

Passing INotes

ParkmontSchool

**Session 2, 2018 and
Session 3, 2019**

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- My Internship: Karla Rodriguez Contreras
- Race Relations: Now And Then
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- Sports: Winning Isn't Everything
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- Life In The Afternoon
- 37th Parkmont Poetry Festival Draws 492 Poems, 36 Schools
- Annual Giving Campaign: Help Us Reach \$57,000



Matt McClain with both middle school advisories at the Jefferson Memorial.

Deep Seeing DC: Rainforests, Heartbeat Art, Tombs

By Troy Burki

From exploring ancient Egyptian pyramids and tombs in 3-D to experiencing hands-on, interactive art installations, Parkmont middle-schoolers enjoyed a series of Wednesday trips to dive into learning at locations throughout DC.

We attended artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Pulse* exhibit at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. The installation incorporated biometric data into engaging art pieces. Students watched as their fingerprints were transformed into digital projections, along with visualizations and instruments that turned their heartbeats into original music. Finally, they entered a room full of light bulbs, where each one flashed with their unique pulse.

Another standout trip was to the United States Botanic Garden, on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol. Students made their way through a wide variety of

areas, each with its own unique climate and growing conditions: a reconstructed primeval Jurassic landscape, a lush tropical rainforest, a desert with unique cacti and flowering plants, sections dedicated to medicinal plants, Mediterranean and Hawaiian landscapes. They saw a display of hundreds of different types of orchids.

Students explored flora that they would not have seen anywhere else in the District. Along the way, they also experienced a hands-on demonstration of how the seeds of the cacao tree are transformed into the chocolate we enjoy. ■



Bezawit Tucker and Sam Graul see biometrics become art at *Pulse*.



Ameen Bekere checks out interactive art at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden's *Pulse* exhibit.



My Internship: Karla Rodriguez Contreras

By Willa Reinhard

Tell me about your internship: I work at CREATE Arts Center. They have programs for students from Maryland when they don't have school, like on holidays and winter or spring break. They hire different art teachers to do art activities, like collage, painting.

Your role? I help the kids use materials they can't use on their own yet. These are the younger kids, 8-12 years old. I clean up after activities. I organize the materials after they use them, too, because it gets very messy.

Favorite part? The people I work with are really kind. Sometimes I've been able to get help on some of my school projects.

Something you are proud of? Around Halloween, my supervisor asked me to create a huge collaged cat for the pin the tail on the cat game. Right now,

continues on the next page

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Karla Rodriguez
Contreras on the
job at CREATE
Arts Center.

we're working on making streamers with abstract drawings on them for Easter. My supervisor compliments my work and says I have such creativity and I take my time on projects, especially compared to other interns she's had, even older interns.

An arts organization career, perhaps? I was thinking about it. It's a fun place to be as an intern. I am into video editing and I imagine myself teaching it to others one day. CREATE has a cartoon class for older kids and another staff member mentioned that there are also video editing classes. I could see it being fun to teach those kinds of classes. I'm just not sure if I could make a career out of it. I would want to help kids who are interested in this know they could have a career. I want to help parents of kids who have talent see their talent in my classes and know their kids can have a career in the arts. ■

Race Relations: Now And Then

By Sania Tildon

This year's Race Relations class explored American history from the 1600s through the present, with an eye on social and political changes over time. After considering current racial dynamics in the United States, we dove into history to understand how our society got to where it is today. We spent an equal amount of time examining the meaning of history and questioning how we achieve a comprehensive understanding of the past. Although these questions are intellectually and emotionally demanding, students brought great energy and curiosity to the class, arriving daily with new questions and observations about race, history, and current events.

In one of our most memorable classes, "Resistance through Music," we traced the African-American struggle for freedom and equality through 80 years of music. From Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" to "Don't Believe the Hype" by Rock and Roll Hall-of-Famers Public Enemy, all the way to the political music of contemporary activist Michael Render, these primary sources let students piece together a meaningful understanding of this struggle in the 20th and 21st centuries. Students even made connections to the media they consume on a daily basis. This was but one day in a seven-week session of challenging readings, conversations, and assignments that the students met head-on.

Student work excerpt: Students were faced with an article that questioned whether white artists imitating black musicians are "expressing admiration, or... just stealing? Are they sincerely trying to come to some understanding of cultural difference, or are they just engaging in minstrel parody without the make-up?"

Firaol Hailu provided the following thoughtful response:

In my opinion, it all depends on how they are expressing it. They have all the right to imitate black musicians, but if they're doing it in a way that they're making fun of it, then I will say that's not admiring the type of music that black musicians make. For example, Eminem is a white rapper. I personally don't listen to him, but people are not bothered by him because he's rapping in his own way. He's not making fun of it or anything, but he's just rapping because that's the type of category of music that he likes. ■

ParkmontSchool

Calendar 2018-2019

Aug 17	English Summer
Aug 18	English Summer
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Aug 22	English Summer
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Aug 31	English Summer

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Creative Writing: Penning Senses

By Nijole Gedutis

In Session 3's Creative Writing class, we went on a field trip every week, using the city's vast resources to inspire us. We saw the Gordon Parks exhibit at the National Gallery of Art, took a tour of the Library of Congress, and spent a morning at the Phillips Collection. Before seeing the *Pulse* exhibit at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (as part of a lesson on sensory details), students were asked to brainstorm a list of words having to do with each of the five senses. Students then walked through the exhibit and wrote poems, using their "word banks." Some wrote poems about the exhibit, others used the words and the surroundings as a jumping-off point to write about something else. Some of those poems:



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Bright the lights go
Dead the sculpture stands
It coerces and the
Roses pulse
In the room that transforms
Will I hear the folks
If they are dead
Will I see the lights
If they are dim
Away I go
To the dark.

— **Helen Abebe**

Placing my finger in a tube to hear
The beat from my heart,
Fills me with fear.
I pretend that what I saw
Is just fake, and I attend to participate.

— **Brianna Cruz**

So many people need liberty
In the logical egotistical world that
We live in today.
With every light blinking
A child is born.
When the light is dying down
Slowly
that means there are people
In this world dying
but slowly
and sluggish.
The big man sitting in the quiet place,
Alone and confused about why people
walk by
And don't free him from his imprisonment.
Everytime people walk by he tries to stare
at them to get their attention
He mentions the metal tension and tries
to catch them when they're flinching

— **Jordan McNair**

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Her lavender scent,
refines my own heart,
It goes a great ascent,
It was love from the start.
Her luminous glow bright
as a star,
You can't stop seeing
Once I look at from afar.
That single look sends my own
mind fleeing.
My mind takes courage, but then
forms a quake.
It questions repeatedly "Should I
make her mine?"
O' why, O' why, these butterflies
make me ache
Will she "reject" or "take" - don't
know till the end of time.
But I wonder if she loves
another,
It brings my mind pain of no end,
If so be true, I'll still be happy like
no other,
Whenever I see her again.

— **Keonte Jones**

The light begins to flicker,
boom-boom-boom-boom.
Loud noise, almost like you're in
your mommy's tummy all over
again listening to her heartbeat.
The fresh air comes in and out
the room, almost like I'm in my
mother's tummy, all over again.

— **Salem Tesfaye**

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**Parkmont writers seek creative inspiration
at the Library of Congress.**



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Calendar 2018-2019

Aug. 12	Summer Breakover	Aug. 12	End of Semester 1st 3rd hour dismissal
Aug. 13	Summer Breakover	Aug. 13	1st hour dismissal
Aug. 14	Summer Breakover	Aug. 14	2nd hour dismissal
Aug. 15	Summer Breakover	Aug. 15	3rd hour dismissal
Aug. 16	Summer Breakover	Aug. 16	4th hour dismissal
Aug. 17	Summer Breakover	Aug. 17	5th hour dismissal
Aug. 18	Summer Breakover	Aug. 18	6th hour dismissal
Aug. 19	Summer Breakover	Aug. 19	7th hour dismissal
Aug. 20	Summer Breakover	Aug. 20	8th hour dismissal
Aug. 21	Summer Breakover	Aug. 21	9th hour dismissal
Aug. 22	Summer Breakover	Aug. 22	10th hour dismissal
Aug. 23	Summer Breakover	Aug. 23	11th hour dismissal
Aug. 24	Summer Breakover	Aug. 24	12th hour dismissal
Aug. 25	Summer Breakover	Aug. 25	13th hour dismissal
Aug. 26	Summer Breakover	Aug. 26	14th hour dismissal
Aug. 27	Summer Breakover	Aug. 27	15th hour dismissal
Aug. 28	Summer Breakover	Aug. 28	16th hour dismissal
Aug. 29	Summer Breakover	Aug. 29	17th hour dismissal
Aug. 30	Summer Breakover	Aug. 30	18th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	19th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	20th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	21st hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	22nd hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	23rd hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	24th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	25th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	26th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	27th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	28th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	29th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	30th hour dismissal
Aug. 31	Summer Breakover	Aug. 31	31st hour dismissal

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Paintings at the
National Gallery
of Art help bring
students' poetry
to life.

The rooms are mystifying and dark.
They ignite the senses of hearing and sight.
There is also an exhibit with tree bark.
But the most fascinating is the room with
bulbs of light.
In the first room is a display
Of many visitors' fingerprints.
New ones come each day
Though some who pass by didn't.
A room of puddles
Turns your heartbeat

Into pulses of ripples
That move at your feet.
On the wall you see
A silhouette against reflection
Of the water pattern fluttering
It's fitting for the collection.
The darkest and most mystifying of all
Is a heartbeat of light.
All of us feel small
As the lights shine beyond and bright.
— Kieran Waterman ■



Bridget clarifies how verbs work in Spanish.

Teacher Spotlight: Bridget Mullins

Origin story: I was born in New Orleans, but I'm not really from anywhere. My dad was in the Air Force. I grew up moving every three or four years. For me, making new friends is just part of life. I moved to the DC area and this is the place I've been the longest.

Studies: A Bachelor of Arts degree, in theater and psychology, from Towson State University in Maryland, and teaching certificates in Spanish and special education. My study abroad experience was at the University of Málaga in Spain.

Working: I had different, interesting jobs right out of college. I was a waitress, a bartender. I started doing new staff training and marketing for Outback Steakhouse, helping open restaurants around the world – Australia, Egypt, Dominican Republic, Qatar. It fostered my interest in other cultures. I have part



Teacher Bridget Mullins in Spain.

of a didgeridoo from one of my openings.

Why teach: It's the students, the connections I make. When I was growing up, I didn't always feel like I had those connections with teachers. It's really important that they know someone is there for them.

Why Parkmont: As a teacher, I have more flexibility. I can teach what I'm passionate about. I think I've built

every one of the courses I've taught. I love Spanish. I love teaching Spanish. I'm also teaching literary elements in film. We break down the structure of a story. Students write their own screenplays. We talk about how a camera can create mood. They make a short film. Then they have a finished piece of art.

A challenge: It's definitely a weird, controversial time in politics. One of the things I've struggled with is how much do I tell the kids. I don't want to tell them what to think. But I've realized it's important to let them know they're allowed to have their own opinions. I also voice my own and explain it. They don't have to agree. It's about how to listen to someone else, how to have healthy debates and conversation. If they encounter these things outside of school, they might not be able to do that.

Off-hours obsessions: Dance – hip-hop, jazz, ballet. Travel. I've been to six of the seven continents, missing only Antarctica. I'll get there someday. My total for countries visited is 35 and this summer I plan to hit 40! ■



Abe Silverman takes in the winter wonderland at Whitetail Ski Resort in Mercersburg, PA.

Winter Trip: Downhill Ups and Downs

By Sania Tildon

On this year's all-school ski trip, the forces of nature tested all the virtues of Parkmont students and faculty. After rescheduling the trip three times due to inclement weather, we finally made it up to Whitetail Ski Resort in Mercersburg, PA. All seemed to be going well, and we felt like it had all been worth the wait when the ski instructors informed us that we had some of the best weather of the year that day. For five hours students and faculty took to the slopes — some

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Brianna
Campoverde and
Karla Rodriguez
Contreras



Melinda
Bone

for the very first time! Nature had other things in mind for the end of the day. In the last hour of our time at Whitetail, three middle schoolers sustained injuries coming down the slopes. The students demonstrated incredible bravery, and their friends and classmates, showing great maturity, were quick to get help. Not only were they quick to get help, but they remained patient and concerned even when the students were with medics and we were uncertain about how they were doing. All of the injured skiers are on the mend and back in school, and for all that the trip did to highlight the possible risks of skiing, it also illuminated the strength and compassion in our students. This year's ski trip will not soon be forgotten, and we hope that students won't forget the courage, maturity, and empathy we saw that day and that we've always known that they have in them. ■



Dei Antoine Ballenger



Parkmont soccer players get their kicks.

Sports: Winning Isn't Everything

By Ethan Kuhnhenh

Parkmont may not have a traditional athletic program, but there are plenty of athletes in our community. While we offer a gym class every session, there are also opportunities for competitive players to showcase their skills against rival small private school programs in the region. This past fall and winter we played soccer and basketball games against the likes of the Siena, Friends Meeting and Nora schools.

We fielded a mixed team of veteran Parkmont soccer players and some students new to the school and to the sport. Our first game of the season was against our local rival, the Nora School. It was a close game that we ended up losing, but it was a positive experience for everyone involved. The results of this year's soccer season didn't always go our way, but the team's bonding and growth made an impression.

The journey to Friends Meeting in Frederick had Matt McClain and me, the coaches, reminiscing about our days of high school soccer away games. The excitement of the away trip, the stories told and jokes cracked on the way to and

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gym rats say,
"Cheese."

from the field, was an experience we won't forget anytime soon.

We had similarly positive experiences during our winter basketball season. We played a number of home games in our Takoma gym, and also traveled away to play Friends Meeting and Siena. Our basketball team was a high-energy mix of younger and older players. We were especially impressed with our middle-schoolers' contributions. Anchored by Yanna Contee-Jones, Dei Antoine Ballenger, Ian Makle and Nick Chin, the younger students showed remarkable poise and grit playing against predominantly older students. The future bodes well for Parkmont sports programs! ■



Matt with middle schoolers from both advisories in George Washington National Forest. These trips allow advisors and students to create bonds that transcend the classroom.

Advisory: Staying In Tune

By Matt McClain

Advisory groups are one of the central features of the Parkmont program. Comprised of eight to 11 students and one advisor, they meet three times a week, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Those 45-minute periods provide students with an opportunity to get work done during their school day, but the advisee/advisor relationship extends far beyond that period. Advisors are the direct line of communication between parents and the school, and advisors are tasked with developing individualized plans for their students to help them succeed in school. In the upper school, this includes supporting students around internship placement and template work, tracking graduation petition work for seniors, offering support around work completion, and devising plans

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Nubia Montecinos practices her bike-riding skills on an Upper School adventure trip. Her relationship with Willa provides a clear example of how advisor/advisee relationships are tailored to the student.

that involve study hall and study skills class placement. In both the upper and middle schools, advisors spend time helping students work through social challenges and developing relationships based on trust and support.

For example, 12th Grader Nubia Montecinos says she sees the role of advisor as “encouraging a student to do their best in school and help them plan for the future.” Nubia has been in Willa Reinhard’s advisory for two years, talking about books and music, their shared passion for social activism, and plans for college and life after Parkmont. Nubia says that she has had a voice in determining her future, and that that is made possible by her close relationship with Willa. “Willa has encouraged me to believe in my educational ability and challenge

myself; ultimately she has been one of my biggest supports in school and is one of the reasons I look forward to coming to Parkmont every day.”

Advisory relationships at Parkmont provide many other opportunities to interact in ways that are not entirely based on academic performance, but take into account students as “whole persons.” In order to truly support our students, we have to know them and earn their trust. They need to know that our advice means something, and is based on our familiarity with them and their needs. This is the basis of the advisory group at Parkmont. ■

Life In The Afternoon

Dance Class

By Bridget Mullins

Dance is my passion. It gave me confidence and an outlet through which to express myself when I didn't have the voice to do so. In addition, dance taught me to embrace my creativity, to persist when I was challenged, and how to work with others as a team. It is for these reasons I continue to dance, and I love teaching dance to Parkmont students.

In Session 2, dance was an afternoon class. The students entered with varying skill levels; some danced every weekend, while others had never set foot in a class. For the latter, it was important to give students a new experience, possibly something they wouldn't normally have the means to experience. So we modeled our dance class after a traditional class: a full body warm-up with core strength exercises, a lesson in technical skills, and finally the learning of choreography. In addition, we explored a variety of styles, including hip-hop, jazz, musical theatre, ballet and modern.

Many students struggled in the beginning with one aspect or another of the class. Learning a new skill is hard, so this is to be expected! By the end, though, students were blossoming. Whether they instantaneously picked up every move, or spent the class dancing in a circle, they were embracing something new and growing stronger, both physically and mentally. Some learned to mentor and coach classmates. Others discovered a natural propensity to move and a desire to continue the practice. Others simply worked on timing and coordination. Everyone had fun!

Chess Class

By Sam Graul

I love chess. I used to play casually when I was a young kid, with my dad and a few friends. I never played competitively,

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Dei Antoine Ballenger looks for the right angle.



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but it always fascinated me how games would always play out so differently every time. As an adult, I've loved following the advancements in how AI, or artificial intelligence, can play the game (in the last couple of years, the best systems can defeat the grandmasters of the world). In the last few years, the world championships being streamed online and more media coverage overall has made it so much easier to follow.

In our classes, I was amazed by the rate at which we all seemed to get better and better each week. We learned about some of the most popular strategic openings (the Ruy Lopez and Queen's Gambit produced some particularly interesting games for us). It was also pretty cool to help students use chess move notation (Kxe4!?), even in casual speech, and see their vision on the board increase.

Chess is the kind of game that no one can be perfect at. As I tell students, if anyone was, we wouldn't play the game. Everyone makes mistakes somewhere on the board. Better players learn how to take advantage of them. This is a really fun class to teach. It is one of those places where we could all relax, but also learn to concentrate and improve ourselves at the same time. ■



Budding grandmasters puzzle out their next moves.



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37th Parkmont Poetry Festival Draws 492 Poems, 36 Schools

By Kim Schraf

With National Poetry Month winding into its final week, the Parkmont Poetry Festival celebrated the verse of our middle-school and upper-school winners. Semi-finalist judges Louisa Newlin, Martha Young and Greg McBride diligently read 492 student entries from 36 public, private and charter schools District-wide. They chose 90 poems to pass along to finalist judge Reuben Jackson, who painstakingly decided which poems spoke to him the loudest among the vibrant pool of student voices.

Parkmont School has sponsored the Festival for the past 37 years, and this year an impressive number of our students were selected to advance to the final round of judging, and four students emerged as finalist winners. We congratulate the following semi-finalists and note those who distinguished themselves as winners with boldface: middle schoolers Henok Abebe, **Casper Corsello**, Yanna Contee-Jones, Niko Harvey, Katia Palhus-Jones, Ameen Bekere, Noelle Tesfaye, and **Alex Harry**; and upper schoolers **Henry Rosser**, **Jordan McNair**, and Spencer Millien. We congratulate them all!

The Poetry Festival was held on Saturday, April 27th at 2 pm at Zion Baptist Church's Fellowship Hall, just across Blagden Avenue from Parkmont School. It was uplifting and inspiring to hear the poetry conversation — an extension of our Parkmont conversation — that filled the hall when these young poets stepped up to the microphone to share their words. Plan to join us next year and treat yourself to a front-row seat! ■



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Annual Giving Campaign: Help Us Reach \$57,000

The Annual Fund campaign, an important source of fuel to keep the Parkmont School going strong, counts on contributions from people who support the mission of our small, nurturing school to foster individual growth and enthusiasm for learning. Our campaign so far this year has raised \$44,813. We are grateful for the generosity and still pushing to reach our goal of \$57,000.

Gifts can be made with a credit card (VISA or MasterCard) or a check. Please call the Parkmont Office at 202.726.0740 with your credit card information or mail a check to:

Annual Giving Campaign
Parkmont School
4842 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

Online donations may be made through **Paypal** (<https://www.paypal.me/parkmont>). Thank you for your consideration. ■



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