

Near midnight, something peculiar happens on PCE-TV. The day's usual line-up of educational programming, classic art, and televised classes is replaced with the beats and rhythms of the most popular hip-hop and rap songs. To some, this shift may be like fingernails on a chalkboard; to others, it's a welcome relief to the tedium of howling opera singers. But to those who understand the mission of Parkland Community College, it's just one example of serving the tastes of the whole community.

Often, people remember the "college" part and forget the "community" part. Like most community colleges, Parkland offers services beyond just classes. Two of those services are PCE-TV (channel 9 with Insight Communications; Channel 10 with Mediacom) and WPCDFM (88.7). Just as the television station, WPCDFM offers a variety of programming. This includes some news, some educational programs, and a hefty helping of music (classic rock in the morning, modern rock in the afternoon, and rap/hip-hop in the evening and early morning). Aside from being free of advertising, WPCDFM is like any other radio station. This is done both to satisfy audience demands and help students when they go off to work at radio stations across Illinois and the U.S.

"We try to run the station like a commercial station so students fly right in," explained Dan Hughes, the manager of WPCDFM. There are three things a broadcasting student at Parkland can do, Mr. Hughes said: get an associate's degree, get the first two years of a bachelor's degree, or take a single class to learn how to be a DJ. The program is popular enough, they "have announcers working in every radio station in a 50 mile radius," Mr. Hughes commented. So, chances are, even if you don't listen to WPCDFM, you've listened to a former student broadcaster at 88.7.

Closely connected to the radio station is Parkland's TV station. During the after hours, PCE-TV airs the radio station's rap and hip-hop music, and during the day light hours, the program list is always available on their showline (217-373-3821), which is similar to theatre movie listings. The summer television line-up includes the "Parkland Challenge," a very popular quiz game hosted by Dan Hughes for local high school student teams.

For even younger members of the community, Parkland also offers an equally popular summer program called College for Kids. Perhaps your son or daughter or niece or nephew or even a neighborhood kid is new to the Champaign area and needs a place to meet new friends. Or maybe wants to learn something beyond the reading, writing, and arithmetic taught in school. For that child, College for Kids has a variety of fun and interesting classes. Is your daughter already confusing you with computer techno-babble the likes of which Bill Gates would scratch his head at? Or maybe you've only been able to stare in disbelief when your son says something like "the use of contrasting form in this Picasso lends itself to the painting's sense of juxtaposed perspectives." Whatever their interests, College for Kids can help elementary-aged kids learn while still having fun with other children their age.

"We want it to be entertaining enough that they want to come here," explained Amy Reinhart, Assistant Director of Community Education at Parkland. Classes include such topics as Photoshop, writing fantasy stories, art, and Japanese for beginners. As the Director explained, the classes are not graded, small (usually twenty students or less), and taught by local high school and elementary school teachers. Without the pressure of

grades and with class subjects more entertaining for children, it's no wonder the program has been running successfully for nearly a quarter of a century.

If you do decide to go online and find out more about College for Kids, be sure to look into the summer sports camps Parkland offers as well.

The college has a few different camps put together by Parkland students as fundraisers. Children from grades five and up are given one-on-one individual attention and really get to know the people they're working with. Teaching via drills and fundamentals and being more affordable than most larger summer camps, the programs are a great chance for kids to hone their skills, whether they're just learning a sport or are already making a name for themselves.

Although, some people are more inclined to just recline and watch sports on TV with a cold drink and something crunchy to snack on. You may think the ultimate snacking, sports-watching day is Super Bowl Sunday. And you're probably right. But have you imagined watching the game in a planetarium? No need to imagine. If you're too old for camps and music and educational television isn't your thing, Parkland also has a public planetarium put to extensive use for such things as showing the Super Bowl and Pink Floyd music videos (and star and planet displays too, of course).

But it is a college, and colleges are generally here to enrich our minds (not that the Super Bowl isn't enriching in its own unique way). That's why there are other amenities like a theatre and an intimate art gallery.

The theatre is open during the school year and puts on plays like the Pulitzer-winning, *The Skin of Our Teeth* or comedies such as *The Miss Firecracker Contest*. The art gallery is open year-around to the public. Featuring eight exhibits each year, it hosts

collections by students, faculty, and professional artists alike. This summer, on display will be works by painter Hua Nian and ceramicist Louis Ballard. The gallery is located in a quiet section of the campus lined with windows—perfect for getting away from the bustle of life for some reflection and solitude.

And after you have taken a few moments to find peace staring into that mysterious, yet somehow soothing painting, stop to take a look around. In the vicinity of ten thousand students attend Parkland each year. Some are studying to become nurses. Some are studying to become computer programmers. Firefighters. Therapists. Mechanics. They're studying many things from Parkland's wide-range of courses.

But the reason they study at Parkland is not because the planetarium plays rock music or because they enjoy late-night culture shifts. They choose Parkland because of the other meaning to “community:” the community of the school itself. Since its founding in 1966 as part of a push to further establish community colleges as part of the education system in Illinois, Parkland has followed the fine tradition of offering smaller, more intimate classes that has made community colleges such a success. Coupled with faculty members that have practical experience in the fields they teach, Parkland's outstanding service to both the community of Champaign and the community formed by the administration, faculty, and students will no doubt ensure the success of the college for years to come.