



# Pembroke Pines Charter High School

# My Experience at Charter

By Alexis Alexander  
(C/O 2007)

After I graduated with my undergrad from Florida State University I found myself thinking about my previous experiences and how they shaped the person I had become. It was hard to wrap my mind around the fact that only four years earlier I was sitting in the War Memorial Auditorium graduating from Charter.

Looking back to my freshman year I remember how nervous I was about going to Florida State, I was concerned about classes and how difficult they would be. But to my surprise it was not my course schedule that proved difficult—Ms. Phelps' AP English class was way harder than anything I had taken

thus far. It was more of a culture shock that greeted me at FSU. It was so strange to get used to the fact that I was one of thousands instead of one of three



hundred. The shock eventually wore off thanks to my continual involvement in club sports which made the large campus feel much smaller.

Now I find myself in Grad School for American Politics and Policy advocating for more schools like our

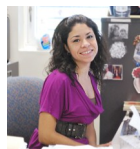
own. While we may have lived in our little bubble with no brawls, bomb threats, or food fights, that is not what is important in the long run. The people that touch our lives are abundant, and I personally know that many of the people that have touched my life are part our growing charter family.

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

-Maya Angelou

If you would like to write an article for the alumni newsletter, please contact Jennifer Diaz at [ppchsalum@pinescharter.com](mailto:ppchsalum@pinescharter.com) or [jdiaz@pinescharter.com](mailto:jdiaz@pinescharter.com)

## Faculty Spotlight



Melissa Santiago has been with PPCHS since 2004. Melissa Santiago is a teacher for the English Department and currently teaches English II and English III Honors. (for more information on Melissa Santiago, see "Biography of an English Teacher" on page 8).

## PPCHS Mission Statement

*The Pembroke Pines Charter Community will provide a challenging educational foundation to prepare students for college success and responsible citizenship.*

# Principal's Note

## Bringing Back the Bell



On September 9, 2011, the bell in the 'A' building tower at PPCHS was heard for the first time since our school's inaugural ribbon cutting ceremony in August of 2000. It rang 10 times, symbolizing the 10 years that had passed since the tragedy of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>. However, the ring of our bell also symbolized a hope for a better tomorrow, just as it did when it rang to open our school doors for the first time 12 years earlier.

But the story does not end here. I am proud to announce that a new tradition has started at PPCHS--

Soon, our PPCHS seniors will begin receiving college acceptance letters. As those that paved the way before them, our seniors have worked hard during their years at PPCHS to prepare for the very best college or university possible.

When they receive their official acceptance letter to the college or university that they have been striving for, their "bell school", they will have earned the right to ring the PPCHS bell.

They will ring it for as many years that they have attended PPCHS and add one more ring for the promise that their future holds. This way, our entire campus know that, when they hear the distant ring from our bell tower, one more PPCHS senior has been accepted to the college or university of their dreams!

Not since the class of 2003 started the tradition of throwing their uniforms in the tree after their last class has a tradition been so innovative, so symbolic, and so very *Charter!*

## JAGUAR PRIDE AWARD



*By Carissa Perry-Smith (Class of 2014)*

process with the Jaguar Pride Committee.

The Jaguar Pride award is an award that honors the achievements of two deserving seniors that went above and beyond in their high school years.

The recipients of the award were announced on Senior Award night. This year, the recipients were (charter starter) Sydney Alexander and Jaclyn Fine.

In almost every school around the country it's tradition for the top two ranking senior class students, the salutatorian and valedictorian, to receive the honor of speaking at graduation. Two years ago, PPCHS came to the decision to replace this recognition and instead give the chance for the honor to not only be given to those who excel academically, but those students who are also well-rounded and involved in school and in their community.

In addition to speak during graduation, the Jaguar Pride Award comes with a monetary scholarship and balcony seats for the recipient's family at graduation.

Students who are eligible to win Jaguar Pride have to be identified as *summa cum laude*. When applying for Jaguar Pride, you have to go through numerous steps. It's required that you fill out an application, write two essays, go through an interview, and have several letters of recommendation. In addition, all students applying must go through an interview



*Jaguar Pride Recipients (from left)  
Sydney Alexander and Jacklyn Fine*

# JAGUAR SPORTS

## Events/Highlights



### Softball Stars and Best Friends Sign to Division IA Schools

*By Bianca Rodriguez (C/O 2012)*

Best friends since the age of ten, Seniors Danielle Heichen and Sara Rotunno accomplished their sought after dream by signing together to each of their favorite Division One schools on April 13, 2011. The duo met at a very early age, when they started playing recreational ball together.

Heichen signed with Appalachian State University in North Carolina and Rotunno will be joining Florida Atlantic University. Both girls look forward to begin their training for softball in the fall.



### Soccer Players Excel on Miami Herald's Honors List

*By Paul Austria (C/O 2012)*

As the Miami Herald released their selections for the top soccer players of Broward County, there was no shortage of Pembroke Pines Charter players on the list. Five boys' soccer players made the 4A-2A first team. Joined by one of the state's best scoring tandems in forwards Alloy Buckle and Dwight Lodge are midfielder Dalton Churchwell, defender Alex Reyes, and one of the

state's best goalies—Marlon Mendez.

In addition, nine of the eleven starters made either the Miami Herald first team, second team, or third team. The other four are senior midfielders Jesus Burga and Dylan Baltar (second team), senior defender Donny Felix (third team), and junior defender Ryan Faulkner (third team).

The girls' team also had some major accomplishments. two players make the Junior midfielder Gabriella Sosa and senior goalie Becca Rogers made the 4A-2A first team for girls' soccer. Sophomore midfielder Devon Vasquez also made the 4A-2A second team, senior defender Ty Rosemelia made third team. Pamela Delgado and Kayla Faulkner received honorable mentions.



### Marc Rojas Receives School's First Championship Ring

*By Troy Bottom (C/O 2014)*

In March, Marc Rojas was given his state championship ring by Principal Peter Bayer. March won his first state championship in swimming.



## Booster Clubs

The Booster Club needs YOU! The Booster Clubs are in need of monetary or "in kind" donations. If interested, please contact the following Booster Club Presidents:

**Debbie Cilli**—Football Booster Club President

dcilli@comcast.net

**Ivonne Diaz**—Basketball Booster Club President

idiaz@mhs.net

## Home Games

All Home Game Schedules are available at our new website: <http://www.pinescharter.net>.

Click on the link "Athletics" to receive the latest schedules and winning streak (s) from our teams!

# IN REVIEW—CLASS OF 2011

## STATE UNIVERSITY BREAKDOWN



Florida State University  
41 Students



Florida International University  
31 Students



University of Florida  
25 Students



Nova Southeastern University  
15 Students



Florida Atlantic University  
21 Students

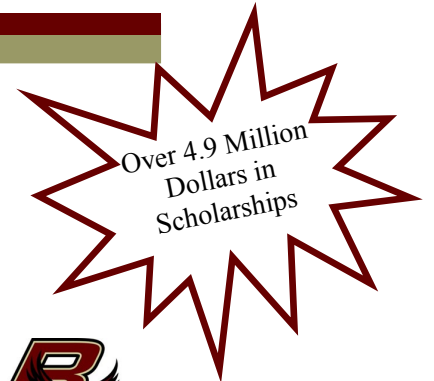


University of South Florida  
11 Students



University of Central Florida  
24 Students

## NOTABLE ADMISSIONS



Over 4.9 Million  
Dollars in  
Scholarships

## Charter Gets Tech Savvy



By Anjali Talwar (Class of 2012)

As students return from summer break, many of them have noticed several changes that have taken place on campus. From new electives to new teachers, it seems as though PPCHS revamps itself every year. One of the most significant changes this year is the wireless system that every building on campus

now has. This means that the Florida International University (FIU) internet that students could use in U-building is no longer needed. Now a student can have access to PPCHS's internet throughout the school just by using their student login and password. Senior David Vallejo enjoys having access to a comfortable wireless network, stating that "it is much easier to have access to my school files with Charter internet."

# POWER-HITTING CATCHER

By Paul Austria (Class of 2012)

a career high 7 homeruns.

Class of 2011 Alumni, baseball player Aramis Garcia is capping his tenure as one of the greatest athletes to ever play for PPCHS.

Garcia took his first step on campus, standing 5 feet 8 inches, four years ago. Much like many young baseball players, he dreamed about one day playing in the major leagues. He now stands at 6 feet 2 inches and is already making a name for himself. The road to get to where he is now was long, but he has definitely made the best of every moment of it. Something varsity baseball head coach Carlos Iglesias has noticed since Garcia started his stint as a member of the varsity team.

Garcia also treats every game, much like the one against West Broward, like



Aramis is currently playing baseball and attending classes at Florida International University (FIU). He has also caught the attention of many MLB baseball teams and scouts.

“FIU has a good baseball program with an experienced coaching staff that allows me to continue to learn and improve my game,” Garcia said. “Plus it wouldn’t hurt to have a degree to fall back on.”

Garcia plans to pursue a degree in sports medicine. No matter where he ends up, Aramis Garcia is a name that will be forever engraved in the legacy of PPCHS athletics.

Aramis hit incredibly well his senior year, achieving a .545 batting average, which sits atop the county leaderboard. Garcia has also shown his power this past season, hammering

his last. “I step onto the field with intensity and focus. I relax because I’m able to trust in my preparation for that game, but I make sure to have fun and enjoy the moment.”



## FOURTEEN ATHLETES EARN FIRST TEAM ALL-COUNTY

By David Nabors (Class of 2012)

The Miami Herald’s final all county first teams have been released, and they include fourteen Pines Charter athletes from six different sports.

The first team for boys’ soccer included five players from our school: forwards Alloy Buckle and Dwight Lodge, who were the most deadly scoring tandem in the county,

midfielder Dalton Churchwell, defender Alex Reyes, and goalkeeper Marlon Mendez.

The softball players who earned first team honors were Dani Heichen, Victoria Gonzalez, Cristina Sacramento, and Natalie Sacramento. Other athletes who earned first team all-county were girls’ soccer players Gabriella Sosa and Becca Rogers, baseball’s Aramis Garcia, water polo’s

Brandon Iglesias, and football’s Jeremy Donaldson, who earned the honor for his season at Hollywood Hills High, before he transferred to Charter.

“I am honored that I was chosen for this award,” said junior Marlon Mendez. “It means a lot to me to represent our school.”

# ALUMNI PROFILE



**Name:** Leslie Roper (Class of 2010)

**Did you attend college after PPCHS?**

Yes. I am currently attending Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. I will be graduating in the Fall of 2014 with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Factors and a minor degree in Safety. I also play for the school's volleyball team.

**What is your fondest memory at PPCHS?**

Fondest memories would have to be—everything about high school! I loved my classes, teachers, and friends. My favorite homecoming week was my freshman year. My sophomore year was exciting because I became the only underclassmen on the varsity volleyball team. I made national team my junior year. Senior year was the most memorable because I met Olympic gold-medalist Misty May-Trainer, Phil Dollhouser, and Todd Rodgers.



## OUTDOOR CLASSROOM A FRESH OF BREATH AIR



*By Troy Bottom (Class of 2014)*

mood.

No more boring lectures in an enclosed air conditioned room filled with gloomy faces and depressed faces. Instead, learning has been brought to life with the new outdoor classroom. To replace the boredom of a classroom, the outdoor classroom features something great: life. Trees, animals, and exotic flowers really seem to lighten the

The screen-covered outdoor classroom features natural form fitting rocks for seats, a recycled bench donated by the class of 2010, and a podium made by recycled wood.

"It's also cheerful to see a lot of interaction between the students and the classroom, with many classes

designing poems and projects around it," says English teacher Mrs. Yanez. "It would be pretty difficult to write about nature indoors," Yanez said. "I believe with so many different sights and sounds, students seem to work more productively."



# Biography of an English Teacher

By Danielle Solomon (Class of 2012)

Imagine that it's freshman year of high school and the English teacher gives an assignment on the novel the class is reading. After assigning a chapter per student, the teacher explains that each student must go up to the board and teach the class their chapter. At just fourteen years old, Melissa Santiago was in this very predicament, terrified. However on the day of her teaching one of the chapters of *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck arrived, Mrs. Santiago simply went up to the board and wrote "Mother equals Earth." This small realization of one of the novels' main symbols had her ninth grade English teacher near tears. At that moment, Melissa Santiago decided she wanted to be an English teacher.

"I feel like Ms. Santiago is the perfect English teacher; the teacher who enjoys the material and even shows

us her assignments that she did while she was in school," said junior Shannon Card. "It makes me appreciate her that much more that she understands the work she has us completing."

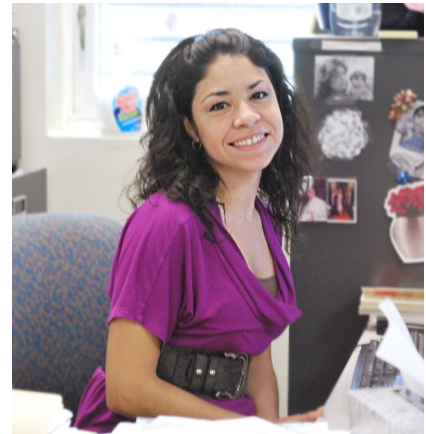
Ever since she was young, Santiago loved to read. When she was only 5 years old she wrote her very first poem which her aunt kept framed in her house.

Mrs. Santiago graduated with her Bachelor's Degree in English Education at Florida International University (FIU). "I had such a great time at FIU and it was mostly because of their English department," says Santiago "I took several classes with this one teacher that I really just connected with. She was a genius and I wanted to be just like her!"

At just 22 years old, Melissa Santiago started her career as a ninth grade

English teacher. Currently, she is teaching tenth grade English courses.

After years of teaching, Ms. Santiago has not only been a successful teacher but has published two short works of her own in *Everyday Grace*, *Everyday Miracle* by Lorna Owens and *Chicken Soup for the Latino Soul*.



**You're Invited!**  
**HOMECOMING GAME**

**Football vs. Stranahan**  
**Thursday, October 27**

**7:00PM at Flanagan Stadium**

For more information, contact Jennifer Diaz at  
ppchsalum@pinescharter.com OR jdiaz@pinescharter.com

**PEMBROKE PINES  
CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL**

17189 SHERIDAN STREET  
PEMBROKE PINES, FL  
33331

***Home of the Jags!***

**We're on Facebook & Twitter!**

**Name: JAGUAR PRIDE**