

2025

NOVEMBER

A season of giving: How Saint Leo University serves the community

Brooke Brinker
Social Media Manager

It is officially November, the month of sharing gratitude and giving. Saint Leo loves to give back to its community in many ways.

Day of Giving

Saint Leo gives clubs and organizations the opportunity to make money through "Day of Giving." Day of Giving is Nov. 21 to Dec. 2. Students, faculty, families, and friends can donate to the organization of their choice. Whichever organization gets the most people to donate wins a cash prize, along with the donation amounts that were sent to them. Saint Leo makes sure the clubs and organizations on campus have the materials they need to keep continuing with their passions. Make sure you donate to *The Lions' Pride Media Group!*

What Saint Leo does to help others

One of Saint Leo's many missions is to serve others. Saint Leo lives by its core values Excellence, Community, Respect,

Personal Development, Responsible Stewardship, and Integrity. Saint Leo is partnered with community organizations, such as Rise Against Hunger, Keep Pinellas Beautiful, and Habitat for Humanity.

In the past, Saint Leo's Tampa Education Center held a food drive for Metropolitan Ministries. Also, the Tampa Education Center and Savannah Feed the Hungry partnered together to feed 50 families for Thanksgiving. Moving forward, Saint Leo serves a delicious Thanksgiving meal every year for students who can't go home to be with their families. Saint Leo tries to be a second home for students who, unfortunately, cannot go home during the holidays.

What the clubs and organizations do to give back to the community

Many of the clubs and organizations at Saint Leo do volunteer work and participate in activities to support the Saint Leo community. For example, the Treehouse Club participates in clean-ups. Caroline Magill, a senior majoring in medical humanities, is responsible for the maintenance of

the greenhouse and the connecting garden on campus. Some of Magill's responsibilities include weeding, cleaning up dead leaves, and planting new sprouts.

"My hope is to educate others about the importance of environmental conservation and demonstrate how simple outdoor activities, such as caring for a garden, not only preserves the earth's wonders, but also allows us to feel a sense of accomplishment," Magill said.

On Nov. 19, the whole school had the opportunity to participate in "Presidential Service Day." Students, faculty, and staff participated in community service on and off campus. Classes were cancelled all day for students so they could be present and pick any service they would like to assist with. This day was to welcome the 12th president of Saint Leo in a way that involved the core values.

Encouragement to you: give back to someone this month, participate in an activity or service that helps someone else. Some ideas can include giving a can to a food drive

on campus, paying for someone's coffee, or donating to a charity.

Saint Leo, the students, and faculty love giving back to the community. We can join together and spread kindness as a community and truly live out our Saint Leo core values.



Saint Leo University even spreads holiday spirit on building windows. (Photo by Brooke Brinker)

NEWSROOM

The Lions' Pride Media Group is the student-run publication of Saint Leo University, free from institutional interference from conception to print. We publish in print once monthly, and weekly online at our website and through our social media sites. It is the mission of The Lions' Pride Media to provide accurate news and diverse opinions that are important to the Saint Leo community, and our goal is to inform and entertain readers while providing thought-provoking journalism without fear of reprisal.

We are located in the Student Activities Building.

Letter to the Editor & Advertising:

Send letters to the editor to the lionspridenewspaper@gmail.com. Guidelines: 500 word maximum. Do not use profane or slanderous language. Faculty must include name and rank. Students must include name, major, and graduation year. Include phone number to verify authorship. We reserve the right to edit for grammar, spelling, or libel.

To inquire about putting an advertisement in the newspaper or social media, please contact Sophia Sullivan at sophia.sullivan@email.saintleo.edu.

Madison Wilson
Editorials Editor
madison.wilson@saintleo.edu

Erick Angeles
Layout Editor
erick.angeles@saintleo.edu

Sanjea Taylor
World News Editor
sanjea.taylor@saintleo.edu

Hadassa Larissa Ferreira
Arts & Editor Editor
hadassalarissa.fer@saintleo.edu

Sophia Sullivan
Editor-in-Chief
sophia.sullivan@saintleo.edu

Brianna Brinker
Campus News Editor
brianna.brinker@saintleo.edu

Elijah Penn
Copyeditor
elijah.penn@saintleo.edu

Faith Skierkowski
Copyeditor
faith.skierkowski@saintleo.edu

Dr. Valerie Kasper
Faculty Advisor
valerie.kasper@saintleo.edu

Bao Han
Online/Multimedia Editor
bao.han@saintleo.edu

Brooke Brinker
Social Media Manager
brooke.brinker@saintleo.edu

Elijah Alvarado
Sports Editor
elijah.alvarado@saintleo.edu

Beatriz Trevisan DeJesus
Managing Editor
beatriz.trevisande@saintleo.edu

Spending Thanksgiving on campus? Fun ways to make the break feel festive

Brianna Brinker

Campus News Editor

Thanksgiving break is a time when many students travel home to be with family and friends. However, there are students who spend the holiday break on campus and find themselves unsure of what to do.

The campus can feel empty and quiet, and it can be extremely difficult to be far from home, often making you miss your loved ones even more. Still, there are ways to turn your homesickness into happiness!

“It is common for students to experience emotional lows or homesickness when they are away from home, wherever home may be, during the holidays. It is natural to have these feelings,” said Dr. Audrea Maxwell, student success coach.

On and around campus, there are so many options to make each day exciting and to make Saint Leo University a home away from home.

Events Saint Leo University offers during Thanksgiving break

Thanksgiving break officially starts on Monday, Nov. 24 and ends Friday, Nov. 28. While classes will not be held during these dates, Saint Leo does offer a few events for the remaining students on campus.

Dawn McElveen, director of student and family engagement, encourages students to stay updated with EngageLeo because there will be campus activities added along with a potential off-campus trip for students who are staying on campus for Thanksgiving Break.

On Nov. 25, Saint Leo Run Club will be hosting a Thanksgiving run from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. at the clock tower. This is a chance to “run for what you are grateful for.” There will also be a non-perishable food drive to help give back to the community.

On Nov. 26, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., there will be a Dungeons and Dragons game session in the Donald R. Tapia School of Business building in room 415. This is a game known from the original Netflix television show “Stranger Things,” which will be releasing the first four episodes of the last season on the same day.

This will be the perfect chance to get a feel for what the characters in the show talk about and have a watch party with your friends after!

Throughout the week, the Wellness Center will offer fitness classes and remain open with adjusted hours for students looking to stay active. The library and dining hall will also have adjusted hours to accommodate those staying on campus. There will also be three basketball games during the break. They are free for all Saint Leo students, great entertainment, and provides a chance to cheer for your lions!

Events held in the area surrounding Saint Leo University

On Nov. 22, there will be a turkey and food giveaway from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. located on 1779 W. Hillsborough Ave, just thirty minutes from campus. It is called “Day of Thanks,” and is a great way to show gratitude and give to people who are in need.

On Nov. 23, there will be an event located in Tampa called the “Thanks-Living Holy Ghost Crusade.” This event includes food trucks, giveaways, and services. This is a Christian event and is a great way to get out of your dorm room!

Other ways to make staying on campus festive

Thanksgiving break is such a special time of the year. If you are spending it on campus, make the most out of it.

Go to a café, pick out a sweet treat and coffee, sit, relax, listen to music, and enjoy your day.

If you don't have a car, there are two cafés within walking distance; The Haven Café and A Cup of Organic are right down the road from campus.

You can even take a trip to Dade City and get started on your Christmas shopping! Downtown Dade City has antique stores that have hidden gems everywhere.

Thanksgiving Day in the United States comes with a lot of food. If you are a college student, your meal doesn't have to be perfect! Attempt a Friendsgiving and have all of your friends each bring a Thanksgiving-themed dish

or snack.

Maxwell shares with students a couple of ideas on what to do while spending Thanksgiving break on campus:

1. Going to a park or a botanical garden where they can enjoy things of beauty will give them some relief from their declining mood.

2. Even though they may be away from home, it is important to establish a consistent sleeping and eating routine. This will help increase their energy and will help lift their mood.

3. Having a movie night or creating holiday decorations can keep students busy and help them enjoy the Holiday season, even while away from home.

4. Lastly, utilizing the University campus grounds by

taking walks for exercise will help lift a student's mood and help them feel recharged.

“Regardless of what students who are away from home do during the holidays, it is important for them to identify that feelings of sadness while away from home are natural, and, thus, being intentional in practicing self-care and self-compassion will help lift their moods and still provide them the opportunity of enjoying the holidays,” said Maxwell.

Staying on campus for the holidays is a great opportunity to try new activities, meet new people, adventure around the area, and truly make college memories that are unforgettable. Gather with your peers, participate in holiday themed events, remember what you are grateful for, and make your Thanksgiving break festive and fun!



It doesn't matter what the food is, having Friendsgiving with the people you have at college is so special! Friends can become your family. (Photo by Brianna Brinker)

A Festival of Lights in a dark world: How Saint Leo University celebrates Hanukkah

Elijah Penn
Copyeditor

As the holiday season rolls around, and the macabre Halloween decorations are taken down, to the joy of many and the vexation of others, they are quickly replaced by the peaceful décor of Christmas. However, the overlooked blue and silver symbols of another winter holiday can be seen spilling off the shelves of a few stores.

The eight-day Jewish holiday of Hanukkah (also spelled Chanukah) is full of rich traditions and festivities celebrating the ancient Maccabean Revolt and the following miracle of Hanukkah.

Also called the “Festival of Lights,” Hanukkah is often confused by outsiders as a “Jewish Christmas” due to similarities such as a celebratory atmosphere and the tradition of gift-giving. However, the two holidays are very different.

“Some people have equated Hanukkah with Christmas,” Dr. Fern Aefsky, the university director of graduate studies in education and professor of education at Saint Leo, said, talking about people incorporating “Hanukkah bushes” into the holiday to mix it with Christmas traditions. “I do not agree with that,” she said. Aefsky prefers teaching others about the traditions and importance of the holidays of different religions.

“In my family, Hanukkah is very much a celebration for children. Each night, a small gift is given. I enjoy teaching others about the traditions of being Jewish. There are many levels of Judaism and varying views of how to celebrate. I think it is important to be aware of the similarities and differences within Judaism and between Judaism and other faiths,” Aefsky said.

From her childhood, Aefsky remembers lighting the candles of the menorah and saying the blessing each night of Hanukkah.

On each night of Hanukkah, one more candle is lit to represent the eight days that the one day’s worth of oil lasted during the

rededication of the temple. This miracle provided just enough time for new oil to be prepared for the ceremony. The hanukkiah—a special menorah with nine branches—has an elevated place for the “Shamash,” or “Helper” candle which is only used to light the other candles.

Simon Zylbersztajn, an international sophomore student with a double major in political science and international studies, has celebrated Hanukkah for as long as he can remember.

“I like the fact that you have to put ... those candles at your window so that everybody can see the light,” said Zylbersztajn. “I like the fact that everybody has to see this light ... and get reminded that light is in the world.”

Another notable symbol of Hanukkah, according to Aefsky, is traditional foods such as latkes (potato pancakes fried in oil). Children also play a “dreidel” game for a prize of chocolate coins. A dreidel is like a spinning top with four sides. Each side has a Hebrew letter corresponding with how many coins in the pot that a player can take or must contribute.

Zylbersztajn explained that Hanukkah is one of the few Jewish holidays that was not laid out by God. Instead, it came to be celebrated as God’s provision for His people in the miracle of Hanukkah. Because of this, Hanukkah is a very joyful season.

“The atmosphere of Hanukkah is very joyful,” stated Zylbersztajn. “I wouldn’t say it’s the Jewish Christmas, because that will be false, but it’s the same atmosphere as you will have during Christmas ... The family gets together; you enjoy food.”

“Those people had nothing back when the story of Hanukkah happened ... They didn’t even have oil to light the candles up. But God made it happen. So, when you have struggles in your life, and you feel like you’re not able to overcome issues ... God will help you make it happen ... They had faith, and they still tried, and God made it happen,”

expressed Zylbersztajn.

Hanukkah is a joyful winter holiday with rich traditions. It reflects the diverse backgrounds of students and faculty of Saint Leo. This “Festival of Lights” has a deeper spiritual meaning, reminding us all,

regardless of our religion, that there is always light in the world, even when we feel lost in the darkness. Hanukkah represents a celebration of hope and victory at a time when the Jewish people were oppressed by a ruthless army.



While the candles are placed from right to left, they are lit from left to right each sundown during Hanukkah. (Photo by Elijah Penn)



The Shamash, or Helper candle, is the only thing used to light the other candles. It does not represent a day, like the other candles do. It is left burning in case another candle goes out. The light from the candles may not be used for practical purposes such as working or reading. (Photo by Elijah Penn)

KEEP THE PRESSES ROLLING

SUPPORT THE LIONS' PRIDE MEDIA GROUP



Scan and help
support student
journalism



DAY OF GIVING
NOVEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 2

Holiday Word Scramble

BY: MADISON WILSON

fwnlsoeka

eerdrein

TWO WORDS
sntsucaala

erlepifca

gckontis

nauhkakh

TWO WORDS
sjeilnleagl

TWO WORDS
amolehone

TWO WORDS
anywree

wzanaka

ngdgrbeaier

lmtosetie

FOR THE ANSWERS, VISIT OUR
INSTAGRAM @LIONSPRIDEMEDIA

From glitter to green: Making your holiday decorations sustainable

Alina Rezepova
Staff Writer

As Christmas quickly approaches, many people are already planning how to decorate their homes with new holiday decorations. What is often overlooked, however, is how these festive choices can impact the environment.

Every December, millions of Christmas decorations are used, from rolls of wrapping paper to shiny plastic ornaments and ribbons; many of which are not disposed of properly. However, Christmas magic does not have to leave a trail of plastic in its wake.

Today, more people are finding ways to celebrate in a conscious way, creating beauty while protecting the planet. One of the easiest ways to make your holiday more sustainable is to pay attention to gift wrapping.

Based on information from the Ecology Center, many shiny papers and glitter ribbons contain plastic and are not recyclable. They end up in landfills after the

holiday. Reusable fabric bags or kraft paper are festive alternatives that are eco-friendly and add a special touch to gifts.

“Use reusable wrapping. In my house, we have a bunch of cloth, paper, and some plastic holiday-themed decorative bags. We keep them year after year,” said Dr. Christopher Miller, professor of biology and ecology at Saint Leo.

The simple habit of using gift bags, fabric cuts, or kraft paper can reduce waste. These materials can be reused repeatedly, making gift wrapping a part of family tradition.

According to the Ecology Center, in recent years, more people have been choosing reusable fabric bags and kraft paper, which is a type of packaging that can be reused or recycled. This is not only eco-friendly but also adds a special charm to the gift.

Also, many people buy new toys every year, even though the old ones are still usable, thus increasing the amount of plastic waste.

“Reusing decorations will always lessen impact. Every time

a new decoration is purchased, that thing now has a new impact on the environment because of manufacturing, shipping, and eventual disposal. Keeping decorations year-over-year is best,” said Miller.

Reusing decorations helps preserve family memories and creates a sense of continuity during the holidays. Old toys hold memories, become part of family history, and are passed down from generation to generation.

“All of our decorations are recyclable or reused because we always keep them and never throw them away. My mom has some she has kept for 20 years,” said Brianna Ortega, a sophomore majoring in sports business.

WasteWise.com points out that instead of plastic balls and tinsel, you can use natural materials such as dried oranges, pinecones, spruce branches, or cinnamon sticks. These decorations create a cozy atmosphere and pleasant

aroma, and most importantly, they are completely biodegradable.

Many of these decorations can be recycled or reused, making the holiday more environmentally friendly.

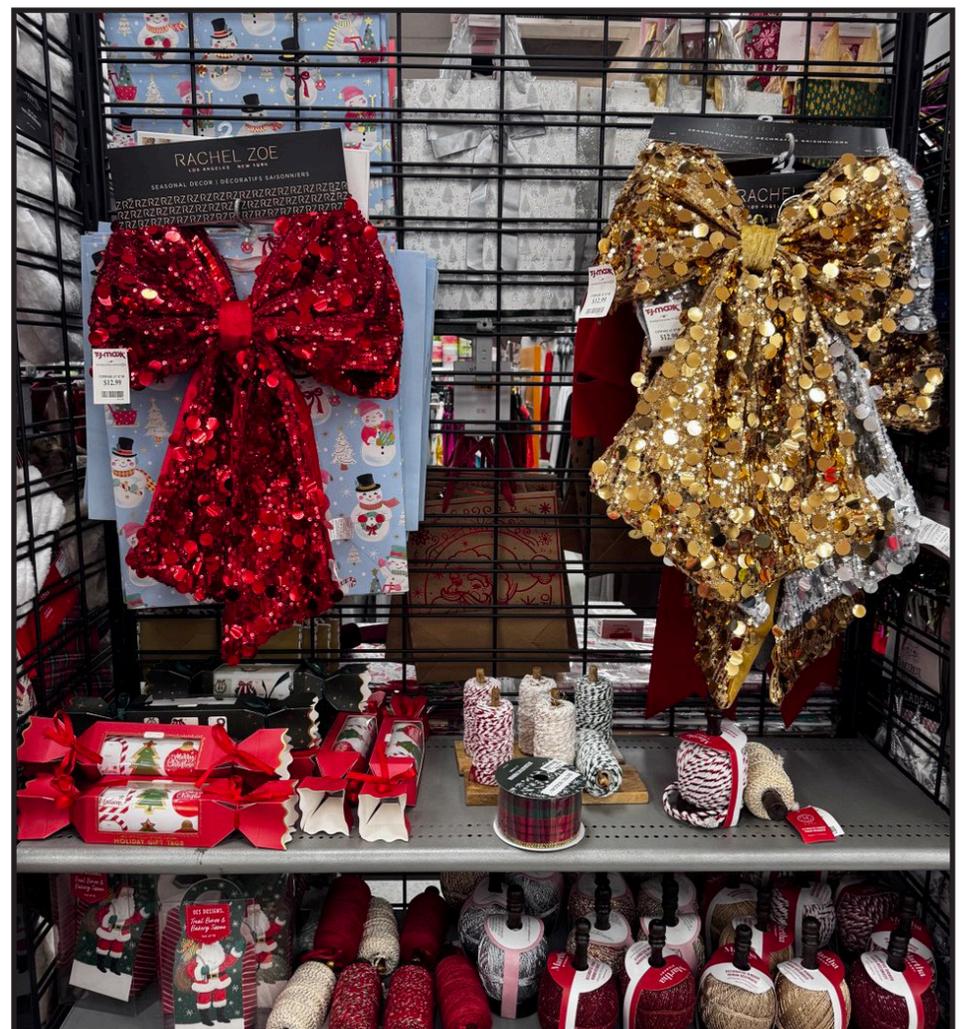
Christmas is a wonderful holiday that fills homes with warmth, joy, and a sense of renewal, but its true meaning lies not in the number of decorations purchased, but in how people fill this day with meaning and care for their loved ones.

“Going small on decorations is better ... Re-use of decorations is very important, and it actually enhances the good feelings around Christmas because even small things can have great meaning,” said Miller.

An eco-friendly Christmas does not mean giving up on joy; in fact, finding ways to care for the planet can make the holiday even more meaningful. Let the gifts and decorations be not only beautiful but also kind to the planet, as the true spirit of the holiday comes from love and respect for the world.



Endless rolls of shiny wrapping paper fill the stores, looking beautiful today but potentially harming the environment in the long run. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



Plastic decorations can brighten your Christmas tree and using them year after year helps make the holiday more sustainable. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



The Lions' Pride Media Group Staff were excited to participate and give back to the Saint Leo community! (Photo by Dr. Kasper)



Jack Wetherington, a junior clinical psychology major gets ready to board a bus full of students eager to help out at Gulfside Hospice Thrift Shoppe in Dade City. (Photo by Elijah Penn)



The crew at the Holy Name Monastery is working on cleaning out sheds. (Photo by Elijah Penn)



Caroline Magill, a medical humanities senior and greenhouse intern, proudly stands by the plants she is charged with taking care of. (Photo by Elijah Penn)



During the opening Speech for the Welcome Service Day Marcal Lazenby, the director of athletics, gave a beautiful speech and prayer to kick off the event. (Photo by Sanjea Taylor)



Saint Leo Women's Softball team joined the rest of the Saint Leo community to display their school pride off the field (Photo by Elijah Alvarado)

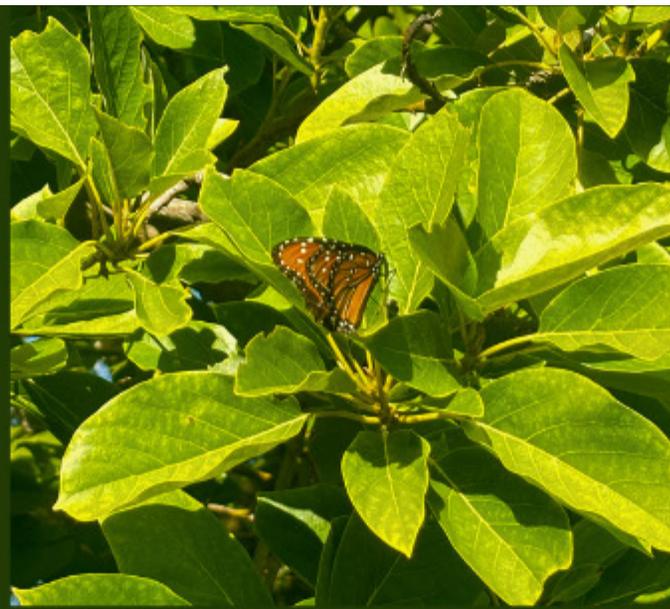


After a check in, students and faculty members posed for a group photo. (Photo by Elijah Alvarado)





ystery is washing cars and cleaning
to by Dr. Kasper)



The beautiful butterfly that was found
while students were cleaning the
greenhouse. (Photo by Brooke
Brinker)



Yanira Luna Perez, biomedical
science senior helps pull weeds
from the rubber greenhouse mats.
(Photo by Elijah Penn)

2025 SERVICE DAY



Faculty lined up for a
Elijah Penn)



Marissa Retzlaff, an ecology senior and Jayadithya
Singh, a biomedical science junior help shovel mud
and debris out of the greenhouse. (Photo by Elijah
Penn)



President Dr. Jim Burkee and his
wife pose for a photo after
explaining how Saint Leo's core
values inspired the event. (Photo by
Elijah Penn)

Thanksgiving on thin plates

Brenden Miller
Staff Writer

Thanksgiving is a joyous time when families gather to share laughter, smiles, and enjoy plates of delicious food. It is a time to truly unwind and be around the people you love. However, this year, that comfort comes with a higher price tag, and for many households, Thanksgiving dinner will be on thin plates.

Based on an analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data by Bankrate, since the 2020 pandemic, inflation has not truly gone away. Prices for consumer goods are now over 24% higher than they were before the pandemic, while paychecks mostly remained stagnant.

President Donald Trump addressed these frustrations by proposing tariffs on imported goods to support American industries and potentially lower grocery prices.

“He wants to renegotiate a lot of deals. Most countries don’t want to renegotiate. So, he’s going to use tariffs as a sledgehammer to force them all to negotiate with new bilateral trade deals that are more beneficial to the United States,” said Dr. Marco Rimanelli, professor of political science at Saint Leo University.

But the ripple effects have been felt at grocery stores across America. While tariffs aim to help domestic businesses, they have also driven up prices on many everyday items, including Thanksgiving staples.

In recent years, turkey has become much more expensive with the average price increasing from \$1.50 per pound in 2020 to about \$2.50 per pound in 2023. Inflation, labor shortages, increased shipping costs, and the lingering effects of the avian flu outbreak are some of the factors contributing to this increase.

According to the USDA Economic Research Service, the avian flu has caused turkey production to decline significantly, and supply chain disruptions and increased demand have driven up prices.

Beginning on Oct. 1, the U.S. government shut down for 43

days, putting programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) at risk and creating uncertainty for more than 40 million Americans who rely on food assistance.

The average SNAP participant receives roughly \$187 per month, which is not enough to cover rising grocery costs. Despite this national uncertainty and economic pressure, students at Saint Leo have demonstrated the deep commitment and heart for the campus community by stepping up with a powerful, local response through the Student Government Union (SGU) Food Pantry.

The Student Government Union has seen a great amount of donations for the Thanksgiving season to their SGU Food Pantry.

“While our power is

limited in reaching those outside the campus walls, the Student Government Union is a proud advocate of the Town of Saint Leo,” said Beau Wolfe, vice-president of communications for the SGU and a Student Affairs worker.

“Those working at the town have gathered lots of donated food items for families. A great portion of these have been donated to the SGU Food Pantry for any students in need,” stated Wolfe.

“There are many food items in inventory including a large variety of canned goods and snack items. The food pantry has gotten very full; however, donations are always appreciated in this season of giving,” added Wolfe.

The message is clear: Students are welcome to look at items from the food pantry and provide them for their family or anyone they see in need. There is

plenty to go around.

“One person may not think they can make a difference, but the accumulation of donations can ramp up fast ... Even just a little bit of effort at a time can add up to create such a large impact,” stated Wolfe.

For many Floridians, this Thanksgiving will still look different. Some are cutting back on side dishes or skipping desserts, and others are leaving out turkey. Families are trying to hold on to tradition even as the cost of that tradition grows out of reach.

Even though food is more expensive this year and times feel uncertain, we should not forget the spirit of Thanksgiving. It’s a time to be grateful for what we have, to come together with those we love, and to remember the true meaning of the holiday isn’t found in what is on the table, but in who is gathered around it.



Donation boxes have been placed all around campus, including one inside the Wellness Center, to collect food items for the SGU Food Pantry. (Photo by Brenden Miller)

Black Friday in a digital world

Sayuri Vargas-Hernandez
Staff Writer

Black Friday used to mean a lot to many holiday shoppers. Waking up early, waiting in long lines, and rushing into crowded stores for the best deals was all part of the phenomenon. However, things have shifted, and many shoppers now prefer finding those same deals online from the comfort of their homes, avoiding the in-store chaos.

In today's digital world, shopping is now faster, easier and more personal, making Black Friday no longer just a single day but an entire season of sales, since discounts can be at every store without waiting for a holiday. Based on Deseret News, many stores now begin their Black Friday promotions weeks in advance, with some even starting in early November and continuing through Cyber Monday—the Monday after Thanksgiving. The deals don't stop.

"The shift to online Black Friday shopping has significantly increased its economic impact by driving strong digital sales growth and changing consumer behavior," said Dr. Jacqueline Wisler, assistant professor of marketing at Saint Leo.

"[In the] U.S., online Black Friday spending reached 10.8 billion dollars in 2024, up 10.2 percent from the previous year, while Reuters reports that in store sales declined by about 5.4 percent," Wisler added.

"This has pushed retailers to invest more in digital advertising, mobile optimization, fast shipping, and transparent pricing, which increases competition as deals become easier to compare," stated Wisler.

This longer shopping season gives people more time to plan, compare prices, and choose the best deals. Many stores now send emails or messages to notify and remind customers about all the new deals they will be having, making rushing for deals no longer necessary as customers can shop when it is best for them.

Customers can search for products, read reviews, and buy with just a few taps on their devices; also, some stores offer special deals

only on their apps while others give extra discounts if you sign up for their newsletter or follow them on social media.

This mobile shopping trend is especially popular with young people, including students. They can shop between classes, during lunch, or while relaxing at home, reducing the need to drive to the store and wait in line.

Even though shopping is easier now, it's important for customers to plan before starting to shop for items. What can help is to make a list of what you need. This way customers can avoid buying things that aren't really necessary.

It's also a good idea to compare prices on different websites. Some websites can help customers track prices and find the best deal. Also, reading reviews from other buyers can help shoppers choose good quality items.

Also, shoppers should always check the return policy to make sure the item can be returned or exchanged if needed. Although online shopping is usually safe, customers should also be cautious.

Some websites may try to trick you with fake deals or ask for personal information they don't need, so to stay safe, shop from trusted websites, avoid strange links, use strong passwords and secure payment methods, and if something feels wrong, don't buy it. If you're unsure, ask a trusted friend, teacher, or family member for help.

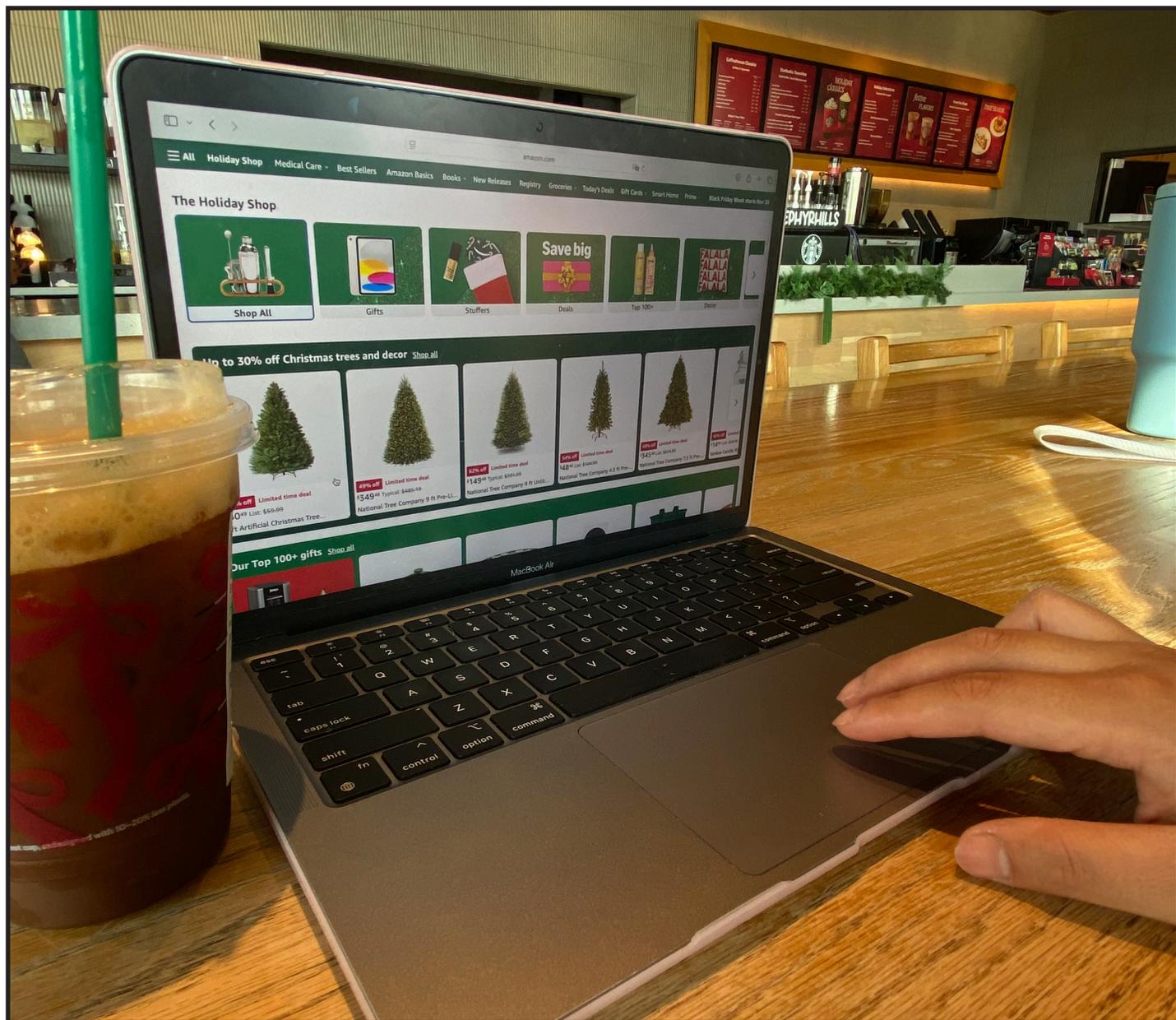
"With Black Friday, everything is digitalized: people can shop online at Walmart, Amazon, Shein, etc., and order stuff. A lot of people like it that way because they don't have to line up [in-store]. So, Black Friday is no longer just a day; it is more of a season. It is

not how it was 20 years ago," said Yulissa Barrios, a junior majoring in marketing at Saint Leo.

In recent years, more people have become more mindful of where their products come from, choosing to support small businesses, eco-friendly brands, or companies that treat workers fairly.

For some students, Black Friday has become a chance to make thoughtful purchases, whether that's by buying from local shops or handmade sellers or choosing longer-lasting, low-waste products.

Black Friday will continue to change in new ways, such as video shopping, voice shopping, and even virtual stores, but the excitement of finding a good deal will always stay the same. For students, it's a chance to save money, support meaningful causes, and practice smart, thoughtful shopping, because smart shopping is happy shopping.



Online shopping makes Black Friday easier for students, who browse sales between classes and grab tech bargains without leaving campus. (Photo by Sayuri Vargas-Hernandez)

A Christmas that smells like pine, not plastic

Alina Rezepova

Staff Writer

The smell of pine trees, rustling gifts, and joyful laughter mark the beginning of the beloved holiday Christmas; but, behind the festive cheer lie piles of plastic waste and discarded wrapping paper. Is it possible to preserve the spirit of Christmas without damaging the environment?

Every year, at the beginning of December, people stock up on all sorts of pre-Christmas items, often buying more than they need. Naturally, after the festivities, all the excess purchases end up in the trash, creating a significant environmental problem.

Based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the volume of household waste in the United States increases by about 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

One of the most important Christmas decorations is the Christmas tree. Choosing between a real or an artificial Christmas tree is a small decision that has a big impact on the environment. The Christmas tree is the most iconic symbol of the holiday, and, every year, millions of people contemplate

which tree is more environmentally friendly: an artificial or a real one.

Dr. Christopher Miller, professor of biology and ecology at Saint Leo University, along with Brianna Ortega, a sophomore student majoring in sports business at Saint Leo, shared their thoughts on this topic.

"Artificial trees hurt the environment because, typically, they are made of materials that do not break down once they are thrown away. Toxic plastics and metals require manufacturing and long-distance shipping," said Miller.

"But, because they are reused every year, the trees' initial impacts are lessened year-over-year. Real trees have some negative impacts, too. Many real trees are grown in monocultural plantations and require many pesticides and fertilizers," added Miller.

"I think an artificial tree is more environmentally friendly because you can use it multiple times. In my family, we have a Christmas tree that we have used for the past 15 years," said Ortega.

The National Christmas Tree Association stated that after the holidays, trees can be chipped into biodegradable mulch, which

replenishes soil in landscapes, parks, and schools. Also, when sunk in ponds, they provide excellent refuge and feeding areas for fish.

Although this option seems more environmentally friendly, it still raises the question of how willing people are to properly recycle a natural Christmas tree after the holidays. Often, it is an entirely different situation when the natural Christmas trees are sent to the landfill after Christmas rather than for recycling.

The topic of using an artificial or natural Christmas tree remains a controversial issue that people have been trying to solve for years.

"I feel like the artificial [Christmas tree] was probably more environmentally friendly because you can use them each year. However, I know that we use a real one in my house because it gives it a more natural scent," said Yulissa Barrios, a junior student majoring in marketing at Saint Leo.

"The best solution is to have a live Christmas tree that can be replanted later," said Miller.

According to ArboristNow.com, one sustainable alternative is to use a live Christmas tree in

a pot, which can be replanted outdoors after the holidays. Such trees continue to grow, purify the air, and eventually become part of the local ecosystem, benefiting wildlife and nature.

Furthermore, ArboristNow.com points out that people who live in private homes can plant small evergreen trees in their yards, allowing them to grow year after year while adding natural beauty to their property and supporting the environment.

During the Christmas season, such a tree can be decorated outdoors, creating a festive atmosphere not only for the household but also for everyone around, without causing harm to nature. After the holidays, all that is left is to remove the decorations, allowing the tree to keep growing, producing oxygen, and providing shelter for birds and small animals.

The choice between a real and artificial Christmas tree should be conscious and thoughtful. It is not so much about which option is chosen, but rather that resources are used as efficiently and environmentally friendly as possible.



In New York there is a living Christmas tree that is replanted after the holidays, continuing to grow and give life long after the lights fade. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



For several years, the Bookstore at Saint Leo has reused the same artificial Christmas tree, showing that festive cheer does not have to come at the planet's expense. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



Even the palm trees at Saint Leo join the Christmas celebration, decorated with lights reused year after year, keeping the spirit bright and eco-friendly. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



At Saint Leo University, a living Christmas tree grows on campus and is decorated each year as a symbol of sustainability. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)

KEEP THE PRESSES ROLLING

SUPPORT THE LIONS' PRIDE MEDIA GROUP



DAY OF GIVING
NOVEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 2

Scan and help support student journalism



Every donation helps fund student journalism and local storytelling

CAMPUS GEAR™ HAS STOCKED UP ON ALL YOUR CHRISTMAS SWAG



The beginning of a new era for the Tampa Bay Rays

Elijah Alvarado

Sports Editor

The Tampa Bay Rays are the beloved home baseball team of the Tampa Bay area. However, on Sept. 30, the news broke that after 22 years, the principal owner, Stuart Sternberg, sold the Tampa Bay Rays Major League Baseball franchise.

The franchise was sold for \$1.7 billion. It was sold to a new ownership group, led by Patrick Zalupski, who is also the CEO of Dream Finders Home, based out of Jacksonville, Florida. It was sold after being unanimously approved by Major League Baseball (MLB) owners. Moving into this new era, the owners look forward to a bright future.

"It's an incredible honor to become the stewards of the Tampa Bay Rays, a franchise with a proud history and a bright future," said Zalupski according to a press release by the MLB website.

When it comes to Sternberg finding his successors to continue the Tampa Bay Rays franchise journey, it was important for him to know they will continue to grow this franchise with passion and serve not only the organization but the Rays fanbase; this new ownership has the right mindset for that.

"Baseball has always been a part of my life, and now I get to join an ownership group for a team I've admired for years," said Bill

Cosgrove, co-chair of the Tampa Bay Rays and member of the group that purchased the Rays, according to a press release by the MLB website. "It's humbling, and I can't wait to share this journey with the fans and the Tampa Bay community."

This big move does not only mean a lot to the franchise but also to the fans and surrounding communities in the Tampa Bay area. Many fans are excited to see a change within the organization, as, over the years, there have been conversations on topics such as finding the Rays a new ballpark.

Over the last 10-15 years, the idea of a new stadium has been brought up, but action has yet to be seen. This is something Rays fans considered when expressing their reaction to this move by Sternberg and Zalupski. One local Rays fan shares his excitement and why he is excited.

"Well, I was happy about the change, because Sternberg has been talking for years about moving the team to Tampa and infusing it with the additional capital for building a stadium. They've been talking about that for 15 years, and it still hasn't materialized," said Kim Payne, instructor of marketing and communication at Saint Leo.

Over the past several years, the Rays have had issues selling out at their home ballpark, the

Tropicana Field in Saint Petersburg, Florida. Many fans say it is because the ballpark itself is rundown or outdated; others say it is because of the location.

"I've only gone to a dozen games collectively over the last 15 years. I would go to 10 or 12 games a season if the stadium had been in Tampa," stated Payne. "I'd probably have a partial ticket plan."

Moving the team to a highly populated city like Tampa can have a huge impact on the Rays' attendance and surrounding businesses, which could benefit the local economy.

"If they do finally decide to move the team to Tampa, the positive impact is the economic impact that it is going to have on the city of Tampa," said Payne.

Tampa, especially in areas that contain many bars, restaurants, and hotels which attract fans, will see a positive improvement in their business, but, unfortunately, may cause Saint Petersburg economics to take a hit.

This is another topic fans have talked about: how they would want the ballpark within reach of additional entertainment locations such as bars and restaurants. Also, for hotels, this change will attract more attention to the Tampa from tourists.

Many believe the Tampa Bay Rays historically had the

lowest payroll across the League, and the low number of tickets being sold plays a big factor in this situation. Moving the stadium or building a stadium that attracts attention can bring better profit for this organization.

Payne explained that if the owners are bringing in money to help strengthen the team, by keeping the players they want and adding new ones who fit well with the team, that will be a good thing.

Payne also believes this was the right time to sell the franchise and sees it as having a potential positive impact for the franchise moving into the future.

Between the Rays now former owner, Sternberg, Major League Baseball, and local officials, ideas of moving or staying put and building a new stadium have floated around with the goal of staying within reach of the Rays fan base.

Since this will be the first season under Zalupski and his staff ownership, there aren't any real expectations for a new stadium announcement anytime soon, but there is confidence that this announcement is on the horizon.

"I think, overall, it's a very positive thing," said Payne. "I think they're receptive to seriously wanting to move the team to Tampa."



Tampa Bay Rays' new ownership is ready to get to work and is committed to winning championships. (Photo courtesy of the Tampa Bay Rays press release)

Saint Leo University Men's Ice Hockey: A young team on the rise

Alina Rezepova

Staff Writer

Hearing ice skates in hot Florida seems like something out of a dream. However, for the students at Saint Leo University, the sound of ice skates and ice hockey is not just a sport but a symbol of unity and perseverance.

The Saint Leo University Men's Ice Hockey team, which was recently established, has already shown results and how passion for the game can overcome any challenges, even in a warm climate.

Men's Ice Hockey was founded in 2022, and in a short period of time, they have grown both on and off the ice. This student program includes athletes from not only the United States but also Canada.

Although the hockey team is not part of the athletic department like the other teams, its members often represent Saint Leo at the regional level. Hockey is not just a sport; it is a way to connect with people and maintain the school's spirit.

This season is special for Men's Ice Hockey. They are officially participating in the College Hockey South (CHS) League. This event is extremely important, as it will help them to make a name for themselves and open new opportunities for

growth and competition with other universities.

"Representing Saint Leo in the CHS League has been such an exciting and rewarding experience. It feels great to compete on behalf of the university and show the hard work and dedication that we put into preparing for these competitions. Going up against other universities is always a challenge, but it motivates me to keep improving and to push myself further each time," said AJ Salvadori, a senior majoring in criminal justice and Saint Leo Hockey Club president.

For Saint Leo hockey players, this is not just a game—it is the formation of true brotherhood and trust.

"There is not one thing I would change throughout the process to where we are now because there is an unforgettable bond with my brothers that I would not give up for the world," said Hunter Gillam, a senior majoring in criminal justice, Hockey captain, and treasurer of Saint Leo Hockey.

From the very first days of its existence, the team has been creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding and support, bringing players together with common goals and achievements.

"When I joined Saint Leo Hockey my freshman year, I knew

I was in for a lot. Being a part of a program building it from the ground up was super special, seeing so many different sides of the story," said Gillam.

Gillam's words reflect his sincere loyalty to his team and his pride in being a part of the hockey club since its inception.

The key factor in the Hockey Club's successful development has been its active presence on social media. Through Instagram and TikTok, the team has gained recognition, attracted new players and fans, and increased attendance at its matches.

Currently, the Hockey Club is actively seeking new members who are willing to immerse themselves in the unforgettable atmosphere, gain valuable experiences, and meet like-

minded individuals.

Students who wish to join Saint Leo University Men's Ice Hockey can email Coach J.C. Powers at john.powers02@saintleo.edu or club president AJ Salvadori at andrew.salvadori@saintleo.edu.

Saint Leo Hockey is constantly evolving and inspiring students with its example. After all, a strong team is not only the result of hard training but also the power of friendship, cooperation, and trust.

Saint Leo Hockey invites everyone who wants to discover new experiences, develop their leadership skills, and become part of the university's rapidly growing sports community. Do not miss your chance to try something new and become a better version of yourself!



Hockey erases borders—it's not about the country on the ice, but about team spirit. (Photo courtesy of CJ Peppers Photography)



Even without an arena nearby, the team finds ice everywhere—the main thing is that they have spirit, sticks, and unity. (Photo courtesy of @cjpeppersphotography on Instagram)

ADVENT



THE LIONS' PRIDE
MEDIA GROUP

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1 	2 	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 	25 	26 	27
28	29	30	31 			

@lionspridemedia

