

FACULTY AND STAFF BIOGRAPHIES 2011-12

Mimi Minnick, Preschool 3 Teacher

This is Ms. Minnick's 3rd year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Steve Houk; children – Alex, 18; Kate, 16; Ben, 15; and Kelly, 9 (Pinecrest student)

Education: B.A., George Washington University; M.A./M.L.S., University of Maryland-College Park; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: children's librarian, Fairfax County Public Libraries; preschool teacher, Sleepy Hollow Preschool; archivist, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; children's swimming instructor, YMCA; preschool – grade 6 library teacher, Pinecrest School; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion

Hobbies: swimming, reading, writing, walking in the woods, loving my family, and spending time with my friends

Core Values: diversity, tolerance, compassion, kindness, and service to community



Lori Cullen, Preschool 3/4 Teacher

This is Mrs. Cullen's 1st year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Andrew; children – Owen, 10, and Liam, 6

Education: B.S., Cornell University; annual professional development classes/in-services through previous preschools and other organizations

Experiences: preschool teacher, Sleepy Hollow Preschool, Rock Spring Cooperative Preschool, and Just Us Kids Child Development Center

Hobbies: collecting children's books, rubber stamping cards and gifts, spending time with family

Core Values: honesty, integrity, and curiosity



Sophie Ferrier, Preschool 4 Teacher

This is Mrs. Ferrier's 13th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Bernard; son – Xavier, 17 (former Pinecrest student, now a college freshman at Virginia Tech!)

Education: B.S., University of Montreal; M.S., University of Montreal; Early Childhood/Elementary Education classes, Northern Virginia Community College and University of Virginia; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: teaching undergraduate microbiology labs; faculty trustee, Pinecrest School Board of Trustees; preschool, kindergarten, and fourth grade assistant teacher and substitute teacher, Pinecrest School; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion

Hobbies: reading, photography, traveling

Core Values: respect for others, being open-minded, flexibility, family-oriented



Marianne Narcisso, Preschool 4 Assistant

This is Mrs. Narcisso's 9th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – James; children – Tony, 18, and Jessica, 17

Education: annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: assistant kindergarten teacher, Washington International School and St. Anthony's Catholic School, D.C. area; ski instructor, France

Hobbies: skiing, tennis, swimming, walking, puzzles, dolphins, traveling

Core Values: honesty, caring, loving children



Heather Vogus, Kindergarten Teacher

This is Mrs. Vogus's 4th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Don; children – Allie, 15; Matthew, 13; and Anna, 11

Education: B.A., Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania; Universite de Strasbourg, France; M.A., George Washington University; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: seminar business manager, energy and transportation firm; project manager and analyst, energy firm; owner, at-home daycare center; teacher's aide and pre-kindergarten teacher, St. John's Center For Early Childhood Education; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion

Hobbies: running, reading, cooking, kayaking, cheering for my kids at their activities

Core Values: compassion towards all people (and animals), dedication, strength of mind and body, creativity, working hard



Jeanie Tibbetts, Grade 1 Teacher

This is Mrs. Tibbetts's 2nd year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse - Carl; children – Andrew, 30 and Wesley, 25

Education: B.A., Principia College, Illinois; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: 20 years as a teacher and assistant teacher (third and sixth grade and reading) at Principia School, St. Louis, Missouri; kindergarten teacher and third grade teacher at Pierremont Elementary, Chesterfield, Missouri

Hobbies: reading, taking long walks with my dog, biking, traveling to see family

Core Values: looking for the good in others, respecting different opinions, handling things that are tough with grace, humility and humor



Kathleen Muhlhauser, Grade 2 Teacher

This is Mrs. Muhlhauser’s 2nd year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Matt

Education: M.A.T., Seattle Pacific University, Seattle; B.A., University of Portland, Oregon; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: kindergarten teacher at small private school in Massachusetts; first/second grade teacher in Seattle; taught in California and Oregon; culinary school student at Le Cordon Bleu in London, England

Hobbies: cooking, kayaking, hiking, exploring new places, reading

Core Values: integrity, respect for self and others, honesty



Janet Bleggi, Grade 3 Teacher and Faculty Trustee

This is Ms. Bleggi’s 7th year at Pinecrest School!

Education: B.S., Edinboro University, Pennsylvania; graduate coursework, George Mason University and University of Virginia; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: thirty-year elementary school teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools; second/third grade teacher, Pinecrest School; faculty trustee, Pinecrest School Board of Trustees

Hobbies: reading, swimming, walking

Core Values: truth, honesty, and a sense of humor



Genie O’Hara, Grade 4 Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator

This is Ms. O’Hara’s 8th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: children – Anna, 14; Lily, 12; and Ryan, 10

Education: B.S., James Madison University; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: first grade teacher, Manassas City Public Schools; third grade teacher, Falls Church City Public Schools; dance and creative movement teacher; artistic director, dance program, Falls Church City; private tutor; physical education/creative movement teacher and sixth grade teacher, Pinecrest School; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion; founder and dance teacher, Every Body Dance

Hobbies: dance, piano, hiking, playing with her children, singing, reading

Core Values: a respect for individuality and the creative spirit; striving to think outside the box; being a nurturing and positive friend, parent and teacher; challenging myself and others to think deeply and to seek to make a difference, supporting others in their dreams and ambitions



Cindy Mitlo, Grade 5/6 Teacher

This is Ms. Mitlo's 3rd year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Steve Shartel; children – Rowan, 16, and Conrad, 13

Education: B.A., Pennsylvania State University; coursework, University of Virginia; graduate coursework, George Mason University; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: teacher, Valley Drive Preschool; kindergarten assistant teacher, Oak View Elementary School; freelance writer; catalog consultant; editor and catalog marketing manager, Co-op America; catalog manager, American Society of Landscape Architects; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion; K-Kids Advisor, Pinecrest School

Hobbies: sewing, knitting, paper arts, canoeing and kayaking, hiking, thinking about gardening

Core Values: nurturing family, living consciously and creatively, learning something everyday, inspiring others to learn, respecting the environment



John Gallagher, Art Teacher

This is Mr. Gallagher's 1st year at Pinecrest School (as a staff member, but 2nd as a parent)!

Family: spouse – Beth; children – Katie, 9; Jack, 7; Will, 3 (Katie & Jack are Pinecrest students)

Education: B.A., Pennsylvania State University; Tyler School of Art at Temple University

Experiences: graphic designer, animator, director of multimedia design at several local companies over the past 15 years; founder, Sky-Dog Enterprises; creator/writer/artist, "Buzzboy" comic series; assembly speaker & teacher, local schools & public libraries; soccer & basketball coach for his children's teams; Odyssey of the Mind instructor, FCPS; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion; after-school activities teacher, Pinecrest School

Hobbies: comics History, classic movies and TV shows

Core Values: "WE are the music makers, and WE are the dreamers of dreams." -- Willy Wonka



Jayne Cantor, Computer Teacher

This is Mrs. Cantor's 7th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Jerry; children – Elyssa, 36, and Tiffany, 33; grandchildren – Austin, 16, and Liam, 3

Education: B.A., Queens College, New York; graduate coursework, University of Virginia; professional development and training, ComputerTots/Computer Explorers; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: first grade teacher, Alexandria City Public Schools; fourth-sixth grade special education teacher, FCPS; children/adult yoga teacher, Dahn Yoga; preschool-sixth grade and adult computer lab instructor, ComputerTots/Computer Explorers; preschool and kindergarten computer teacher Northern Virginia Academy of Early Learning; first-third grade computer teacher, Brookfield School, McLean; preschool & kindergarten computer teacher, The Springs Montessori School, Springfield; software, curriculum and computer support, First Baptist Church of Clarendon Child Care Center; K-Kids Advisor, Pinecrest School

Hobbies: hiking, bird watching, nature, yoga, karate, painting, dancing, reading, cooking, computers, art

Core Values: show love and respect for yourself, others, nature and our world (go green); be sincere and honest; do your best; have a passion to learn new things; think creatively, laugh and enjoy life; create a world filled with peace, joy and smiles!



Jacqua Yeomans, Music Teacher

This is Mrs. Yeomans’s 10th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Bill; children – Sam, 26, and Gina, 23

Education: B.A., Catholic University of America; annual professional development classes/in-services through Pinecrest School and other organizations

Experiences: thirty years independent piano instructor; five years church accompanist, Cherrydale UMC; private piano instructor and accompanist, The Madeira School and The Potomac School; choir member Clarendon UMC, Cathedral Choral Society, and Voce Della Donna Womens Ensemble; member of Northern Virginia Music Teachers Association and Music Teachers National Association.

Hobbies: swimming, sailing, attending baseball games, travel, going to the beach with my family, playing piano, singing, playing with my dogs (Elle and Lou)

Core Values: being true to one’s word, setting high standards and living up to them, endurance, patience, kindness



Larissa Giacoman, Spanish Teacher

This is Mrs. Giacoman’s 1st year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Rodolfo; child – Ulises, 17

Education: B.A., San Francisco State University; M.B.A., Keller Graduate School of Management of DeVry University

Experiences: research assistant, Mexico Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Latin American Program at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; assistant editor, Library of Congress-Hispanic Division; teacher and founder, KidSpanish

Hobbies: bikram yoga, dancing, reading, and traveling

Core Values: enjoying the moment, being sincere, and doing my very best at everything I do



Ricardo Cunningham, Physical Education Teacher

This is Mr. Cunningham’s 1st year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Staysha; child – Gabrielle, 8 months

Education: A.S., Southwestern Christian College in Texas; B.S., George Mason University

Experiences: preschool – high school physical education teacher, local private school; physical education teacher, local homeschooling community group; special education physical education teacher, Krieger School; field day program organizer and facilitator, Sidwell Friends School and other local schools; founder and one-on-one teacher for physical education, therapeutic exercise, and personal training at Life Changing Fitness

Hobbies: track, table tennis, long tennis, basketball, spending time with my family

Core Values: honesty, respect, integrity, leadership, and helping those in need



Samantha Fleming, Administrative Assistant

This is Mrs. Fleming's 2nd year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Josh; stepchild – Emma, 7

Education: B.A., George Mason University

Experiences: eight years of horseback riding instruction, Stoneleigh-Burnham School, Greenfield, Massachusetts; marketing and advertising work, George Mason University Women's Center and Stoneleigh-Burnham School; event planning, George Mason University Women's Center and Stoneleigh-Burnham School; magazine contributor, Equine Journal and Horseman's Yankee Pedlar; five years as a gymnastics instructor, Y.M.C.A., Greenfield, Massachusetts; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion



Hobbies: horseback riding, reading, traveling, cheering on Emma's soccer games

Core Values: leaving a positive mark on the community, adding value to other's lives, remaining a life-long learner, being well-rounded and well informed, taking initiative, celebrating family and friends

Karen Tamayo, Business Manager & Admissions Officer

This is Ms. Tamayo's 5th year at Pinecrest School (as a staff member, but 11th including as a parent)!

Family: spouse – Ben Purser; children – Hannah, 16, and Maddie, 11 (former Pinecrest students)

Education: B.S., Georgetown University, Washington D.C.

Experiences: twenty years as a pediatric nurse and health educator; Child Care Health Consultant; parent trustee and secretary, Pinecrest School Board of Trustees; teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion



Hobbies: reading, hiking, spending time with my family and friends, attending my kids' sporting events

Core Values: tolerance, compassion, generosity, family, friendship, keeping a positive perspective on life and teaching by example

Beth Hartzler, Summer Camp Director

This is Mrs. Hartzler's 6th year at Pinecrest School!

Family: spouse – Shane; children – Jacob, 14; Emma, 11; and Rachel, 9

Education: M.T. and B.A., University of Virginia–Charlottesville; professional development in-service training with Pinecrest School

Experiences: first grade teacher, Henrico County Public Schools; second grade teacher, Falls Church City Public Schools; private tutor; teacher, home-based kindergarten enrichment program for half-day kindergarteners; substitute teacher, Pinecrest School; camp director and teacher, Pinecrest Summer Pavilion



Hobbies: reading, shopping, spending time with my friends and family

Core Values: faith, family, friends, making a difference by helping where I can, doing my best at what I set out to do

Nicole McDermott, Head of School

This is Ms. McDermott's 8th year at Pinecrest School!

I've lived in Northern Virginia since July 2002, first in Falls Church, and, since 2007, in Annandale. I moved to this area with my best friend for the enrichment and opportunity of a new place. It was important to me to try something new as I grew up and went to college all in New England. My hometown, West Bridgewater, is a small town about forty minutes south of Boston. Most of my family and many close friends are in or near Massachusetts, and I visit them once or twice a year. I have two 'nieces' (ages 8 and 6) who just moved to Wisconsin (a new place to visit!) and twin godsons (age 3) who live nearby, and I love being their Auntie Nicki.



In May 2001, I graduated magna cum laude from Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island, with a B.S. degree. I majored in elementary education and minored in English/journalism. Including my college student teaching at The Pennfield School in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, all of my professional teaching experience has been in quality independent or private schools.

I taught kindergarten in Massachusetts before relocating, and once here in Northern Virginia, I worked for two years at the former Fairfax Brewster School in Bailey's Crossroads, teaching second grade and then serving as Assistant Head of School. I came to Pinecrest for the 2004-05 school year as the third grade teacher. That third grade class (Pinecrest's Class of 2007) was such a dynamic group of children and parents; their warm embrace made me sure that I chose well with Pinecrest. Pinecrest School appealed to me with its intimate atmosphere, focus on individualized attention and positive school community, and it's why I am still here (and then some!). In June 2005, I was honored to become Pinecrest's sixth Head of School, and I am proud of the many ways we have grown and changed our school community over the past six years. Additionally, I have continued to teach in some capacity each year while serving as Head of School – third grade literature circle, K-6 library, Election Connection and Kids for a Cause at Pinecrest Summer Pavilion, and teaching fourth grade and sixth grade (our first-ever – Pinecrest's Class of 2009) with Ms. O'Hara. This year, I will continue reading to the preschoolers weekly at their library classes and working with Mrs. Cantor and Ms. Mitlo to advise our K-Kids Club, a student-led community-service organization sponsored by Kiwanis. I would miss the classroom terribly if I did not have these opportunities.

In high school, I began my affiliation with Kiwanis International – “a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time.” It is the parent organization of many youth organizations, including Key Club (in high schools) and Circle K (in colleges). I enjoyed a combined eight years of membership in both organizations, serving my communities and leading in various roles. After college, I joined Kiwanis and am currently a member of the Kiwanis Club of Tysons Corner/McLean. I also serve on the adult committee responsible for working with and guiding high school student leaders in the Capital District of Key Club International. This means I get to know, work with, and mentor students from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. Additionally, I provide support and direction for Key Club advisors (teachers) from local high schools and Kiwanis Clubs. I also manage our area's annual values-centered, leadership development weekends for high school students called Kiwanis Key Leader. My Kiwanis Family commitments take up a lot of my personal time, but I love giving back to an organization that has given so much to me, and I very much enjoy working with young leaders – it is inspiring and rewarding on so many levels. Bringing K-Kids to Pinecrest in the 2010-11 school year was the icing on the cake of my Kiwanis Family experience! Some of my other hobbies include reading, relaxing, baking, traveling, staying connected with the people I love, supporting causes that are important to me, and enjoying time with friends and family.

At the top of the list of my own core values are quality, community, connection, giving my best at all times, doing the right thing, making a difference, and caring for our earth. I love children (of all ages!) and greatly enjoy what I do. For me, teaching is a vocation and way of life more than it is my occupation.