



Students Pull Off Fantastic "Phone-Free Weekend"

Eliza MacLean
Apr 25 2019

Ever since Owen Pinto '20 read *How to Break Up With Your Phone* by Catherine Price—recommended to him by Dean of Students Will Robinson—he knew he wanted to find a way to help his peers develop a deeper appreciation for St.

Andrew's unique cell phone policy. Throughout this school year, Owen and his classmates have taken ownership of the cell phone policy, and in addition to holding themselves and the student body accountable for leaving their phones on dorm, all day long, they have also started conversations and encouraged self-reflection around the use of personal technology.

Piper Ackerman '19 and Hannah Murphy '19 have joined in Owen's quest, and from the start of the school year have challenged their peers to not only to uphold the cell phone policy, but to embrace its purpose. "We wanted to make sure people recognize that the phone policy is still important, and that it's adding something to [the] community," Piper explained. Every Friday, the two make lunchtime announcements encouraging students to put down their phones for the weekend and connect face to face.

When Owen approached Piper and Hannah about planning a Chapel service dedicated to cell phone use, the trio then decided to spearhead an official "Phone-Free Weekend". They staked out the first weekend in April, organized a plethora of outdoor and phone-free weekend activities, promoted the weekend at School Meeting and via email, and come Friday, more than 40% of the student body voluntarily turned in their cell phones to faculty. Pell Dorm, the residence hall of all III Form girls, had 100% participation, and the "Pellicans" found themselves spending the weekend fishing, beading bracelets, and running through the woods.

The Chapel service Owen had envisioned was held on the Friday morning leading in to the weekend. At the service, students shared reflections on how cell phone use impacts

their lives and relationships. Owen spoke about how it has affected his relationship with his twin brother, and encouraged students to consider not only how "electronics impact you, but also how, when you're using your phone, it could be cutting off a relationship." Josie Friedli '20 read an excerpt from Price's book, Murphy weighed the benefits and drawbacks of smartphones, and Ackerman reflected on how the friendly and open atmosphere created by St. Andrew's cell phone policy was what first drew her to the school. You can listen to each talk on [the Podcasts page of our website](#).

On Saturday evening, students dressed in festive costumes and piled into school buses to attend an outdoor dance at Rodney Point, on the other side of Noxontown Pond. Other cell phone-free activities over the weekend included making honey from SAS beehives, planting trees, voluntary trash pickup on Noxontown Road, and a cookout at the Robinsons' home.

Reflecting on the weekend's success, Ackermann said that she hopes "a phone-free weekend, where everyone puts their phones down and gets outside will become a tradition every year on one of the first weekends of spring." When she and Murphy graduate in May, they will pass their Friday announcements off to Pinto, who is already dreaming of ideas for next year. "I think that what we have is great," he says, "but it's not perfect. There's always work to be done."