?

The submission gates are now open and poems will be accepted until the deadline of February 19, 2019. Students in grades 6-12 at any school located in DC are eligible to submit up to two original poems to [poetry@parkmont.org](mailto:poetry@parkmont.org). Entries must be typed and accompanied by an entry form, available on the website, [www.parkmontpoetry.org](http://www.parkmontpoetry.org), which features past winners and their work. Parkmont students can submit their entries to any Parkmont English teacher.

A distinguished panel of poets is in place to serve as preliminary judges. Louisa Newlin, a senior consultant at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Kate Young, poet laureate of Arlington, Virginia, and Greg McBride, poet and founding editor of *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, will select 80-90 semi-finalists. Forty winning poems will be chosen by the finalist judge and published in the festival's annual collection.

The 2019 Festival will culminate with an assembly and reading on Saturday, April 27th at Zion Baptist Church on Blagden Avenue, across the street from Parkmont School.

The Festival, founded in 1982 by Parkmont School, counts on ongoing support from friends who are passionate about activating young voices, building reading and writing skills, and spurring creativity among diverse students across the city. ■



This year's poetry festival poster, sent to over 600 teachers in District public, private, and charter schools, highlights some winning 2018 poems and invites new submissions.

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## **2018-19 Annual Giving Goal: \$57,000**

Parkmont School carries out its exceptionally nurturing and dynamic approach to education only with the support of a caring and committed community. We rely on many forms of help to give students the best chance to succeed. The assistance beyond tuition that we seek is vital to fulfill our mission. Our Annual Giving Campaign represents an important contribution to our efforts. We can look back over our decades of work and be grateful for the help from the generous alums, parents, staff, foundations, and friends who have helped make it all possible. In our 47th year, we are reaching out anew, with an ambitious goal to raise \$57,000, which does not include the support we also work to raise through foundations.

The articles in this edition of Passing Notes offer a sense of the many facets of our program and the many places where funding is put to essential use. For a small school like Parkmont, our goal is ambitious. All donations, no matter the size, significantly aid our capacity to give students a wide range of experiences within our wonderful school house, our vital city and farther climes, along with the extra attention crucial to their success. Thank you for your consideration and support!

Donations can be made by check, via PayPal to [gifts@parkmont.org](mailto:gifts@parkmont.org), or by credit card. For assistance or questions, please contact Communications Coordinator Erin Lidz, [elidz@parkmont.org](mailto:elidz@parkmont.org) or 202-726-0740 ext. 2. ■



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