

# Parkmont School Passing Notes

2021-2022 | SESSIONS 1 • 2 • 3

Field trips are our fuel: this class spends a few hours at the Capitol.

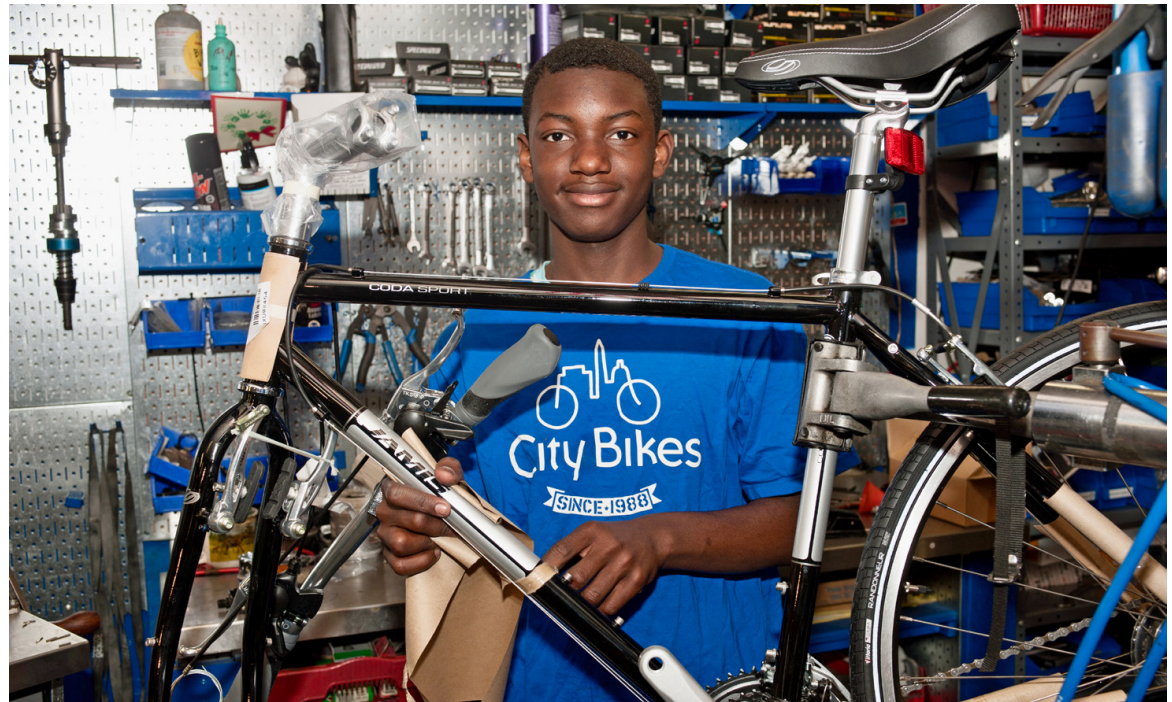
From School to Work: The Evolution of P.I.P. ....	2
An Insider's Look at Internship with Sean Quigley .....	4
Chasing the Story in Journalism Main Lesson .....	5
Reading and Writing at Parkmont .....	6
Camping Trip .....	7
Spirit Week Scrapbook .....	9
The Next Big Thing! Adventures with Inventions .....	10
Podcasting Class .....	11

# From School to Work: The Evolution of P.I.P.

by Ron McClain

P.I.P. – the Parkmont Internship Program – was initially designed by Linda MacKenzie, when Parkmont was still a middle school and located on Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown. Madeira, with its 300 acres, 300 students, and many horses, already had a renowned internship program which brought its students into town once a week, but this was before community service programs and the many, often brief, internship programs you can find around town today. The “Park” in Parkmont comes from the Parkway program in Philadelphia that became known as the “School Without Walls” program, where learning takes place out in the community and not so much in a schoolhouse. P.I.P. was our first major initiative beyond leading the city in field trips annually.

Georgetown was a great place to start the program because from 1640 Wisconsin Avenue, our students could



Have wheels, will travel: Jackson Nimley on the job at City Bikes.

get to 300 businesses on foot in 10 to 15 minutes. So we got started in bike shops, ice cream parlors, schools, non-profits, toy stores, Commander Salamander (!), pet stores (Animal Hut!), parks, and gardens. Sometimes we’d hear that a dozen students had gotten stuck at Burger King on their way to work, but it’s amazing in retrospect that we were able to run the program for the first 10 years with only middle-school students. Insurance concerns and work restrictions for children

made things more difficult over time, but the program became an important fixture in our Parkmont curriculum.

In ‘91, after the Somerset merger and our expansion through high school, the program opened up. Students were able to get around the whole city and its suburbs, and their ages made them welcome in a much richer range of environments. One student interested in animal welfare spent a semester going to U.S. Fish and

*continues*





**Above: Casper Corsello tends to some pups at District Dogs ... or are they tending to him?**

**Right: Not everyone has the will power to volunteer at Fancy Cakes, but Caitlin Doherty made it work!**

Wildlife in Reston in the afternoon before heading to his home in Gaithersburg, all via public transport. Students have worked for the federal and state governments, on political campaigns, for dozens of non-profits, and at dozens of schools and daycare centers. Stables have been popular, Rock Creek a modest hike from Parkmont, and others farther afield. One senior, credit-ready for graduation, spent a month working on the Australian tour



of a Grammy-winning alternative music band. Someone else graduated after getting her final credit at a rescue farm for wild animals in South Africa, and another worked four months at an organic farm in Maryland recently.

Willa Reinhard has run the program in recent years, often with a team of three to help find placements. Advisors are always heavily involved with monitoring attendance and supervisor reports. Students



**Right: Jennifer Benton has made an equine friend interning at Meadowbrook Stables.**

complete projects and share “productions” that show what they are learning at work. Mistakes are made and folks get fired sometimes, but fortunately, they are not yet paying mortgages. They graduate with resumes and a beginning of a network. The staff feels strongly that it’s one of the Parkmont experiences that most contributes to the emerging maturity of our students. With 300,000 hours of work in the world, P.I.P is in year 41! ■



# An Insider's Look at Internship with Sean Quigley

by Willa Reinhard

**Tell me about your internship:** I started my internship at the Potomac Horse Center in February 2021. I go every Friday afternoon for four hours.

**Your role?** I am a volunteer and an instructor's assistant. We're in charge of setting up the arena, taking out tack



gear, and getting things set up for the instructor. I help out with a total of seven classes. They run from 4pm until 7:30pm. There are kids and adults in the classes.

**Favorite part?** I get to know more kids and adults, and I get to help them if they need it, especially if they are afraid. I help teach the kids to be independent. I just help make sure everything is okay.

**Something you are proud of?** On December 17th, I was leading a horse with a 7-year-old girl on it. We were about to go trotting. The horse suddenly tripped and the little girl riding it fell off. I caught the girl in the nick of time. I was holding the lead line in one hand and the little girl in the other. We checked if she had any injuries. She didn't. She calmed down and we got her back on the horse. We have these trainings where we practice emergency drills, and this was an unexpected thing

**Camila (on the left) and Sean (on the right) pay a visit to Sparrow.**



**Sean is ready to welcome another crew of passengers to Trolley 4602.**

that happened, but I knew how to react.

**Career?** Maybe. I also horseback ride. I just want to learn more about volunteering and helping.

**Exciting news?** I started this internship at the National Capital Trolley Museum nearly two weeks ago. It's been going well. I attended a training last week, and on Saturday, I begin as a docent. I'll give people tours of the museum. Visitors watch a brief film and then I take them on a tour of the trolleys. I'll help out conductors when they give trolley rides. ■

# Chasing the Story in Journalism Main Lesson

by Ethan Kuhnenn

Middle-school students in Ethan's Journalism and Current Events class immersed themselves in media studies, becoming experts at navigating digital and print news, while also learning the ins and outs of the profession. Highlights of the class included chicken sandwich reviews, teacher profiles, and a special trip to the US Capitol to talk to the Senate Press Secretary.

In the class, students read, read, and read some more. Most days included built-in free reading time, where students could explore the wide variety of topics and genres which all constitute “news.” Learning the journalistic method and the significance of the press were two major topics that gave context to the importance of being media-literate and understanding the value of the press. We watched Steven Spielberg's award-winning *The Post* to get a better understanding of the significance of the press as a check to government power. At the same time, we followed current events that also highlighted how media can sway



public opinion – including the Kyle Rittenhouse and Ahmaud Arbery shooting trials.

**Taste-testers undertake serious research for their chicken sandwich reviews.**



**Aspiring journalists visit the U.S. Capitol.**

In the second half of the course, students focused on the fundamentals of reporting and writing. We reviewed three different chicken sandwiches from fast-food restaurants, interviewed teachers, and wrote profile stories, finishing our unit with op/ed pieces that focused on student-specific issues like the importance of masking, gendered bathrooms, and AA forms, to name a few. Check out <https://parkmontpost.godaddysites.com> to see all of our student writing as highlighted in *The Parkmont Post*, our very own student newspaper! ■





## Reading and Writing at Parkmont

by Nijole Gedutis

We did it again! Starting November 1, 2021, Parkmont middle schoolers and Willa's upper-school Reading Group participated in National Novel Writing Month ("NaNoWriMo"). Students set a word goal for the month and wrote between 200 and 1000 words per day (every day!) until November 30. Cumulatively, students in the three classes wrote 152,757 words – that's about 15,000 words more than *A Tale of Two Cities*! Their novels ranged from fan fiction to re-imaginings of Norse mythology, from eco thrillers to psychological ones, from mysteries to autofiction; protagonists included a corgi, a bird, and an 8th-grade boy, with settings spanning the space-time continuum.

As NaNoWriMo wrapped, students shifted from writing their own novels, to choosing a book they wanted to receive from Parkmont in our annual Holiday Book Give-Away. Here's just a small sampling of books that students requested and received:

- ▶ *Chaos, Creativity, and Cosmic Consciousness* by Rupert Sheldrake
- ▶ *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith
- ▶ *The 57 Bus: A Story of Two Teenagers* by Dashka Slater
- ▶ *The Comic Book Story of Basketball* by Fred Van Lente and Joe Cooper
- ▶ *With the Fire on High* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- ▶ *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari
- ▶ *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison
- ▶ *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart
- ▶ *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer
- ▶ *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid ■



# Camping Trip

by Matt McClain

Earlier this fall, as the leaves changed color and cooler weather descended on the nation's capital, a group of Parkmont high schoolers packed up the van and headed for the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This was our first camping trip since the start of the pandemic two years ago, and our first upper-school

camping trip in my ten years working at Parkmont.

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. Our site sprawled across both banks of a winding creek, and included four tents and two hammocks. Ethan primed the fire, and before long we were roasting sausages to pair with baked beans, corn and, for dessert, s'mores. The

*continues*



Above: Ben in the foreground, nature in the background.

Left: "Forest bathing" in one of Parkmont's mountain classrooms.



**Right: Briana and Karla celebrate friendship and foliage in the Blue Ridge Mountains.**

**Below: Ben, Karla, and Matt pause to drink in the view and pose for the camera.**



dinner conversation gravitated toward the divine nature of the campfire meal, and students played cards and explored the surrounding area as the sun set in the canyon. 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 overlooking our camp, and our eyes adjusted to the moonlit path in front of us. After a short walk and several stops to look at salamanders, the trail opened up into Hone Quarry, a large field perfect for



stargazing. We held a push up contest and lay flat on a slab to take in the stars.

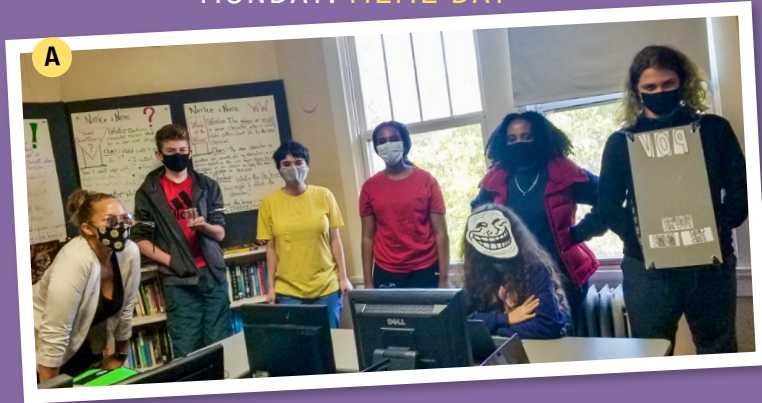
The following morning, we packed up camp and drove 45 minutes to the High Knob Tower trailhead. We quickly traversed the two-mile trail up to a wonderful lookout: a WWII-era fire tower with a 360-degree view of the surrounding mountains. We ate lunch and got back on the road for a 90-minute drive to Hartland Orchard. Students picked a few bags of apples, tossed the frisbee, and enjoyed some freshly-made pie.

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. ■



# Spirit Week Scrapbook

MONDAY: MEME DAY



WEDNESDAY:  
DIFFERENT DECADES



TUESDAY: DRESS TO IMPRESS



- A "Meme Day" kicks off Spirit Week.
- B "Dress to Impress Day" makes it hard to tell the teachers from the students....
- C Impressed? That was the idea for "Dress to Impress Day", as demonstrated by Keonte, Willa, and Bailey.
- D Bridget and students embrace an earlier fashion era for Spirit Week.
- E Bailey and Bridget emerge from the Time Machine on "Different Decades Day."
- F Spirit Week closes out with Halloween, Parkmont style.
- G Students don a different sort of mask for Spirit Week's Halloween!

THURSDAY: HALLOWEEN





# The Next Big Thing! Adventures with Inventions

by Winnie Shi

One of the Main Lessons for middle schoolers in Session 3 was Inventions. Inventions was a class filled with creative minds. Students worked through several different projects to invent and innovate using everyday materials. This led to the final project of the students creating something for our classroom version of “Shark Tank.” All the projects before “Shark Tank” allowed them to think about the different mechanics of different inventions. They were able to familiarize themselves with the tools in the classroom and then eventually make up their own new invention or innovation. For “Shark Tank,” students had to either build or discuss a prototype of the invention or innovation to an existing invention. They also had to think about the costs of making the product as well as how much profit they would like to make from each product.

Our class was also able to take a field trip to the Air and Space Museum in Virginia. On the trip, the students were able to experience riding in a spaceship and taste astronaut ice cream!

Some major highlights of the class were:

- ▶ Mac built a retractable phone case that would prevent a phone from hitting the ground.
- ▶ Gavin made a Spider-Man toy that would eventually shoot out a string and attach to materials containing iron.
- ▶ Graham invented a box mix for banana bread that only required oil and water (it tasted amazing).
- ▶ Amy (along with Graham) made an invention that could protect an egg being thrown out of a second-story window.
- ▶ Nico warmed our hearts with his hobby box to help students find friends with similar interests.
- ▶ Gigi showed off her amazing art skills throughout all the projects.
- ▶ Max created a dog-friendly taco that multiple doggos were happy to scarf down.
- ▶ Nick D. came up with a really cool idea of a picture frame where you can scroll through photos.

Watch out for these inventors and innovators as they continue their adventures! ■



# Podcasting Class

by Sania Tildon

After debuting in Session 2 of last year, the Parkmont PMCast is back! This year we hit the ground running, releasing a new episode each week, which we aired during announcements. Students managed all parts of the podcast production process: researching, writing, recording and editing.

Several students investigated phenomena right in our backyard. Ameen Bekere, who started podcasting as an eighth grader, collaborating with high schoolers to develop her voice and research skills, this year researched, wrote and recorded her own in-depth report on gentrification in DC. Did you know evidence of gentrification dates back as far as ancient Rome? Neither did we until we heard

Ameen's podcast! Alessandra Tatton took to the streets of Georgetown to interview locals about women's beauty standards as part of her report on toxic gender expectations.

Inspired by his interest in psychology, and reflecting on the isolating effects of the pandemic, Alex Harry investigated the history of cults and their relationship to mainstream society, and examined the effects of Covid-19 on cult membership. Middle schoolers and first-time podcasters, Marake Wosen, Noah Borden, and Kavin Moore made for a delightful group of co-hosts, bringing humor and polish to the role.

As always, students also reviewed different media in our arts and

entertainment segment. In an original effort to combine arts and entertainment with investigative journalism, Kyp Heggans and Bailey Maxwell joined forces to write and produce a segment on the social, political and aesthetic history of disco.

With enough content to air new episodes each week, you can imagine that there isn't enough space here to do the students and their stories justice. Our full slate of stories, which includes pieces by Mihret Bekere, Madz Kornfield, Nico Borden, Elijah Logan, Mariam Malassa, and Emma Gutnikoff, will be available on the Parkmont PMCast website later this spring. ■



4842 Sixteenth Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20011  
(202) 726-0740 • **Admissions:** Ext. 2  
**Email:** [info@parkmont.org](mailto:info@parkmont.org)  
**[www.parkmont.org](http://www.parkmont.org)**