SPARK
news magazine
THE OFFICIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE
The Spark

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Pictured below is the tennis team who won the County Championship for the second year in a row. Top Row (left to right): Molly Dillon (8), Sandra Piskor (8), Julianna Divincenzo (7), Marissa Saba (8), Lauren Gross (8), Brooke Rogers (8), Middle Row: Oliver Brum (8), Nelson Lu (8), Grant Burroughs (8), Niklas Pinto (8), Spencer Cohen (8), Bottom Row: Dalton Burroughs (6), Alexander MacKenzie (6), Joseph Calleja (6), Adam Homer (7), Jack Scarlett (6) The middle school tennis teams won the County Tournament on October 22 for the second year in a row. PHOTO BY JONAS MEYER

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Familiar Faces, New Places

By Sam Wright

With the coming of a new year, middle school is filled with familiar faces in new places. Pine View's teachers, both old and new, have been shaken up and are starting off their years teaching new subjects, students and grades.

Liz Ballard

Spending time in the portable villages of Pine View, one can spot a recognizable face go about her day. Who could this be? Liz Ballard! Despite being a long time P.E. coach at Pine View, Ballard has taken two periods out of her day of exercise and energy to teach World History to sixth graders. Despite the drastic change in environment and curriculum, Ballard enjoys the switch. Ballard said her adjustment has given her a new perspective of teaching and her students.

“I’m so blessed to work with these kids,” Ballard said, “There are people who have PHDs and have been on archeological digs who would love to be in my teaching position.”

Jack Francis

The story of Jack Francis’s career in recent years relating to Pine View? The short version is here, away, and back again. Francis, however, has a much longer story to tell. He decided to swap schools, going from Pine View to the charter school Sarasota Suncoast Academy. The driving force behind the switch was that Francis’s wife worked at SSA and he wanted the chance to work with her. He began as the seventh-grade history and speech teacher as well as the basketball coach. His favorite aspect happened to be his position as basketball coach, which surprised him. However, Francis is clearly back. He began missing the Pine View students and his friends at Pine View, so he decided to return this year.

“The teachers at Pine View are very, very, lucky,” Francis said. “If you don’t like [Pine View], try another school…this school is the best place to work.”

Stephanie White

Stephanie White has left the iconic Building 16 as a fifth-grade teacher and can now be found on the schedules of sixth-graders all around campus. White made the leap to get closer to older students as one of the sponsors of the class of 2021, but not split too far from her elementary teaching experience. White also liked the sixth-grade curriculum and wanted to challenge herself.

“I have learned to never say never,” White said. “I remember myself saying that I would never teach middle school, but here I am now.”

Wendy Hazlett

English teacher Wendy Hazlett was first inspired to teach by the teacher who made learning fun for her. Hazlett started her teaching career in Michigan, then Texas and for two years in Sarasota before taking a ten-year break from education. During her break, Hazlett lived in Sarasota and began her family. She ended up teaching at multiple schools as a substitute, including Pine View.

Her teaching career began blossoming again when she took a position teaching fourth grade at Pine View, and this year moving up to teach sixth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-grade English.

“I wanted to move from the elementary classroom to the secondary classroom for a new challenge and because I relate well to older kids and aim to be an adult who connects with and supports them during their teenage years,” Hazlett said.
Art takes heart

By Gwen Cushman

Growing up surrounded by theater, art teacher Haley Brown has strayed only slightly from her arts background. Brown grew up in southern Florida and was influenced by the arts her whole life; yet, she eventually found an interest in teaching through her mom.

She came from an artistic home and a mother who worked as a teacher in Charlotte County. Despite all this educational influence, Brown initially did not consider teaching as a career.

Even at a young age, Brown did all she could to immerse herself in the world of theater and art. She did many dance classes including ballet, tap, jazz, musical theater, hip hop, acro, pointe and modern lyrical. Her dreams were being a star on Broadway, but she found her passion later in teaching art.

Before going to college, she taught theater to young children for seven years at the Charlotte Players.

While pursuing an education in Florida State University, Brown blended her passion for art and theater, painting sets and eventually becoming a scenic painter for local theatres. By the end of her college years, Brown earned her bachelor’s degrees in studio art and theater with a focus in scenic design. Her master’s degree is in art education.

Now, Brown has mixed her own passion for art with her teaching style.

When it comes to making her own work Brown said, “Instagram and Tumblr have so many talented people creating art on them and they inspire me to make my own.”

Other than social media, many movies also influence her art and her lesson plans. Nature has also had an impact on her life as shown by her elaborate plant decorations throughout her classroom.

Brown is always broadening her art styles and skills as a teacher and a creative.

“There are just so many types of art that I want to try,” she said.

So far, Brown is enjoying teaching at Pine View, and her students enjoy her style as well. In regards to Pine View’s environment, she said the school offers a unique experience.

“I think my favorite thing, is how self-motivated the kids are, and how they are more interested in what we are learning, which makes the classroom more productive,” Brown said.

Meeting Pine View’s new assistant principal

By Courtney Nelson

“Every time that I think about my job, I just have to pinch myself, because it’s absolutely amazing that I work here. I can’t believe it, and I’m so proud to be here,” new Middle School Assistant Principal Melissa Abela said.

Since starting at Pine View, Abela has been working to integrate new ideas and still a positive impact on middle school students. Having experience teaching students in Miami, Abela expressed her contentment being with middle school students once again. Additionally, Abela explained how she seeks to understand middle schoolers and their own perspectives.

From her experience, she’s found that sixth-graders deal with transitioning into middle school. Whereas in seventh-grade, Abela sees how certain students are unclear about their interests. Yet, Abela has seen eighth-graders grow to find their own individuality.

“Middle school is so different from elementary and high school, because each year is totally different and unique in their own ways. When I had taught English as a teacher in Miami, I grew such a strong connection with the students. I saw the impact I had on those students. But I decided to become an assistant principal, because I realized how much of a larger impact I could have on the school,” Abela said.

In Abela’s transition from Booker High School, she worked alongside previous Middle School Assistant Principal Sue Fair.

“Everyone has been amazing and so welcoming. Ms. Fair has made my transition even easier,” Abela said.

In terms of goals for the coming years, Abela seeks to implement ways for everyone at Pine View to grow closer. While at Pine View, she hopes that student-teacher bonds can improve, and their learning environments are as welcoming as possible.

Abela addresses how everyone has different needs when learning and how it’s important that educators grow relationships to reach everyone’s desire to learn. Whether by holding the door or smiling at someone, Abela models her expectations, reinforcing positivity in the school community.

“My goal is that every teacher has the tools to create relationships with others. It’s truly inspiring to see how students of such similar age all can be so different...just being positive and yourself is appreciated. When teachers are happy it all trickles down, and to me, students are the most important.” Abela said.
Saying ‘hello’ to the newest AI on campus

By Faith Bossman

Tech savvy and ready to make change in their community, Suncoast Coders is applying their computer science knowledge to Pine View’s campus. The STEM club has been working on a Google Assistant attachment called Hello! Pine View.

“When we finally completed Hello Pine View and the attachment was deployed by Google, I was so excited because it had been turned down so many times,” said eighth grade club-member Devin Gulliver.

The attachment has officially been deployed on Google Assistant and is available for download. Everyone can access the attachment by simply saying, “Talk to Hello Pine View.” The questions go to a server to see if an answer is available. Certain questions are always available to answer, but some are only available on certain days. So if a question wasn’t answered today, it might be there tomorrow.

Currently, you can ask the app simple questions like, “Who is the principal?” and get a pre-programmed response. Daily questions also are being programmed, so one can ask “What is today’s lunch?” and be updated on a more complex everchanging question.

The Hello! Pine View app doesn’t even require coding experience to add one’s own questions and responses.

Suncoast Coders and their development team didn’t begin with such a massive and public undertaking. Suncoast Coders grew out of the Girls Who Code club, which began in 2015. The group of girls began following the preset curriculum. Quickly, however, these developers grew out of the curriculum and started their own independent club.

Their first project as a group was a model of the Weasley Clock from the Harry Potter movies. The model was fully functional and able to track ones preset locations.

Other than these models and apps, the club members also created their own websites through a program called Cloud 9. Club members get tons of examples of hands-on experience with coding and development.

In the future, Suncoast Coder’s seeks to continue building their repertoires through new projects and growing their coding skills.

To contribute to Hello! Pine View and learn more about coding, come to Suncoast Coders on Fridays at 1 p.m. in Roger Siegel’s room.

NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL CLUBS

Dungeons & Dragons
Fridays 7th period with Dr. Bell
Release your inner creativity and create your own world with friends.

Crate Diggers
Fridays 7th period with Mr. Pauling
Enjoy the chill atmosphere while going through thrifted and collected vinyl records.

Odyssey of the Mind
Tuesdays 7th period with Mrs. Novak
Learn to solve creative problem solving program and get exposure to other creative outlets.

Science Olympiad Club
Fridays 7th period with Mrs. Kohler
This club prepares students for the Science Olympiad competition based on subjects like forensics, anatomy, and more.
Sixth Graders: The Adventure Guide

Adam Teffenhart
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Jiayi Zhu

Alan Daniel
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Brenna Cullen

Allen Lin
Previous School: Southside Elementary
Interview by: Shelby Brann

Ankur Bishayee
Previous School: Everglades Elementary
Interview by: Faith Bossman

Anna Buchmeier
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Andres Cortes

Anthony Dedovets
Previous School: Lakeview Elementary
Interview by: Donelle Grone

Ariana Washburn
Previous School: Taylor Ranch Elementary
Interview by: Shelby Brann

Ava Glover
Previous School: Southside Elementary
Interview by: Ryan Purdy

“After 20+ years here at Pine View and the last 10 in 6th grade, each day continues to be a joyful opportunity to enrich the academic performance of my amazing students.”
Fran Squires
Interview and photo by Sam Wright
Elizabeth Khodzhaieva
Previous School: Collen Bevic Elementary
Interview by: Shelby Brann

Emmett Russo
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Aaron Schroeder

Ethan Cherry
Previous School: Cherryville Elementary
Interview by: Coltrane Marcusky

Evelyn Hunt
Previous School: Island School
Interview by: Jiayi Zhu

Franklin Boyer
Previous School: Imagine Palmer Ranch
Interview by: Faith Bossman

Gabrielle DeLeo
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Donelle Grone

Gabriel Yamada
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Brenna Cullen

Grant Miller
Previous School: Fruitville Elementary
Interview by: Madilyn Hagney

Greyson Dawes
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Brenna Cullen

Hadley Thompson
Previous School: Lakeview Elementary
Interview by: Jiayi Zhu
Harrison Williams
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Lindsay Luberecki

Isabel Jerome
Previous School: Cranberry Elementary
Interview by: Zlata Basarevskja

Jack Berke
Previous School: Boyette Springs Elementary
Interview by: Christian Batista

Jack Venesky
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Emma Reynolds

Joseph Calleja
Previous School: Lake View Elementary
Interview by: Andres Cortes

Helene Giraud
Previous School: Gulf Gate Elementary
Interview by: Molly Whipple

Jace Ekes
Previous School: Fruitville Elementary
Interview by: Liana Le

Jackson Mitchell
Previous School: Phillippi Shores Elementary
Interview by: Emma Reynolds

Jacob Feldman
Previous School: Southside Elementary
Interview by: Lindsay Luberecki

Joseph Tricarico
Previous School: Public School 8, Staten Island
Interview by: Emma Reynolds
Kane Ryan
Previous School: Boyette Springs Elementary
Interview by: Tanvi Senthil

Kannon Morrissey
Previous School: Southside Elementary
Interview by: Lindsay Luberecki

Kaia Yturralde
Previous School: Out-of-Door Academy
Interview by: Zlata Basarevskaja

Kinley Thompson
Previous School: Lakeview Elementary
Interview by: Jiayi Zhu

Lanie Fineman
Previous School: Southside Elementary
Interview by: Coltrane Marcusky

Laura Herrera
Previous School: Venice Elementary
Interview by: Molly Whipple

Layla Thach
Previous School: Southside Elementary
Interview by: Brenna Cullen

Liana Schlabach
Previous School: Bay Haven Elementary
Interview by: Molly Whipple

Laird Foley
Previous School: Venice Elementary
Interview by: Coltrane Marcusky

Lila Mertzlufft
Previous School: Tatum Ridge Elementary
Interview by: Donelle Grone
The adjustments to Pine View’s challenging classes, far-reaching campus and new classmates may be intimidating for new students. Nevertheless, Pine View’s middle school teachers look forward to making new memories with all their students, as they share their own experiences teaching.

Alventina Lazareva, sixth-grade social studies  
“I’ve been teaching for 12 years – since 2007, starting here at Pine View. The students have given me great memories and helped make me more patient and understanding.”
David Yotsuda, seventh-grade science
“My favorite part about teaching is the excitement from middle school students. They have kept me, as far as perspective-wise, to always be curious and to always ask questions.”

Marybeth Maiello, eighth-grade science
“I have been teaching middle school for 27 years. They teach me new stuff everyday... I want to make [middle school] a safe, fun, non-emotional, non-stressful time period.”
# Evolution on Pine View’s Campus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Former School</th>
<th>Interview by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annika Biggs</td>
<td>Sarasota Middle</td>
<td>Lindsay Luberecki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Rudin</td>
<td>Coleytown Elementary, Westport</td>
<td>Jiayi Zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin Rollings Zepponi</td>
<td>Davidson Middle</td>
<td>Molly Whipple</td>
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<tr>
<td>EllaRose Sherman</td>
<td>Laurel Nokomis Middle</td>
<td>Shelby Brann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donelle Grone</td>
<td>State College of Florida Collegiate School</td>
<td>Brenna Cullen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan Rollings Zepponi</td>
<td>Davidson Middle</td>
<td>Courtney Nelson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Zamora</td>
<td>Charles Rushe Middle</td>
<td>Ryan Purdy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freya Melbourne</td>
<td>Sarasota Middle</td>
<td>Liana Le</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?**
- Woodshop club; I like to work with my hands.
- Horse riding club because I love horses and ride every day.
- I would start the Meme Club where a group of students review memes.
- If you could change one thing at Pine View, what would it be? Why?
- Making longer transition periods.

**What challenges have you faced with the change to middle school?**
- There's a lot more homework and a lot more walking from class to class.
- Well, a few, there's a lot of organization involved, a lot more preparation, studying. Mainly just academic stuff to be honest.
- If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?
- Animation club because I like art.

**Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about yourself?**
- I do have a twin brother.
- I think Pine View is a great switch from my previous school and I don’t regret anything.
- Less weekend homework so I can enjoy my weekend more.
- I‘d make sure that there would be different intervals in which the teachers would put their tests.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Former School</th>
<th>Interview by:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Hostetler</td>
<td>Former school: Rippon Middle in Rippon, Virginia</td>
<td>Shelby Brann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>A martial arts club because I like it a lot and think other people would.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges have you faced with the change to middle school?</td>
<td>Lots of homework. And it’s hard to walk across campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Purdy</td>
<td>Former school: Sarasota Christian School</td>
<td>Andres Cortes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>Star Wars Club, because I like Star Wars and I’d like to talk to people who like Star Wars and all that stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could change one thing at Pine View, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>The amount of time they [teachers] give you to work on tests; I think they should give more time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Pushkash</td>
<td>Former School: Woodland Middle</td>
<td>Shelby Brann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>I helped my friends start a Minecraft club already.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges have you faced with the change to middle school?</td>
<td>Not much. It’s pretty much the same amount of homework, just a lot more classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liana Le</td>
<td>Former School: Brookside Middle</td>
<td>Zlata Basarevskaja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>I would probably make a cooking class, because I really enjoy cooking and baking but I’m really bad at it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If there anything else you’d like to tell me about yourself?</td>
<td>I play piano, I have a shopping addiction and I talk a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raphael Haslam</td>
<td>Former School: Magdalen College School in Oxford, England</td>
<td>Madilyn Hagney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>A table tennis club because it’s fun and we had it at my old school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges have you faced with the change to middle school?</td>
<td>Homework, classes. It’s more relaxed here, but there’s more work at a higher level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Gutierrez</td>
<td>Former School: Saint Martha’s</td>
<td>Donelle Grone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges have you faced with the change to middle school?</td>
<td>The challenges I’ve faced are the homework load and the size of the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>I would like to start chess club because I like to play it and want to get better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santo Valenti</td>
<td>Former School: Laurel Nokomis Middle</td>
<td>Aaron Schroeder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>I would start a videogame development club, to open more career options in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about yourself?</td>
<td>I like chicken wings, and love to draw in my spare time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Bury-Lugo</td>
<td>Former School: St Martha’s</td>
<td>Christian Batista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you could start any class/club, what would it be? Why?</td>
<td>Lego club for some Lego enthusiasts. Maybe for the younger kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges have you faced with the change to middle school?</td>
<td>More work, more responsibilities, and harder classes I guess.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUCCEEDING IN SEVENTH**

*Keep up with your homework*

*Remember you’re halfway there*

*Value yourself and friendships*
# In the Final Stretch: New Eighth Graders at Pine View

**Patricia Bury-Lugo**  
*Interview by: Courtney Nelson*

- **What school were you at before Pine View? How was it different?** I used to go to Saint Martha’s, it’s a Christian school. We’d always wear uniforms and we’d use chrome books for everything, like our homework, so our backpacks were lighter.

- **How would you describe yourself?** I’d describe myself as funny, kind, sweet and obviously new!

- **What professions are you interested in? Why?** I’d like to be a lawyer. Both of my parents are lawyers, so it’s pretty inspiring.

- **What would you do with a million dollars?** With a million dollars, I would love to travel the world, experiencing new culture and languages. I’d make sure to put some into my will for my future family, and of course donate to some charities.

**Ethan Wang**  
*Interview by: Leo Lenerz*

- **What other places have you lived in/traveled to?** I went to California, New York and Taiwan.

- **What or who inspires you? Why?** My mom inspires me because she works hard to help us with homework, extracurricular activities and more.

- **What professions are you interested in? Why?** Engineering because it involves math and I like to do math.

- **What have been your first impressions of Pine View? What challenges have you faced at Pine View?** It’s a nice place, but when it rains, it floods. [Some challenges I have faced are] finding the right bus and sometimes when I get picked up from the shell lot, it is flooded.

**Florentina Klingenberg**  
*Interview by: Leo Lenerz*

- **What school were you at before Pine View? How was it different?** I went to Sarasota Middle School. The campus was a little bit smaller and I wasn’t in the gifted program.

- **What places have you lived in/traveled to?** I have lived in Austria and Massachusetts. I have traveled to Iceland, California, Arizona, Colorado, Italy, Norway and Germany.

- **What would you do with a million dollars?** I would give some to charity, travel the world and get a dog.

- **If you could have a super power, what would it be?** I would have the power to stop global warming and all the problems that humanity has put on Earth, such as climate change.

**Maria Clara Melo-Fontoura**  
*Interview by: Monica Hennaway*

- **What school were you at before Pine View? How was it different?** Before, I went to Bridgewater Middle School.

- **What professions are you interested in? Why?** I’d like to be a fashion designer. I like planning things out and making them look nice and neat.

- **What would you do with a million dollars?** I’d donate some and use the rest for life savings.

- **If you could have a super power, what would it be?** All knowledge, so I could pass all tests and quizzes, and do whatever I want.
What school were you at before Pine View? How was it different?

SMS, there are more lockers here and more homework.

What classes/clubs/teachers have you enjoyed?

All of my teachers are good, but I like PE [Coach DiGiacomo] the most.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

Completing my homework in 1 second and getting the answers all right.

What or who inspires you? Why?

My dad inspires me the most because he is a firefighter and saves people’s lives.

By Naina Chauhan

Molly Dillon

Interview by: Faith Bossman

What professions are you interested in? Why?

I’m looking for a career in the arts; my main goal is to be a Disney animator. But if that doesn’t happen, I’d want to be a writer or default to another career in relation to my hobbies.

What or who inspires you? Why?

I take after my dad [who is an artist] and other artists.

What classes/clubs/teachers have you enjoyed?

I like art with Mrs. Brown and I’m working on starting an animation club.

What would you do with a million dollars?

Half for college, half for charity, maybe get a house.

Tyler Tricarico

Interview by: Sam Wright
Seventh-grader breaks glass ceiling and state record

By Madilyn Hagney

The scent of chlorine and the sounds of splashing fill the indoor pool complex. Sidney Brann speeds down lane 4, then heaves herself out of the water. Cheers fill the venue.

A voice booms overhead, “Coming in first place with a time of 2:25.87 and breaking the FLAGS and LSC records... Sidney Brann!”

In one race, Sidney Brann broke two state swimming records for the 200-meter backstroke, FLAGS (Florida Age Group Swimming), which was two minutes and 29.53 seconds, and LSC (Local Swim Committee), which was two minutes and 27.43 seconds.

Brann has been swimming for about four years and shows extraordinary skill according to her coach.

“She’s a good leader for the group,” her coach, Ira Klein, said. “She could be training with the older group. She has a promising career.”

Klein has also praised Brann for her work ethic. Both Klein and Brann’s teammates admire her commitment and skill. Brann attends swim practices regularly, training to compete for multiple tournaments; this takes a large portion of her time.

“Our goal should be to try and beat the national record and beat our rivals,” teammate Toby Schwenk said.

Two of her teammates, Toby Schwenk and Val Smirnov, spoke very highly of her, Schwenk saying, "She’s funny sometimes."

Not only is Brann perceived as an impressive swimmer, she’s also admired by her teammates for her hard work and persistence.

Smirnov especially expressed joy to have Brann on her team.

“She helps me get through practice,” Smirnov said.

Brann said that she will remember her accomplishment, since she’s been training for it her whole swim career. She also said she plans on pursuing swimming in the future.

Brann said she believes that swimming is a sport that can really get her somewhere in life.
Leaping Lizards: Caring for Pine View’s most exotic animals

By Shelby Brann

Typically, most students that have pets may have a dog or cat, or a fish or a lizard. As for others, they may even have no pets at all. Many students at Pine View have pets, and certainly all students love them! But when you ask Anne Mel-Luver if she has pets, she’ll reply with a whole list of various creatures!

According to many students who have been brave enough to venture to her house for a meet-up or a sleepover, they’ll tell you that Mel-Luver has two ostriches, five peacocks, two hogs and a crocodile named Jeffrey, not to mention the giraffe she has been housing.

“I have many pets at home. Some people are confused as to why some of them are so interesting, but I always say that’s the fun of it!” Mel-Luver told several teachers.

“It’s hard to have so many sometimes, but when choosing between seeing a movie or hanging out with my lizards, I’ll choose Gary every time. The only problem is, no one believes me when I tell them my pet ate my homework!”

Mel-Luver feeds them every day at the crack of dawn. She lugs water to her giraffes, then fills her dogs’ bowls. With a slight struggle to reach the ostriches’ field, she is careful to give them their favorite nuts and seeds. While she walks by her swamp, she has to watch for her crocodiles to be sure she’s giving them the right meal. After this chaotic feeding, she rushes to school, trying her best to make it on time.

“It takes a while to feed them all,” she said. “They have very different appetites, which makes it so difficult. Gary likes apple slices with cinnamon, but Bobby, who’s a hippo, hates cinnamon. Two of my peacocks adore pumpkin seeds, but they always end up fighting over the burnt ones. In the end, it’s a lot of work.”

With someone such as Mel-Luver having to labor over countless animals, it makes the average person think twice about owning a dog. Nevertheless, Mel-Luver has five of the country’s most beloved pets. With two Burmese mountain dogs, one German Shepard and three great Danes. The animals can especially be tiresome for her, as she has to juggle with Pine View homework as well.

“Pets are extremely hard to take care of and they require a lot of attention. But at the end of the day, it’s totally worth it,” Mel-Luver said.
A Journey through Pine View

By Leo Lenerz
Dear travelers,
For eons, I have wandered this vast land and discovered the stunning sights and curious finds of Pine View. Before you, I have the very map I created while wandering this vast land, documenting paths and marking hidden adventures in every spot. I wish you luck, young one...
The insidious alliance hiding in our pencil pouches

By Courtney Nelson

Being highly skilled and professionally trained, stationary thieves could be anyone. They could be behind you or seated next to you, but to any school student, they pose a large threat to your academic success.

When you drop your fancy gel pen but can’t seem to find it anywhere on the floor, or when you misplaced your new mechanical pencil, look for the Stationary Thieves, the ones to snag it first. Stationary Thieves have terrorized Pine View in the shadows for far too long, and it’s time to bring these shady stealers to light.

It was the second day of school, my fancy new Mildliner annotation highlighters in hand, when the head of the Stationary Thieves Organization (STO), Stealio Pen, comes to me, innocently asking to use my mint colored Mildliner. At this point I didn’t know how to handle this; all eyes were on us. I only had two options: give him my mint colored Mildliner, that I loved ever so dearly, or face the wrath of STO.

My friend, Vicki Tem, had the audacity to deny Penny Bandeet, another thief, her beautiful set of gel pens to “color her science project,” which we all knew that was just code for “give me all your pens.” When Tem rejected Bandeet’s offer, things took a dark turn. I haven’t seen Vicki since the incident.

STO is a merciless group of individuals. From what I’ve heard, the organization runs from a top-secret location on campus, collecting a surplus of pens, pencils, highlighters and notebooks.

The thieves have taken what we love, destroyed our faith, and weakened the soul of our school. I shall not stand for the terror that has been forced upon us! We must stand strong and forge a plan to fight back against those who have degraded our quality of stationary and life at Pine View.

Students across Pine View have been devastated by the actions of these delinquents, and once we accomplish a revolt, we, as a school, will grow to become a safer school. But for now, we will be in the shadows of these mischievous marauders.
What’s behind the Batman Bench?

By Gwen Cushman

Friday, September 13, 2019: Dear Diary,

Today I adventured into the forest behind the batman bench carrying my large camping bag because I thought it would be fun to disappear for a few days.

Items I brought with me:
- 1 cans of raid for those pesky ants
- 1 fly swatter
- 1 family sized bag of Bugles
- 1 cup decorated with Hello Kitty for collecting rainwater
- 4 of my favorite onesies
- 1 glow in the dark flashlight
- 1 knife for cutting stuff
- 3 survival guides
- 1 swimsuit for swimming in toxic ponds
- A few calculators for calculating the time, date, and how many calories I eat
- The Pine View Trail Guide that I brought along. Somehow, I drifted off into daydreaming and ‘awoke’ to find myself stalking a bird; I seem to have a great subconscious. The bird was very dumb, so I easily used the Bugles as bait, killed it, and brought it back to my camp. After I struggled to cook it over the fire, I settled down on a tree stump to eat dinner (dinner + lunch).

Saturday, September 14, 2019: Dear Dairy,

Today I awoke to find that my leg was covered in rashes. I took a very estimated guess and decided that it was from the mushrooms I ran all over yesterday. Eventually I was able to blink the sleep away from my eyes and ate some berries from a near-by bush; they were very tasty. After dragging one of my onesies around, I finally found a plant that looked like aloe vera and spread the juice all over my legs; it stung a lot, so I tied my onesie to my legs. Once again, I slowly crawled back to my home base to prepare lunch. By the time I got back my legs felt better so I made the greatest decision: to go hunting. I grabbed my knife, one of the bags of Bugles, and headed off into the dense woods.

Sunday, September 15, 2019: Dear Diary,

Today I realized that there wasn’t an adult in sight, so I jumped around and screamed “I’m free!” Eventually I decided that it would be best to stop my nonsense and read another survival guide.

After a few pages about acid rain had been read, it started to rain in real life, so I grabbed my Hello Kitty cup and danced around catching raindrops. I really hoped that I had captured acid rain, but it was just normal rainwater. By the time it had stopped raining I had drunk five and a half cups of water, which was then recorded in my calculator.

As I was walking, I was able to identify some of the amazing plants due to my knowledge of the Pine View Trail Guide that I brought along. Somehow, I drifted off into daydreaming and ‘awoke’ to find myself stalking a bird; I seem to have a great subconscious. The bird was very dumb, so I easily used the Bugles as bait, killed it, and brought it back to my camp. After I struggled to cook it over the fire, I settled down on a tree stump to eat dinner (dinner + lunch).

Monday, September 16, 2019: Dear Diary,

Today I awoke to homesickness so I ate the left over Bugles and kissed it goodbye; my homesickness had grown too much. So, as much as I loved my adventure, I gave up and trekked back to Pine View. On the way I thought about all the fun I have had these past few days and how I was really going to miss the freedom of doing whatever I wanted.

As I neared the school I realized that I should record my journey so I could keep forever. I paused and sat down on a patch of sad looking grass. I recorded my great adventure, which you are now reading, and headed off to school with a smile.
The Secret to Sustainability in our School Lunches

Seeking solutions to plastic pollution at Pine View

By Courtney Nelson

You’re standing in the long lunch lines extending out all the way to the doors, mingling among other hungry kids who are anxious to get their hands-on lunch. You pick up a Styrofoam lunch tray and grab what’s being served on that day. In the masses of students, you sit down, plastic utensils in hand, fruits smothered in plastic wrap, cups and packages.

This daily routine, you realize, has contributed to the massive amount of plastics and non-recyclables thrown away at Pine View each day. Even if you didn’t want to use this much plastic, or if you wanted to at least recycle what you’ve used, you can’t.

Pine View lunches and many other take away options pose a glaring problem: massive amounts of plastic pollution, much of which cannot be recycled.

According to the Sarasota County Schools’ website, it says, “The district’s Food and Nutrition Services Department serves about 32,000 meals each day.” Thus, in Sarasota County’s schools alone, 32,000 people per day use at least one piece of plastic, amounting to thousands of thrown out trays, wrappers and silverware. For students who seek an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, especially if they rely on school lunch, the emissions as a result of simply eating a school lunch can be disheartening. The good news is that we as a community can push for change.

“We can’t stop plastic waste individually. There is strength in numbers, and we should work together to use less waste and make a change,” eighth-grader Casie Ryan said.

On a school wide level, one of the biggest changes is implementing reusable trays. Every lunch comes with a tray; that’s about 32,000 trays used per day for an entire school year. The switch could dramatically reduce the amount of waste we produce and will eventually prove beneficial in regards to budget.

Another way we can improve our lunch is by changing how we wrap food. Prioritizing fresh food, without the plastic wrap can help reduce waste. And plastic isn’t just waste, it’s oil. The thousands of pounds of plastic wrapping we throw out is made out of an already dwindling resource that we should be shifting away from.

Plastic utensils can also be swapped for more ecofriendly options. Compostable materials such as bamboo or reusable metal options can help combat the masses of spoons, forks and knives entering our trashcans daily. Compostable options can even contribute to gardens around campus.

Surprisingly, the cost of unpackaged versus packaged food is essentially the same. In fact, there is a common misconception that unpackaged, fresh foods are more expensive. A new study published by the USDA revealed that packaged food is not cheaper than unpackaged food. As well, food wrapped in less plastic can be beneficial for the environment while remaining cost effective. Pine View has come so far in making efforts to conserve our resources, and so many students on our campus care. If we become aware of the inadvertent damage we are causing, we can make strides toward making change.

Photo by Sam Wright
Respecting religions: The diversity that goes unrecognized at Pine View

By Monica Hennaway

Christian holidays are not the only holidays. So why are they the only holidays taken off the calendar? Yes, Christianity is the most common religion in Florida, but according to statistics from Pew Research Center, 6% of Florida’s population consists of other faiths.

To make a convenient schedule for everyone, it would be best to give more holidays time off, and meet everyone in the middle. There are several ways students can be guided and helped, and it would be useful to have a more specific policy.

Since only Christian holidays are given time off, it can be difficult for students of different religions, who do want to participate in activities regarding their religion, to handle school sometimes. Some leeway is given to Jewish students, because teachers are not allowed to assign homework during some of their holidays, but not all teachers choose to adhere.

For example, one of the more popular Hindu holidays is Diwali. To celebrate, Hindus pray, buy clothes and participate in other festivities, according to National Geographic (celebration differs from region to region).

Students are often discouraged from missing school, even for important holidays. Think of the average workload of a middle schooler, especially in a school like Pine View. Juggling world language homework, math homework, social studies homework, language arts homework, science homework, and sometimes even elective work can be hard. Combine all that homework (including studying), with other tasks students have to do, and celebrating.

Of course, there’s always the problem of having important tests or assignments falling on holidays like midterms or finals. Once teachers have their schedule set in stone, it’s not always ideal to change it. Which is why planning ahead and applying more stress on these holidays is important, and more policies being implemented would be helpful, if the day cannot have time off.

Thus, kids should be allowed to take the test earlier during another class, if not much is going on in that class or at lunch. That would make it easier for students whose holidays aren’t off the schedule, and fairer to them since kids whose holidays align with the schedule wouldn’t have the advantage.