



## PINE CAY PROJECT ASSISTS STUDENTS IN REMOTE LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, AS IT MOURNS THE DEATH OF FOUNDER JEAN WEIS

The trustees of Pine Cay Project mourn the passing of Jean M. Weis, who died on September 29, 2020, at her home in Lima, Ohio. In collaboration with other Pine Cay residents, Jean founded Pine Cay Project in 1990; see <https://pinecayproject.org> for more detail on the organization. Along with others, she intended that this new charitable organization would provide needed resources to students, schools, and other youth-serving organizations for the purpose of improving educational opportunities for all students in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Over 20 years, Ms. Weis (fondly known to many as Mother Weis) led Pine Cay Project as it provided financial and technical support to every public school in the TCI and to most of the country's private schools and youth-serving organizations. Begun by Ms. Weis 30 years ago, this remarkable effort continues today.

As has been the case elsewhere around the world, COVID-19 has interrupted schooling for every student in the TCI. In March 2020, public and private schools were closed by government edict to prevent COVID-19 infection and spread. In place of regular instruction, schools hurriedly shifted to online teaching. However, because many TCI students lack access to computers and broadband internet and because many other families share a single computer among several siblings, large numbers of TCI students became unable to reliably communicate with their teachers, participate in instruction, and complete assignments.

Over the summer of 2020, TCI education leaders and front-line educators developed plans for the September roll-out of improved approaches to online learning,

including plans for (1) training teachers to deliver effective, engaging online instruction, (2) sharing specialized curricula adapted to online teaching, and (3) delivering donated computers and internet “hot spots” to students’ families and communities where needed. Unfortunately, budget constraints have limited the comprehensive implementation of these plans.

In this pandemic-dominated environment, few schools and other organizations were able to prepare applications for Pine Cay Project grants, and only two organizations applied for and received grants in the fiscal year ended September 30, 2020. The experiences of these two grantees illustrate both the challenges of the current crisis and the innovative solutions that TCI educators are employing to meet students’ learning needs.

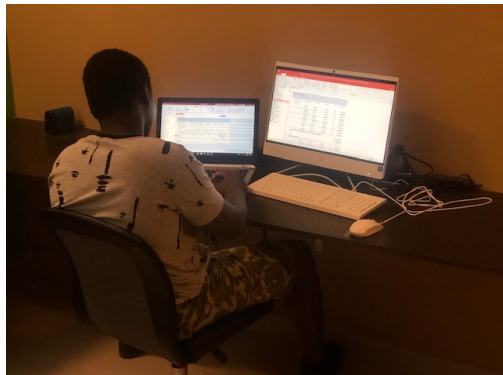
## THE MATH LAB

The Math Lab is a charitable organization in Providenciales founded by CEO Lekensay Missick for the purpose of assisting students with their schoolwork and skill development in academic subjects during the after-school hours, focusing in particular on math and science. Two grants from Pine Cay Project in 2020 supported the Math Lab’s purchase of computer equipment, which was originally intended for use in tutoring students who needed academic help to succeed in their regular academic programs. With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, however, the computers and internet access are now being used by students to participate in remote instruction and to complete homework assignments, while complying with rules on social distancing, mask-wearing, and hand-washing. The Math Lab’s facility, equipment, and personnel have permitted these students to keep abreast of their coursework and also to prepare for key national gatekeeping exams.

Math Lab students range in age from 7 to 34 and include students enrolled in primary and secondary schools and also in college and other postsecondary training programs. In addition to tutoring and remote learning, students at the Math Lab also participate in presentations and demonstrations in areas of possible career interest, including civil engineering, mechanical engineering, quantity surveying, construction engineering, artificial intelligence, network engineering, and website design. Feedback

from parents, teachers, and students suggests that students' work and interactions in the Math Lab have helped them succeed in school, while also motivating them to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.

Looking to the future, Mr. Missick wants the Math Lab to add more STEM programs, launch student clubs focused on math and science, organize student tournaments in STEM fields, and increase the number of students it can serve.



## JUNIOR PARK WARDEN PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND COASTAL RESOURCES

For 20 years, Pine Cay Project has supported DECR's Junior Park Warden program, for the purpose of teaching students about their natural environment and its close connections to the well-being of our social and economic environments, on both a local and global scale. Over these 20 years, the Junior Park Warden summer program has educated hundreds of TCI students on the characteristics of these essential connections and on ways that they can foster and preserve a healthy natural environment, on which the TCI's social and economic environment depends. Many former program participants have later engaged in advanced study of environmental issues, careers in environmental fields, and volunteer activism on behalf of environmental protection.

Such a program was planned for the summer of 2020, with appropriate programmatic and logistical adjustments made to protect students and staff from exposure to the coronavirus. Adjustments included, for example, shifting all program

activities outdoors (thus canceling indoor classroom instruction) and eliminating snorkeling activities (to prevent the sharing of snorkeling masks). With these changes, the program was successfully implemented for the first four days. Unfortunately, sudden new government requirements issued on the program's fifth day effectively shut the program down, due to new limits on all beach gatherings to no more than four people and the banning of all watersports. Because these restrictions extended through the summer, it was not possible to reinstate the program later. Although students and staff regretted the unexpected cancellation of the program, DECR and Pine Cay Project look forward to continuing the Junior Park Warden program in summer 2021 or as soon as government restrictions allow and it is safe to do so. Despite the abrupt cancellation, however, program participants enjoyed the short program and considered it a high point of their summer. Unused funds from Pine Cay Project will be carried over to support the Junior Park Warden program in summer 2021.



## LOOKING AHEAD

In the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, Pine Cay Project grants totaled \$21,682, a lower level than usual due to severe interruptions in educational operations in the islands' schools. Donations to Pine Cay Project during the period totaled \$80,068. Except for year-end accounting and the filing of required state and federal reports, all goods and labor used in the administration of Pine Cay Project were donated by trustees and other volunteers.

Drawing on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and also on the intent of the TCI educational community to increase the use of digital learning in regular classroom instruction post-COVID, Pine Cay Project's board of trustees is currently exploring possible new initiatives to support improvements in students' access to and engagement in online learning.

Pine Cay Project would like to thank Liz Pickman for her invaluable years of service and leadership to the charity. Liz has retired from the board after she and Jim sold their Pine Cay home. Liz has worked tirelessly and been an important member of the board. Liz's understanding and background in education has brought a level of unmatched discernment and empathy towards the issues that the young people of the TCI encounter. Her guidance ensured that the funds raised by PC Project were expertly deployed. Her wise council will certainly be missed. David Bowen (Education Officer, TCI Private Schools) has kindly agreed to take over Liz's role as Pine Cay Project Secretary.

We want to thank our very generous donors for their continuing support. We could not do our work without you. Your gifts are making a significant impact on the educational opportunities and achievement of students in the TCI, especially in these hard times. Your aid is invaluable, and we sincerely thank you.

PLEASE MAIL YOUR DONATION TO:

PINE CAY PROJECT

P.O. BOX 437

CHICAGO, IL 60611

OR GO TO [HTTPS://PINECAYPROJECT.ORG/DONATE-NOW/](https://pinecayproject.org/donate-now/)

TO MAKE A SECURE DONATION ONLINE.

THANK YOU!

TRUSTEES OF PINE CAY PROJECT, FY 2020

MAGGIE BACZKOWSKI, DAVID BOWEN, MARIE YVONNE LANDEL, CARLTON MILLS,  
ELIZABETH PICKMAN, JOANNA PRENTICE, AND JAY SAUNDERS

NOVEMBER 2020