

AROUND THE HILL

Students Journey From Music City to the Hill

BY KATE TUMMARELLO

While some high school students spend winter breaks sleeping in and watching television, eight young women from a private school in Tennessee are spending their vacation answering mail and conducting tours of the Capitol.

Harpeth Hall, a renowned all-girls college-preparatory school in Nashville, has been sending students to intern in lawmakers' offices since 1973.

For a few weeks between the fall and spring semesters, juniors and seniors at the school are required to spend time working or studying off campus. Students have done community service projects in New York and studied in China, Italy, France and Spain.

Eight chose to spend this year's "winterim" interning in the offices of Reps. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.) and Steve Scalise (R-La.), and Tennessee Republican Sens. Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker.

Legare Vest, a program adviser and Harpeth Hall science teacher, said the mandatory program reflects the school's attitude about learning.

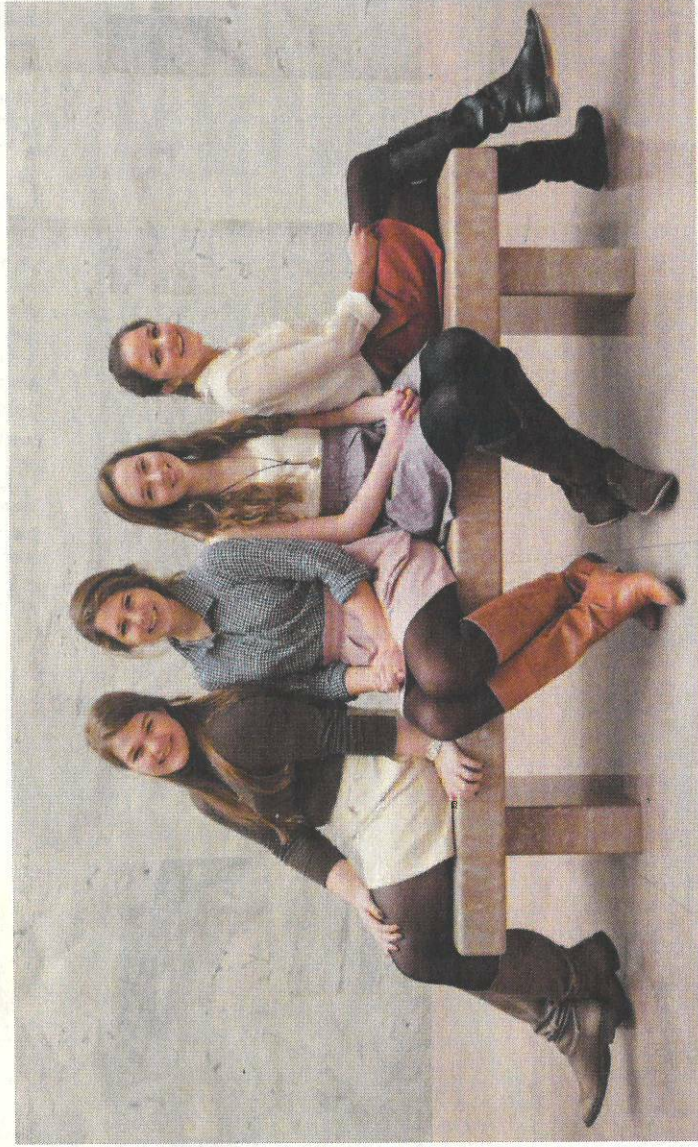
"We're not just about sitting in the classroom," she said. "We're also about helping each girl find her own passion, and winterim is certainly an avenue that makes that happen for each girl."

Some based their decision to come to Washington, D.C., on positive feedback from previous interns.

Senior Mary Liza Hartong, who is interning in Blackburn's office, followed the path of her two sisters who interned in D.C. while in high school.

"I thought it would be nice to carry on the 'family tradition,'" she said in an email.

For others, the Congressional intern-



Harpeth Hall interns (from left) Anne Gray Thornburg, Leslie Rolfe, Ellie Davis and Laura Lee Singer are spending their winter break working in the office of Sen. Bob Corker. Below: From left, Mary Liza Hartong, Sarah Abel and Emma Dedman are part of a group of eight young women from the private school in Tennessee who are interning on the Hill.

Photos by Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call



cases. "But I really wanted to see the more legislative side ... so I thought D.C. would be the perfect place to figure that out."

Despite the lull that often accompanies Congressional recesses, the students are still getting hands-on experience.

"I've learned all of the nitty-gritty details of mail sorting, phone etiquette and giving Capitol tours," Hartong said. "Even in the quiet times here, there is still so much important work to be done."

In addition to seeing the business side of D.C., the Harpeth Hall students had a chance to explore the fun side of the city. They toured the National Mall, saw "Billy Elliot" at the Kennedy Center and dined at some of the city's best restaurants.

Inspired by the experience, some of the