

# Pinecrest

ONE OF MIAMI'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

APRIL 8 - 21, 2013

## Young Palmer Trinity student writes and illustrates three books

BY CRISTY CANALES

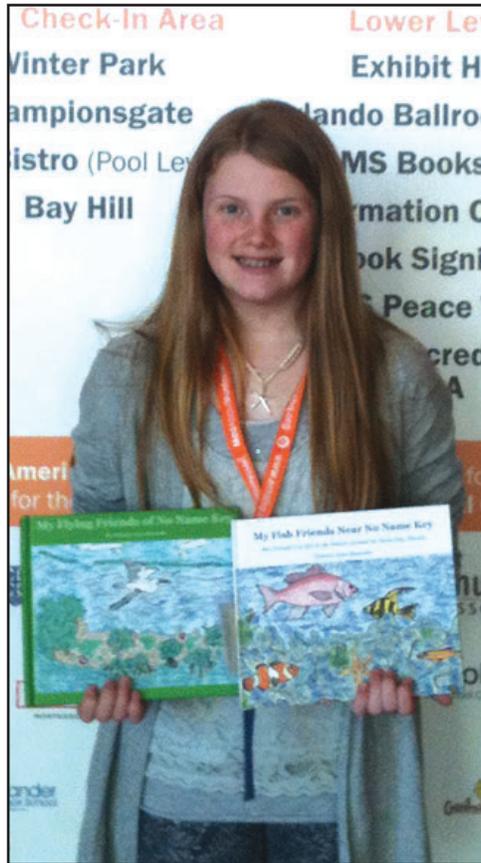
Many people dream about writing or illustrating and publishing a book in their life time, but few accomplish that goal. To see a child write and illustrate a book is quite an accomplishment, but that's exactly what Pinecrest resident Delaney Reynolds has achieved at a very early age.

Reynolds, a graduate of Alexander Montessori School and an eighth grade Palmer Trinity Middle School student, was inspired to write her book by her third grade teacher Melanie Carlson. In the weeks before school ended, she and her classmates each wrote and illustrated a chapter about the universe in a book the teacher published online and the class gave to each parent as a year-end gift.

As her parents drove her home from school, Reynolds said she wanted to write and illustrate her own book. Her parents, still a bit shocked over the lovely book she and her classmates had presented them at school, wondered how a child would go about actually publishing a book. But they promised support as long as she agreed to do all of the research, as well as write and illustrate it.

When her parents asked what she wanted to write about, she said it would focus on animals and the environment on No Name Key, a rural natural island in the lower Florida Keys where her family owned a home. Thus began her young career as an author and illustrator which led to her first published book *My Animal Friends on No Name Key*, which was completed in 2009 when she was nine.

Reynolds gave a copy of her book to her teachers and the school's founder, Beverley McGhee, as well as one to head of school James McGhee for the school library as a way to say thank you for having inspired her. McGhee surprised the family by suggesting that they ask the



Delaney Reynolds

local county library to add a copy. When the library was contacted, first in Monroe County where No Name is located, and then Miami-Dade, the librarians were eager to add a book by a child author/illustrator.

Today, Reynolds' first and second book *My Fish Friends Near No Name Key* can be found online at <blurb.com> as well as on local library shelves.

In 2011 McGhee approached the family and asked if the young author would consider speaking before the Florida Montessori annual conference later that year in Miami about her experience writing, illustrating and publishing her books.

In October she became the first child to

ever speak at the conference, giving a 30-minute Power Point presentation to the educators about what inspired her to write her first two books, as well as share how she went about publishing them. "My favorite part of that presentation was visiting a school early the next year in Key West after its owner saw me speak and asked me to talk to their students about my books," Reynolds said. "The letters that the children mailed me are some of my most treasured possessions, and to read that they were inspired by me and want to write their own books is amazing. Their response, as well as seeing the books in the library for other children to share and enjoy, makes all of the hard work worthwhile."

Following the response to the speech, Reynolds again was asked to speak about her books, this time at the 2013 American Montessori Society National Conference in Orlando. In March at a gathering of 3,000 educators from across the U.S., Reynolds again became the first child to ever give such a presentation at the society's annual convention. She used the occasion to introduce her third book in the series, *My Flying Friends of No Name Key*, a project that she finished just a week before the conference.

"I was inspired by my teachers and that inspiration continues; each book has become a bit more sophisticated and scientific" said Reynolds. "In addition to sharing stories and information about the animals, I've included information about ecology, solar power, pollution and other interesting places near No Name Key."

Reynolds hopes to attend the University of Miami to pursue a degree in Marine Biology. Until then she follows her dreams at Palmer Trinity as part of the extensive sustainability programs such as the solar charging station, the Coral Lab and a shark-tagging trip off Islamorada.