

CORNERSTONE CONNECTION

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FALLING INTO FUN

From an apple celebration to a pumpkin farm visit, Cornerstone has Fall covered.



CEREAL-OUSLY AMAZING

Cornerstone families donate a record-breaking amount of cereal boxes for the Second Annual Tribes Cereal Box Domino Challenge.



Athletics Update

Student Athletes shine during Cornerstone's Fall sports seasons.



Roller Coaster Ride

Fifth Graders engineered and tested mini roller coasters during STEM.



CEREAL-OUSLY AMAZING

Cornerstone families came together to give back, turning over 1,900 donated cereal boxes into a dazzling domino display complete with student-built robots—all benefiting the Interfaith Food Pantry.



Last year, students and families donated over 1,400 boxes of cereal for the inaugural Tribes Cereal Box Domino Challenge. After the boxes were lined up around campus and toppled in an impressive domino chain, the question immediately arose: could this feat be repeated and even surpassed? Student Life Coordinator Dan Peterson was determined to find out.

This Fall, during the last two weeks of September, the Cornerstone community eagerly collected cereal boxes with the hopes of shattering their 2024 record. After each box was counted, more than 1,900 cereal boxes were donated!

On a rainy September morning, the boxes were carefully arranged one by one across campus, forming a massive domino chain, ready to tumble in spectacular fashion. This year's challenge

also showcased the creativity and engineering skills of our Eighth Grade STEM students, who built a series of robots to bring the domino chain to life. One robot launched a ball to knock over the first box, while two other robots helped keep the chain going around Cornerstone's corners. The falling dominoes culminated in a winding circle on the front porch and a surge of cheers.

After the last box fell, students and staff loaded them all onto a truck destined for the Interfaith Food Pantry. "The challenge was a wonderful celebration of creativity, collaboration, and community service," said Peterson. "Our students gained additional experience with engineering and problem-solving, families contributed to a meaningful cause, and the entire Cornerstone community came together to create a memorable morning."

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?



Cornerstone's First Graders put on their scientist hats for a recent STEM activity inspired by the book *Ada Twist, Scientist* by Andrea Beaty. Students designed their very own "Smell-a-nator 4000" out of cardboard tubes and foil to assist them in an important scientific investigation: identify different mystery smells curated by their Teacher Cassandra Gibson.

The covered cups were filled with familiar scents like popcorn, oranges, and soap. Each student brought their

"Smell-a-nator" to the table, carefully sniffed the cups, and recorded their observations. The activity encouraged curiosity, critical thinking, and teamwork as students explored the science behind their sense of smell.

"Some students were so nervous, not knowing what I would have put in the containers," said Gibson. "Others were excited when they thought they had figured it out. There were lots of giggles and even a few 'I knew it' declarations."

WALKING RAINBOWS

Second Graders explored the fascinating science of plants through a colorful experiment demonstrating capillary action. Using simple materials like water, food coloring, and paper towels, students created a "walking rainbow" that visually showed how water can defy gravity, adhering to surfaces as it moves, just like it does in real plants.

Students observed firsthand how water travels from one container to another, mimicking the flow through roots, stems, and leaves. They experimented with how the colored water moved and blended, predicting and observing the patterns that formed when different colors met in the middle.



At the end of the experiment, and to their delight, students had created a vibrant, flowing rainbow. "Most students have never seen capillary action happen before their eyes," said Teacher Kassie Timpner. "They were surprised that it actually worked!"

6TH GRADE AFO SIGHTINGS



Cornerstone's Sixth Grade STEM classes recently created their own ankle-foot orthoses (AFOs) during their Project Lead the Way Foot Orthosis project. Working in teams, students designed prototypes of AFOs to assist individuals with cerebral palsy. Using provided criteria and materials like cardboard, foam, and Velcro, they built devices meant to provide foot and ankle support and prevent toe-walking, all while remaining comfortable, durable, and removable for the wearer.

Through the project, students tested and retested their prototypes making alterations as needed along the way. Each group then presented their finished design to the class, demonstrated its features and function, and answered questions about their invention.



FALLING INTO FUN

Fall in Florida may look different from other parts of the country, no changing leaves and mostly warm days, but at The Cornerstone School, the season is still full of festive activities. From the annual First Grade Pumpkin Drop and Middle School Costume Dance to Dress Up Day and the Kindergarten Apple Celebration, Fall is celebrated across campus in fun and creative ways that engage students of all ages.



Preschool and Junior Kindergarten visited Amber Brooke Farms in Eustis and learned how pumpkins grow, different uses for pumpkins, planted a sunflower, made some new animal friends, and went on a hayride around the farm.



Junior Kindergarten students turned into pumpkin investigators, exploring the inside and outside of a pumpkin using all five of their senses.



First Grade students built miniature catapults using spoons, Popsicle sticks, and tape, then tested their designs during a fall-themed parent event. Testing stations included a plastic cup tower and pumpkin-shaped targets, allowing students to explore and measure force and forward motion.



After reading "Ten Apples Up On Top!" by Dr. Seuss, Kindergarten students built apple towers with toothpicks, play-dough, and whole apples to explore balance and gravity. They also enjoyed an apple-tasting activity, sampling red, green, and yellow apples, and then voted for their favorite.



The Middle School Fall Costume Dance is an opportunity for our older students to take part in some seasonal fun. Students dressed as Disney Princesses, Star Wars heroes and villains, video game avatars and even characters from popular films while dancing the night away.



Second Graders have been learning about rural, suburban, and urban areas as part of their communities unit. In PE, Coach Mike brought their lessons to life with stations where students roped a "horse," practiced batting in t-ball, and honed their kicking and catching skills with kickball.

PUMPKIN JACK'S DEMISE



In October, students in Ms. Jamie's Junior Kindergarten class enjoyed a seasonal science experiment inspired by the book *Pumpkin Jack* by Will Hubbell. After reading the story, which follows the lifecycle of a pumpkin from carving to decay and new growth, students took the lesson off the page and into their classroom.

The class carved a small pumpkin and placed it in a glass container in a designated viewing area, where they can observe its gradual decomposition while learning about concepts like nutrient cycles and plant growth. Over time, their "Pumpkin Jack" will break down into rich soil and, with a little luck, sprout new pumpkin plants by spring.

"The children are so excited to come into the classroom each morning to see how Pumpkin Jack is changing," said Teacher Jamie Brown. "They think it's gross when he starts to decompose, and it's so much fun listening to their conversations and predictions about what he will look like next!"

We will continue to follow Pumpkin Jack's story this school year. Stay tuned to the next issue of *Cornerstone Connection* for a Pumpkin Jack update!

HEXAGONAL THINKING



This semester, Eighth Graders have been studying the lasting impact of European Exploration of the Americas in American History. To bring their learning together, students worked in groups to create hexagonal thinking maps, connecting key people, places, events, and ideas such as Hernán Cortés, the Columbian Exchange, and the Triangular Trade. Each connection showed how exploration reshaped societies, economies, and environments in the Americas. This activity helped students think critically, collaborate, and make meaningful connections across multiple sources of evidence.



DIGGING IN

Cornerstone students got their hands dirty and grew their gardening knowledge during this Fall's FANS planting day in September. Volunteers from FANS and the UF IFAS Extension Florida Master Gardeners joined students to help plant a vibrant mix of flowers, herbs, and vegetables, including snack peppers, cucumbers, dill, and sunflowers in our raised beds.

Students worked side by side with the volunteers and their classmates,

learning about pollination, different planting techniques, and the basics of gardening. From carefully planting seedlings to watering the new additions, the students showed curiosity, teamwork, and enthusiasm throughout the day.

"The garden project not only teaches students about horticulture and healthy eating, but it also encourages an appreciation for nature," said Teacher Assistant Cindy Shawley.



ATHLETICS UPDATE

The fall sports season at The Cornerstone School showcased many exciting moments across all our teams, highlighting student-athletes' growth, teamwork, and school spirit.

JV Flag Football ended the season with a 3-5 record, with three losses coming by a touchdown or less. With many first-year and younger players competing, Coach Mike is optimistic about a strong run at the league championship next year. Varsity Flag Football finished 5-2 and faced Blessed Trinity in the final game before the Super Bowl, falling short despite a hard-fought effort that highlighted teamwork and skill.

Cross Country had another impressive year, with the Elementary Boys team winning the Celtic Invitational and the Middle School Girls team qualifying for the State Middle School Championship in Lakeland. Soccer wrapped up a solid season with a 6-4 record, advancing to the tournament before narrowly losing to Redeemer 2-1 in the league tournament.

With so many achievements and personal milestones this fall, our student-athletes are excited to build on their success next year.



STUDENTS SHINE AT FAFO

Forty-five Cornerstone students had their artwork featured in this October's Fine Arts for Ocala student showcase. Students in Kindergarten - Fifth Grade were eligible to display their work, while Middle School students competed in several categories. We are proud to share that four Middle School students earned special recognition, receiving ribbons for their outstanding pieces, including: 1st Place - Waylon Gibbs, 2nd Place - Natalia Castillo, 3rd Place - Lacey Mosley, and 4th Place - Mia Palacios.

ROLLER COASTER RIDE

Our Fifth Grade students took on an exciting STEM engineering challenge in October, designing and building their very own roller coasters! Using everyday materials like cardboard, paper, tape, and marbles, students worked in teams to create a track that could carry a marble smoothly from start to finish.

Throughout the project, students explored key concepts in physics, including gravity, potential and kinetic energy, friction, and motion. They quickly discovered how the height and shape of their track impacted the marble's speed and movement. Too steep? The marble flew off the track. Too flat? It didn't move fast enough. Each group had to carefully test, problem-solve, and make adjustments to ensure their coaster functioned as planned.

"By combining science, technology, engineering, and math, the students gained a deeper understanding of how STEM skills are used in the world around us," said teacher Audrey Jabbar. "This project encouraged collaboration and problem-solving as the students refined their designs and supported one another through the engineering process."





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The Cornerstone Possibilities Fund ensures that The Cornerstone School maintains its reputation of offering an unprecedented educational experience to all its students by providing financial assistance to classroom technology, school security, and school programs including Project Lead the Way, Physical Education, Art, Music and STEM.

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