

PINE VIEW SCHOOL'S MISSION: "SHARING OUR GIFTS"



*The Pine View Elementary
Habitat for Humanity Team*

As the principal of Pine View School for more than nineteen years, I am a very fortunate man. During my tenure, I have been able to play a small part in some of the many successes our students, teachers and staff have recognized over the years.

And there is much to celebrate at Pine View School. Our students continue to rank first in the State in all measures of student achievement, the support we receive from parents is amazing, our dedicated faculty is consistently acknowledged for their accomplishments and in a variety of extracurricular arenas, we are proud to defend our championship achievements year after year. All of these "standard" measures of school achievement pale in comparison to our efforts at giving back to our community.

I can cite a long list of projects and initiatives our school has been involved in where we were able to offer some help. These efforts went far beyond simply raising money to donate to a worthy cause - - they involved our students, staff and parents interacting face-to-face with those in need.

After Hurricane Charley, we con-

tacted a school in Arcadia that had been hit particularly hard. Based upon conversations with their staff about their many needs, a year-long partnership was forged. We were able to offer some small assistance as they worked to resume a degree of normalcy in their school lives and sent: backpacks, supplies, books, shoes and computers. We made new friends who touched our lives more than we touched theirs.

I could easily cite numerous additional examples of our students embracing service learning and community service. From sending work gloves to the relief workers in NYC after September 11, to help for the tsunami victims in Indonesia, to assistance for a high school in Mississippi after Katrina, all of these efforts have enriched our lives and made us a better school. I frequently tell students that lending a helping hand is simply the right thing to do. That's what neighbors do. Certainly others would help us if we ever were in need.

Probably the best example of the "Sharing Our Gifts" philosophy was last year's project, "The House that Pine View Built." Students coordinated the collection of more than \$50,000 to

build a house for Habitat for Humanity. We then met every Saturday morning to actually build the three bedroom home for a single mother and her children. It was a life-changing experience for many of us.

We are a school with a strong academic focus. All of our graduates attend college. Our students are awarded millions in scholarship dollars. Even in this context, few would disagree that the most meaningful, most valuable lessons taught are not at school but these outside class, character-building experiences. Long after we forget the causes of the Civil War or the quadratic equation or how to diagram a sentence, we will remember those whose lives we touched.

"To whom much is given, much is expected." In Sarasota and at Pine View, we have been given much. We are all so fortunate to live in a community that offers so much. We have an obligation to give back. We have an obligation to make a positive difference on those around us. We have an obligation to share our gifts. . . **S**

- Steve Largo, Principal Pine View School

