As a result of the overwhelming success of last edition’s focus on student perspectives, we once again will highlight Pine Crest Middle School student writing in this edition. The contributing students were asked simply “What makes your Pine Crest experience special and unique?” We think all our readers will agree that the Pine Crest Middle School experience represents a highly unique opportunity for our students as it represents one that is enriched in many ways and that prepares our students for excellence in our Upper School and beyond. We hope you will enjoy this edition.

Science Team Wins First Place at Regionals!

The Pine Crest Middle School Science Team placed 1st overall in the Florida Science Olympiad Regional competition held at FAU in Boca Raton on Saturday, February 25, 2012. Congratulations!

Our fifteen member team consisted of five 9th graders, three 8th graders, four 7th graders and three 6th graders. A summary of the awards received are: (4) 1st place, (6) 2nd place and (3) 3rd place. While every member on the team won an award for an individual event, nine members of the team won multiple awards. All members are to be commended for their TEAM EFFORT. The state competition will be held on March 24, 2012 at UCF in Orlando.

The Science Team poses with its trophy. Congratulations to the team, Mrs. Vicelli and Ms. Hanlon– Good Luck at States!
My Pine Crest Experience

By Madison Hawthorne

I consider myself very lucky to be a part of the Pine Crest experience. At Pine Crest, we Panthers have a large selection of sports and extra-curricular activities that many other schools do not have. We are also at a higher education level than most schools and have a beautiful campus including three pools, three fields, a lake, two student stores, and many beautiful fountains.

From ballet to football, crew to lacrosse, Pine Crest offers it all. Having these options allows students to express themselves through an activity. For example, every day I put forth my best efforts at expressing myself through ballet. Then, at the end of the day, I play lacrosse and all my worries melt away, as I challenge myself while having fun with friends. In class, I love mastering something the teacher tells us is two grade levels above us. You see, teachers at Pine Crest always manage to find a way of keeping students interested. In fact, it is almost as if they are bringing the material to life right before our very eyes – which many times they do! Not only that, but we are taught the value of teamwork by being encouraged to share our thoughts and ideas with other students.

On top of having many extra-curricular activities and a great learning plan, Pine Crest also supplies students with a beautiful campus. My favorite part about campus is that we are surrounded by nature every time we walk out of class. I truly enjoy every aspect about being a PC Panther, and I am happy knowing that the next years of my life will be spent attending Pine Crest School.

My experience at Pine Crest is something I know I will treasure for a lifetime. From the sports and activities, beautiful surroundings, and tremendous academics and friendships, I am grateful to call Pine Crest my home.
The Middle School Girls Soccer team capped an undefeated season with a 5-1 win over Henderson. Congratulations to the whole team. Team members Jordyn Elliot, Maddie Birrer and Isabel Turner added this team accomplishment to their undefeated volleyball season. Great work to the whole team and Coaches Olaf and Sikora.

Hailey McEwan’s Perspective of Her Pine Crest Experience

When people think of Pine Crest, they imagine a luxurious and impressive campus complete with an entire academic and athletic repertoire. Yes, that is true, but there is much more to the school than most people think. I have attended Pine Crest since first grade and have enjoyed everything about it. Learning and education are high priorities for the faculty and providing abundant activities for students only adds to the journey. Pine Crest challenges students in ways that help them to build a solid foundation for higher learning. I have discovered that the subjects offered to the students throughout the years have already prepared me for success in the future. To add to an excellent education, the athletic facilities for the students from middle school to upper school are truly inspirational. Athletics allow students to display their talents outside of the academic arena. I have been participating in many sports in my two years in middle school; the coaches are always there to encourage and cheer me on through the tough and the easy times of competing. Pine Crest has wrapped its arms around me and walked me into a world that holds the key to my dreams. It teaches the importance of pushing myself to become the best person I can be. Pine Crest nurtures students’ potential to produce their best work, share their gifts, and develop their skills. When I hear about the school Pine Crest, I feel privileged to attend it, the freedom to explore the wide range of interesting curriculum, the ability to excel, the method to succeeding, and the inspiration to find out who I am.
It Takes A Village by Alessandra Yoldas

Since I was four years old, I have proudly been a part of the Pine Crest family. The day I arrived, a stable and supportive community surrounded me. I was the youngest in my grade, but I found that the wonderful teachers and administrators involved with the school made sure that I applied myself to keep up with my older classmates. As I moved forward through Pre-Primary, Lower, and now Middle School, I found the academic and personal growth to be dramatic.

It seems so long ago when I did not have homework. In the Lower School, the teachers made learning fun and accessible. They gave us the tools to excel later, but it did not even seem like work at the time. The third and fourth grades brought more “formality” and structure to each subject, and it was easier for me to see the path of learning ahead. Trips outside of the classroom also provided excellent opportunities to realize that learning is not always found in a textbook. The St. Augustine and Washington, D.C. trips will always be such wonderful memories for me, and I hope every PC student has the opportunity to experience them. With all the diligent studying up until then, however, nothing could prepare me for the challenges of Middle School. The amount of homework and intensity of the classes has forced me to “step it up” and learn to be more efficient with my time and studying.

While the world of books and academia is important in life, it is not the only thing to develop. I have found out so much about myself and others as I have progressed through school. Learning about and developing one’s character is something that our school has always promoted. The PC honor code is a good framework for students to follow. Also, in Lower School, we had an advisory class to guide us in making the right decisions. We all will face the joys and disappointments of some of our friendships. Through our own or others’ errors, PC encourages us always to grow from our experiences.

Pine Crest offers opportunities and an environment that other schools cannot match. I never truly appreciated the PC academic level of teaching or of those around me until I met people from outside of school. It made me realize that I was in a special school. It has not always been easy. As I get older, the homework, studying, and responsibilities have increased. However, as I meet those responsibilities, I find that I am given more freedom with study halls and free periods. The important lesson that is stressed, both in and out of the classroom, is that greater freedom is earned, not given.

There is an old saying that says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” The Pine Crest “village” has done just that and has done it well. For that, I am so grateful.
All I needed to know I learned in Pine Crest Pre-K

By Vanessa Medrano

As an eighth grader who is about to finish Pine Crest Middle School, I was asked to write an article about my Pine Crest experience. I have been at Pine Crest since Pre-kindergarten. I am a “lifer,” so I decided to think about what that means. I looked back to remember what I have learned throughout the years at this school. As I did so, I thought of author Robert Fulghum’s advice that All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, and I think that these words are very true.

Fulghum’s list includes things that might seem, on the surface, to apply only to pre-primary, for example: share everything, play fair, clean up your own mess, say sorry when you hurt somebody, put things back where you found them, don’t take things that aren’t yours, live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some, and when you out in the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together. The point of the book, however, is that these rules should carry on throughout the rest of our lives.

In looking back at just how far we have come, I realize that we are different in many ways- we are bigger and smarter, and we have made great new friends that have joined us along the way, but the theme of that book is really true. We learned important lessons in Pine Crest’s Pre-Primary, and I am proud to say that all of us, whether we have gone to Pine Crest for 10 years or 1, do a pretty good job of remembering the basic rules of caring, sharing, and treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves.

Even though we are in eighth grade, we continue to look out for each other. We are kind to each other—Vanessa Medrano

Even though we are in eighth grade, we continue to look out for each other. We are kind to each other. We try not to make too many messes, and when we do, we clean them up ourselves. We say sorry, and we share and play fair. And we try hard to balance work and play, learning and fun. So, as we head out into the “traffic” that is the world of Pine Crest Upper School, I hope that we can continue to remember and live by these rules. Let’s hold hands and stick together. Upper School here we come.
The date was January 5th, 2009. I was driving with my parents to a school called Pine Crest and was extremely apprehensive about the day ahead. At the time, I was in the fourth grade and lived in Kentucky. My parents and I were thinking of moving to our beach house in Florida, but only if we could find an excellent school for me to attend and only if I could be accepted. Throughout the drive, I wondered if the students in my grade would like me or if I would fit in with them. But what I was concerned about the most was whether or not I was smart enough to pass the entrance exam. When we finally arrived at the school, I tried to gulp down my fear as I softly closed the car door. Then I took a deep breath and strode into the Lower School Office.

I was greeted inside the office by an incredibly nice lady named Mrs. Johnson. She had a warm personality that helped to calm some of my fears. After I was situated with her, my parents left, and I felt incredibly shy. The thought had suddenly hit me that I was actually here, applying for Pine Crest, and that this could change my life forever. I sat down and took the test, doing my best and feeling the pressure to do well enough to be able to start a new life in Florida. I realize now that Mrs. Johnson played a very important role in my first impression of Pine Crest as a school. She was the first of many amazingly kind and welcoming people that I would meet on that day. Yet little did I know that the best part of my visit was about to begin.

After the test, Mrs. Johnson explained to me that for the remainder of the day, I would have the opportunity to spend some time with the other fourth graders to see what a regular day at Pine Crest was like. A nice-looking, blonde haired girl, wearing a purple Panther Pal t-shirt appeared outside the office to guide me around for the remainder of the day. She introduced herself to me as JoAnn Wood, we waved good-bye to Mrs. Johnson, and off we went. We walked around the many twisting hallways of the school and chattered quietly together. Surprisingly, in that short time, we discovered that we had a lot in common and I was feeling a bit more confident in myself. Before we knew it, we were inside a fourth grade classroom. The unfamiliar students turned to look at me, and my shyness crept up inside me again. But after a few short moments, I was amazed at the kindness and generosity of each student and how welcoming the teacher was to me. I started to feel like I was at home. As the day progressed, I found that I really liked the school and the people. I even lucked out that it was pizza day, and I thought it was so cool that the silverware had its own “special slide” where it went to be cleaned. (It sounds a bit ridiculous now, but JoAnn and I still have a good laugh every now and again about that one!) As the day came to a close, I said good-bye to the new friends that I had made and hopped in to my parents’ car to talk about the experiences that I had during the day. I was hopeful that one day soon I would be able to call Pine Crest my school.

I am now in the seventh grade and am a participant in the Ambassador’s Club. I take the job very seriously and eagerly, for I know firsthand how nervous the prospective students feel. But I also know how special that first connection to the school can be. To this day, my Panther Pal, JoAnn Wood, is my friend for life! She, Mrs. Johnson, the teachers, and my classmates made the best of Pine Crest come to life for me that day in January and for that I am forever grateful!
We recently did a project in Senora Devash's class where we made an interactive collage on Vuvox. We used adjectives to describe classes and our teachers, who were all famous Hispanic actors, actresses, musicians, sports pros and artists. We pretended like we lived and went to a school in a Spanish-speaking country. We learned about the geographical location and features of Hispanic countries, how to use adjectives to describe different attributes of people and classes, and famous Spanish people and that for which they are famous. It was an amazing learning experience that everyone benefited from. Taylor Phillips

I felt as if I was in Spain via Glogster, a 21st century poster. I learned so much about euros vs. dollars, culture, weather, and even the time zones. Glogster is much more advanced than any other program and helped me emerge myself into the day in the life of a person living in Spain—JoAnn Wood

My Glogster project was on the city of Málaga, España. Glogster is so much more advanced than all the other programs out there. The pictures, videos, and links that I could upload allowed me to virtually travel to the city of Málaga.—Thomas Sullivan

La Chandeleur by Anastasia Golvolkine

On February 2nd, the French classes celebrated La Chandeleur. La Chandeleur is a national French holiday that is supposed to give the family luck for the entire year. Of course, the families have to eat crêpes, the official food of the holiday. So on the 2nd of February Madame Gutiérrez decided that her classes should also join in on the holiday. Before eating the crêpes, Madame Gutiérrez told the class about the importance of the holiday and the recipe for a crêpe. Then, the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade French classes enjoyed La Chandeleur related crosswords and puzzles, and ate crêpes. One by one, the students lined up and asked in French for their crêpes and toppings. Chocolate, strawberries, raspberries, Nutella, whipped cream, powdered sugar, or cinnamon. The students were also required to write a small paragraph about La Chandeleur. This day was a great way of bringing the students closer to the French culture. I thought that this was an excellent idea! It was a lot of fun and educational at the same time. I really like that Madame Gutiérrez always does something memorable in French class.