

Parkmont School Passing Notes

SPRING 2025



The world is our classroom! The Ecology of Alaska class departs for their 10-day trip to the 49th state.

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Real World Experience through Parkmont's Internship Programs

By Maya Oliver

Parkmont's Internship Program allows students the chance to step beyond the classroom and into the D.C. community for weekly hands-on experiences. Our Upper School students begin their internships in the fall and log 180 hours on site by the end of the school year. Middle School students participate in individual or group internships that begin in April and continue through the end of the school year.

Seven of our middle schoolers are interning individually at exciting locations across the city — from Kalorama to

Chevy Chase Circle — at sites like Because Science, Each Peach Market, and Artsy Beast ceramic studio. As with the Upper School interns, their placements allow students to explore personal interests while gaining real-world experience in dynamic, local settings.

The rest of the middle schoolers have been hard at work volunteering every Wednesday afternoon with local nonprofit organizations. Whether they're removing invasive plant species, preparing meals at a food pantry, or disassembling donated

bikes, students are learning by doing — and making a tangible impact. Along the way, they're not just picking up knowledge about plants and mechanics, they're also building important life skills: teamwork, problem-solving, persistence, and tool use. Such experiences lay a strong foundation for the more rigorous internships they'll take on in Parkmont's Upper School Program. Watching the students embrace new challenges, step outside their comfort zones, and collaborate with

continues



enthusiasm has been a true highlight of the year.

More than 40 different organizations and companies are hosting Parkmont interns this year, some of them long-time partners in our internship program. They



range from chocolate shops to senior centers, pre-schools to coffee shops, record stores to equine therapy centers. The internships are core to our mission of providing students with meaningful, substantive experience in the world beyond school, and we are very grateful to our partners!

If your organization is interested in hosting a Parkmont intern, we invite you to get in touch with program coordinators Mel Kates and Lizzie Sampson at internships@parkmont.org. ■

Poets Shine at the 43rd Annual Parkmont Poetry Festival

by Kim Schraf, Poetry Festival Coordinator

Even though we have been hosting this celebration of D.C.'s student-poets since 1982, each Parkmont Poetry Festival feels like the only one of its kind. And of course, it is. Every year, teachers submit the verse of a new crop of writers, and new judges sift the selections for something that charms,

continues



Kim Schraf, Parkmont Poetry Festival Coordinator





Nijole Gedutis, Parkmont Dean of Students

arrests, or stirs them. The Festival honors the unique voices that define our community, tapping the District's public, private, and charter schools. The eclectic, electric result is an anthology of 40 poems – 20 from grades six through eight, and 20 from grades nine through twelve – that feels like a finger resting on the collective pulse of D.C. youth.

continues

Days of the week

by Annabelle Dixon

Dread
Denial
Anxiety
Claws
Minutes
Seconds
Hours
Homework
Monday

Tuesdays = Thursdays
Tuesdays = Thursdays
Tuesdays = Thursdays
Tuesdays = Thursdays
Tuesdays = Thursdays
Tuesdays = Thursdays
Tuesdays = Thursdays

Notebooks and questions
and tears and laughter,
dogs vs. cats and
scissors and teasing
and depression and
happiness, an oddly
shaped family.

Thursdays = Tuesdays
Thursdays = Tuesdays
Thursdays = Tuesdays
Thursdays = Tuesdays
Thursdays = Tuesdays
Thursdays = Tuesdays
Thursdays = Tuesdays

Freedom
Red and blue flashing
lights
Intellect
Dragon themed books
A singular golden-brown
leaf among the green
Young kittens, small and
curious

Saturdays are a sunset-
pink ocean with
undercurrents of blue
Saturdays are a cat taking
a bath in a sandstorm
Saturdays are paintings
dancing on the
rooftops in the
moonlight



Sticky fingers holding
brightly colored
cardboard blocks,
calming,
empty promises
whispered underneath
the screams coated
in sadness, eyes filled
with happiness as they
take in this
beautiful world.

Fedayee (Freedom Fighters)

by Sofia Krikorian

We hear of men who are the soldiers
But we seldom hear of women, children and the elders
When we do they're seen as helpless,
But like the people on Musa Dagh,
some were relentless.

There were many women Fedayee who fought as well,
Rather than be silenced even more by genocidal hell,
They made their decision to rise up and fight,
Just like the men, it was their every right
Mothers, daughters, wives and more,
They learned to shoot, defend and go to war.

An inspiration to all Armenians, we know their names,
For much more meaningful things than fortune and fame,
They will not be forgotten because they dared to try
Armenouhi, Lola, Mariam, Roubina, Sosse Mayrig
You may ask who they are, but never why.



On Saturday, May 3rd, the winning poets gathered at Zion Baptist Church, across the street from Parkmont, to debut their poems to the public. It was a public of their peers, families, friends, and teachers, and the poets did not disappoint! First, though, they heard from Finalist Judge Michael Gushue, who congratulated his “fellow poets” and urged them, “if you love poetry, please please read it voraciously, read it like you are starving.”

The winners were chosen from 382 entries and hailed from 20 area schools. Parkmont boasted two winners, 6th grader Annabelle Dixon and 12th grader Sofia Krikorian. We are so proud of them and are pleased to share their winning poems with you here, along with an invitation to experience the magic next year on May 2nd, 2026! ■

Cooking up a Storm

“Everyone should know how to cook,” says Mike, who taught the Cooking Afternoon Class in Sessions 3 and 4 this year. Who can argue with that? Like knowing how to read a map, sew, or change a tire, cooking is one of those basic life skills that fewer and fewer people are learning in adolescence. Unlike changing a tire or reading a map, however, cooking offers nearly endless variety and opportunities for learning.

In our Afternoon Cooking classes, the students learn basic kitchen skills — hold the knife this way, for example — as well as the knowledge you gain through practice, Mike says. “That low whirring noise the blender is making? Add a little bit of liquid to see if the mixture loosens up. They also learn a lot about working together and improvising when you don’t have exactly what you think you need.”



For Geography class, Owen made a Sri Lankan no-bake chocolate cake.



Fun fact: Isla’s sundaes were delicious!



Clara May coaches Cal on his knife skills.

The students begin the week by figuring out a menu and finding recipes. On Tuesday, they shop. On Thursday afternoon, delicious aromas waft through the building as the students get cooking. By 3 p.m., you can usually find a few folks milling around outside the kitchen, curious to see (and maybe taste) the source of those aromas.

Most weeks, only Cooking students get to sample the resulting dishes, though extra portions do make their way out. About once a session, the class prepares a feast for the whole school! Among the many recipes tested and tasted this year, Pierce’s pasta Bolognese has become the stuff of minor legend. Fortunately for us, the chef has graciously shared his recipe in this month’s Parkmont Dish!

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Thursday afternoon in the Southeast room = Time to get cooking.

The Afternoon Cooking class has a reputation for being the hardest class to get into at Parkmont. While we haven't combed through the historical data to back that up, we can tell you that out of 65 students, 25 listed Cooking as their number one PM Class pick for Session 4 this year. The class maxes out at 10 students, so it's not surprising that would-be Escoffiers need to try a few times before winning a spot at the stove. All you students who've been waiting for a spot in the Cooking Afternoon Class may actually be the lucky ones. The next phase of the Parkmont Schoolhouse Project includes building out a new kitchen this summer, so when you finally take the class, you'll sauté in style.

Besides, cooking at Parkmont isn't limited to the one class. Cooking is one of the many ways our teachers incorporate experiential learning and collaboration across grade levels into their lessons. Because so many subjects and disciplines converge in



Above: Tom and Zoey with cookies ready for the oven.

Left: Brooke and Mike discuss a hummus recipe.

the kitchen, cooking can find its way into almost any class. To name a few: Students in the Session 4 Geography class made recipes from various Asian cuisines this spring. Our Health Main Lessons for both the Middle and Upper Schools always include choosing and preparing recipes. Camping trips feature meals the students help cook on the grill, campstove, or campfire. Some of the sweetest Parkmont dishes, of course, are the treats that students bring in to share. This past fall, our middle schoolers even organized their own Thanksgiving potluck!

We prepare our students for the journey ahead, and that includes being able to prepare healthful food for themselves and their loved ones. Bon appetit! ■

Yearbook Club

Did you know that Parkmont's yearbook is 100% student created? Current seniors Ameen and Mariam have been doing a superb job putting together this year's edition as co-leaders of the Yearbook Club. One or both is always at the ready with the "better" Parkmont camera to capture special moments and day-to-day life. They are unfailingly patient and gracious with everyone here, and they're impeccably organized. Even their spreadsheets for planning the content are a beauty to behold! These two seniors are also the masterminds who created, organized, and brought to life three different Spirit Weeks this year! Throughout, their craft, creativity, and leadership have impressed and inspired all of us. We are so proud of them as they bring this ambitious and meaningful project to completion. Thank you, Ameen and Mariam, for chronicling Parkmont 2024-2025!

Here are a few behind-the-scenes snaps of the Yearbook Club in action! ■



Mariam captures Jacob's yearbook picture.



Ameen (at left) and Mariam



Mariam and Ron check out his yearbook photo.

Photo Scrapbook



A



B



C



E



D

- A** Ashton and Jack at Top Golf.
- B** Shwe's Ancient Civs class at the National Museum of Asian Art.
- C** Evidence of spring-time atop a ladder in the shed.
- D** Pierce finds a study nook in Parkmont's Porte Cochère.
- E** Griffin and Ivan in a favorite hangout spot.

Inside the Classroom, Sessions 4 & 5

The Main Lessons and Afternoon Classes from Sessions 4 & 5 offer great examples of the experiential learning and creativity in Parkmont's program. Check out the teachers' descriptions of their spring classes.

MAIN LESSONS

Astronomy (Anthony): In this course we will study our understanding of our place in the universe, from prehistory to the present. Students will learn the structure and motion of our solar system and how to read the night sky — from constellations to planets, stars, and other galaxies — and even the potential for alien life. From the local to the farthest reaches of our telescopes and our theoretical understanding, students will be exposed to the vastness of time and space and will examine theories about the origin and future of our universe. Astronomy is an examination that should both intrigue and humble and be



Astronomy

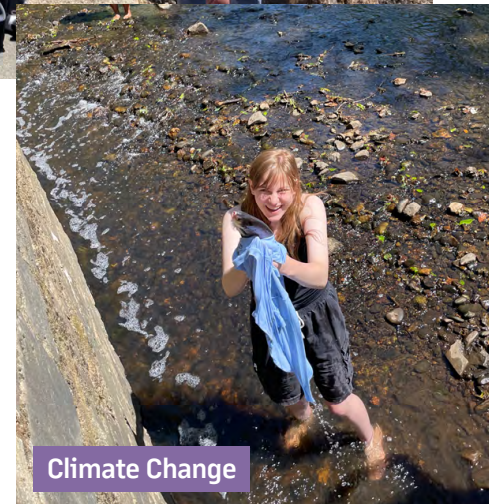


Math, al fresco

invaluable to broadening one's perspective in the world.

Potomac Ecology (Tom):

Through your own discovery and research, you will experience first-hand how ecology and the environment affect your daily life and the enormous number of factors occurring all around us. You will also gain insight into the arts of questioning, hypothesizing, investigating, discovering, and communicating. In each of the various activities, you will be encouraged to work together to discover more, explore a problem, or solve a mystery. Emphases will be on teamwork and cooperative learning and learning through direct experience rather than



Climate Change

continues

reliance on textbooks. Hopefully, the activities in this course will captivate your imagination while illuminating essential scientific themes, concepts, and messages.

Ancient Civilizations (Shwe): Students will learn about the incredible achievements of early human civilizations: the mighty kingdoms in Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylon, Assyria), the engineering wonders of Ancient Egypt, the art that flourished in the Indus Valley, the great dynasties of Ancient China, the democracy of Ancient Greece, the philosophy of Ancient Rome, and the innovations in the Ancient Americas (Mayas, Aztecs, Incas).

Structures (Milo): In this course, students will begin to understand some of the basic elements of structural design by building models of such structures as houses, bridges, and towers, using drinking straws, popsicle sticks and other common materials. Each set of activities is designed to serve two broad purposes:



Structures

to be meaningful to students at a personal level and to act as a stimulus for better scientific understanding. Near the end of the session, we will spend some time thinking about an expanded definition of the word structure. This portion will include learning about the structure of language, numbers, information, and ideas.

Flight (Maya): Students in the class will explore the fascinating world of flight! We'll learn about the history and science behind how humans took to the skies, from the Wright brothers to modern jets. Students will investigate the evolution of airplanes and air travel, discover the forces that make flight possible, and dive into hands-on engineering-design projects to build and test their own flying creations.

Anatomy & Physiology (Anthony): This class enables students to identify and understand key structures, organs, systems, and spatial relationships within the human body. Upon completion of the course, students will understand the role that different organ systems play in the maintenance of homeostasis and, more importantly, the mechanisms by which those systems act, both at a macroscopic and a microscopic level. Students will be able to discuss disease processes and healthy development and will have gained a greater appreciation for their bodies.



Structures

Climate Change (Klara): Students will explore climate change through direct interaction with the environment and climate we experience here in the DMV. The course will emphasize learning through observation, exploration, and interaction with our natural

environment. We will collect samples from local rivers and soil, take measurements, and compare those values to data from past years to draw conclusions about how things are changing in our climate over time. Reading climate research, watching documentaries, and drafting our own research papers are supplemental activities to round out the direct observations on class field trips.

U.S. Government (Sam): In this introductory U.S. Government course, we will begin by reviewing the events leading up to the writing of the Constitution and the issues that arose in negotiating its compromises. This will provide a base for learning about the branches and powers of government. We will consider the amendments that addressed original problems and also secured more equality and protection for individuals over time. We will study the Presidential election process, and we will use current concerns, such as those about policing and civilian gun violence, to examine how the political branches and levels intersect. Students will study how our system of government addresses the needs of the citizenry, and learn about each branch of government and the Bill of Rights, among other topics.

Race Relations (Mike): This course surveys 400 years of race relations in the United States, focusing in particular on the shared and unique experiences of Blacks and Whites in this country. How did a nation willing to aspire to the notion that “all men are created equal” become so dependent on a system of enslavement and then apartheid, the consequences of which still pervade our social fabric today? We pay particular attention to the ways our political system has been used both to support and diminish great inequity and injustice. We focus on the growth of slavery in colonial times, the pre-Civil War political campaigns to expand and limit the “peculiar” institution, the growth of Jim Crow after the War, and

the Civil Rights movement in the 60’s and 70’s. And we examine the current state of these race relations and what might lie ahead.

Ecology of Alaska (Ethan): This course has two objectives: studying the history of Alaska and the events that have shaped the modern-day politics of the state, and developing a better understanding of the physical/natural world through the study of immense and diverse environmental resources. In preparation for the class trip in the middle of the session, we will focus on the geography, environment, history, native peoples, and modern-day issues of our 49th state.

Geography (Ethan): We will learn about several different aspects of geography and the many ways in which the world is interconnected. The class is structured in one-week units, each focusing on a different continent. As we work our way around the world, we will focus on the following elements within Geography: location, physical, human, and political geography, economics, and natural resources.

PM CLASSES

Journal Crafting (Rhodes): In this class, we will use journaling as artistic expression to write and organize ideas, feelings, and other material. We will keep an active journal throughout the whole session and will have prompts for each day, with periods of free writing/drawing/crafting. We will customize and decorate our journals as well. There will also be elements of collage, meditation, and self-reflection.

Pop Art (Lexis): In this class, students will explore the exciting world of Pop Art, a movement known for its bold colors, high contrast, and eye-catching imagery. Inspired by artists like Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Keith Haring, students will learn to

transform everyday objects, pop-culture icons, and personal interests into vibrant, stylized artworks.

Yoga & Meditation (Matt): This course will introduce students to the practices of yoga and meditation. Our classes begin with a few words of wisdom from the teacher, breathing exercises, and light stretching before a 30- to 40-minute yoga practice. Students will be encouraged to push themselves physically and to spend more time checking in with their minds and bodies throughout the day. Each class ends with a 15-20 minute meditation period when students will learn a variety of mindfulness techniques.

Health (Matt): Our health class this session aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of human health, drawing on topics from three major spheres: physical health, mental health, and social health. Our class begins with a unit on happiness and positive psychology in which we will learn about mindfulness, positive thinking, and mental health. We will then turn to nutrition and the American food system and to a unit about the reproductive systems and sexual health, which will include a discussion of communication and consent. We finish with a unit on drugs, addiction, and the social implications of drug policies in this country.

Film Studies (Rhodes): This class explores genres of film as well as the many staples of memorable cinema. We will break down different story structures and key elements that make a good movie. We will also take a close look at the components of a film and how they help us define their purpose/genre. Explorations include the role of protagonists, the hero's journey, metaphorical themes, and more.

Sports (Soccer (Matt & Tom)): We will focus on getting students active by doing warmups, focusing on basic techniques and soccer

skills, and playing small-sided games at Raymond Recreation Center.

Classic Games (Anthony): We will learn and play various classic and/or popular card and board games.

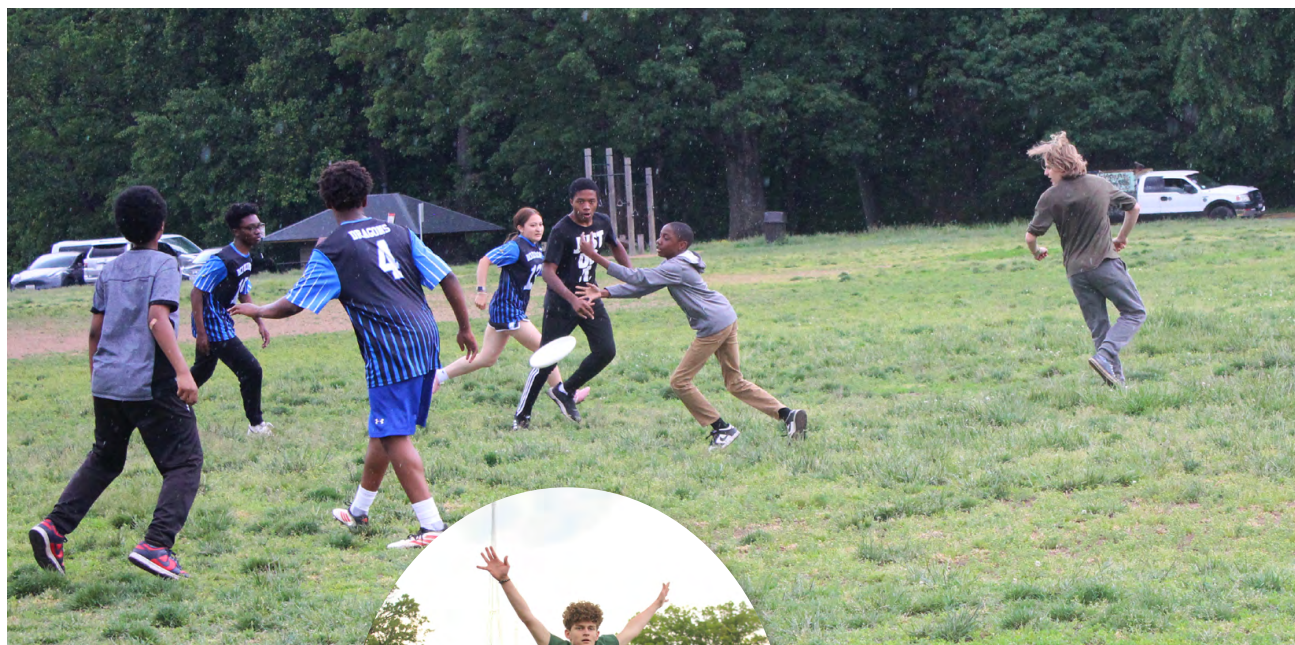
Collage (Lexis): Students will explore the art of collage as a tool for self-expression and storytelling. Using a mix of found images, text and personal materials, students will learn techniques to create layered compositions that reflect their unique perspective.

Study Skills (Ethan/Shwe): Students learn different time-management and study techniques, including organizational skills. They receive incentives to complete work in order to encourage and reinforce completion of school work. There is dedicated class time for completing and making progress on work from their other classes. ■

Our Ultimate Frisbee Season

By Anthony Muehlberger

The ultimate players had a great season. Some were new to the game, some had played a little, and some were starting to actually look legit, but everyone had a really great attitude. They were always up for playing, dependably showing up after school, even for distant away games; playing through rain; and playing against bigger, faster, more experienced teams. They cheered the other teams and complimented one another. It was great, and I



was really proud of them.

We got rained out of a couple of games, but they still seemed to have a good season and are already looking forward to next year.

The Team scored 5 points against DCI, 4 against Roosevelt (in a shorter game), and 3 against Jackson-Reed (whose varsity is ranked #1 in the Nation!), so every point for them was a true moral victory.

Special thanks to Milo for helping make it all work! ■



Photo Scrapbook



A Zoey shares birthday cake with fellow Middle Schoolers.



B Pierce and Abe at the “wExorcist Stairs” in Georgetown.



C Ashton, Mikiyas, Nick, Jacob, adn Madz at a performance of *In the Heights*.



D Tom and Bronx on a normal day.

E Milo at Calleva



Studio Notes

Please enjoy this mini-gallery of artwork created by students this spring!

Students in Lexis's spring art classes wowed us with their collages (A & B), pop-art creations (C, D, & E), and works inspired by Black D.C. artists Sam Gilliam (F) and Alma Thomas (G).



THE PARKMONT DISH

Pierce's Pasta Bolognese

Pierce's recipe for Bolognese sauce was a hit in the Session 4 Cooking Class. It's a favorite at Pierce's house, too. "My family loves it," he says. At home, Pierce adds a little bit of wine to the sauce for deeper flavor. For cooking class, "it was the PG-13 version. No wine. But it was still delicious," he says. Pierce doesn't use a written recipe for this dish, so the quantities below are approximate. Feel free to adjust according to your taste and the size of the crowd you're serving. Enjoy!

Ingredients

1 onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 can tomato sauce
1 lb ground beef or plant-based meat
1 box pasta. Pierce prefers angel hair
Olive oil
Butter or margarine
Wine
Chili pepper flakes, Tajin
Salt and pepper

Instructions

Cook the sauce:

- 1) Pour a tablespoon or two of olive oil into a saucepan or skillet over medium heat.
- 2) Add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes.
- 3) Add the garlic and spices, if using, and stir.
- 4) Add the ground plant-based meat or beef. Break up the meat into smaller pieces with a wooden spoon, stir.
- 5) Add the tomato sauce, stir
- 6) Pour a few tablespoons of wine into the sauce, stir
- 7) Cook at a low simmer for 20-30 minutes



Cook the pasta:

- 8) Fill a large pot about $\frac{2}{3}$ full with water
- 9) Add 2 Tbsp salt
- 10) Bring to a boil
- 11) Add pasta and cook according to the package directions
- 12) Drain and toss with a few pats of butter or margarine
- 13) Serve the pasta and sauce together in a large serving bowl or serve in separate bowls with grated cheese on the side. ■



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