

February



# Doomscroll detox: Hobbies to pick up instead of scrolling in 2026

**Brooke Brinker**  
*Social Media Manager*

It is 2026, and many people have made it a goal to stop mindlessly scrolling on their phones. To make it easier, you can replace your phone with a hobby!

If you love to be creative and are looking for a fun craft to do by yourself or with your friends, you can try scrapbooking. In college, you take so many pictures with new friends you meet and all the places you go. Scrapbooking is fun and a perfect way to collect memories to savor forever.

Scrapbooking can take a long time, and it is a great way to put your phone away and spend time on an activity!

A hobby that is related to scrapbooking is junk journaling. It is where you put concert tickets, photos, receipts, and stickers, all in a journal. You can give each page a different theme, for example, months of the year, a restaurant, nostalgia, and so many more!

"I love to read, make jewelry, journal, scrapbook, color, play cozy

video games, and write poetry, short stories, and occasionally fanfiction," said Heaven Nazario, a senior majoring in English.

If you are outgoing and love to travel, a great hobby to try is decorating disposable cameras. You can decorate them with fun stickers, beads, or anything you want. You can take your decorated, cute camera on a trip and capture adorable vintage photos.

There are many hobbies and activities to learn and try, rather than scrolling and watching the same videos repeatedly.

You can try cooking or baking something new! Pick out a delicious recipe online and try to recreate it. If you are good at cooking or baking, you can make a recipe book with all your favorite recipes and ingredients.

Moving forward, another sweet activity is making handmade cards for your family, friends, or nursing homes and hospitals. Not only is this fun, but it will also take time away from your phone and make somebody's day.

"To students who are

struggling with scrolling, try something new! Pick up a cheap hobby you don't know and see how it goes. It might be something you end up loving," said Nazario.

If you are looking for a hobby that is simple and quiet, you can try reading, crossword puzzles, coloring, crochet, needlepointing (which is very popular right now), or even writing a book for fun.

"Some of my hobbies include crochet, sewing, reading, and baking," said Hannah Lynn, the Mail Center supervisor.

Put your time and creativity to good use each day. Phones can be addicting, and it is easy to get trapped in the never-ending cycle of scrolling. Try to limit your screen time and take up a hobby you haven't done in a while, or learn a new one from the list.



Instead of scrolling, go to your favorite coffee shop and journal, or do a Bible study with your best friends. (Photo taken 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.

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# The snowbird: Florida's friend or foe?

**Elijah Penn**

*Copyeditor*

"You know it's fall in Florida when the license plates start changing color," Floridians joke as the weather grows cooler.

Indeed, Florida is consistently ranked among the top states for tourism and seasonal living.

According to Florida Realty Marketplace, it is estimated that with one million seasonal residents per year, Florida's population increases by five percent in the colder months.

World Population Review published data on 2023 that reveals only 35.14 percent of people living in Florida were born in the state. This is the lowest percentage of native-born citizens of all states except Nevada.

As someone who was born in the state of Florida, it can be a strange sensation to feel outnumbered by newcomers in one's own neighborhood.

I recall one year when I volunteered at a citrus expo at the Florida State Fair. Each person that I spoke with made some reference to "My neighbor in California," or "At my house in Michigan." No one, it seemed, at the State Fair was from the state.

Being outnumbered presents an interesting dilemma for native-born Floridians. Most people I know who were born locally have immense pride in what they see as the greatest state in the nation.

I have heard many long rants and, admittedly, spoken about how people move in from other places and gradually change the culture and values to those of their own homes.

Perhaps these jeremiads are unfair to those who genuinely wish to make Florida their home, but there are valid concerns about thousands of people moving into any state each year.

A conservationist once explained to me that when the local environment disappears, giving way to countless new homes and businesses, those who move into those homes have no reference for what was lost until, years from now, the cow pasture

they pass on their way to work becomes an apartment complex. They may complain about the new construction across the street, oblivious to the fact that their own driveway was once someone else's complaint. And so, the cycle repeats.

Chair of the Department and Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Saint Leo University, Dr. Karen Hannel is a fifth-generation Floridian.

"I love this place, but it breaks my heart. I have watched so many wild places paved over inch by inch. I have watched fragile ecosystems flattened beneath the weight of endless development," said Hannel.

Outside of her role at Saint Leo University, Hannel is Vice President of Chipco Preserve in San Antonio, Florida.

Chipco Preserve is a volunteer-run nonprofit organization with all funds going to environmental efforts as well as native and veteran communities.

Hannel encouraged people to follow Chipco Preserve's social media pages for updates.

"What is most beautiful draws the most attention, and what draws the most attention can be crushed beneath the weight of endless desire," said Hannel about Florida.

"Balance begins when Florida accepts that its beauty is not endless, and that protecting wetlands, springs, and coastlines is not an obstacle to prosperity but the very condition of it," Hannel concluded.

While there may be cultural and environmental friction between Floridians and their guests, the inescapable reality is that tourism keeps the state's heart beating.

In an article, Dr. Rachel J.C. Fu, a professor in the Department of Tourism, Hospitality, and Event Management at the University of Florida, summarized the sentiments of many Floridians.

"Floridians want the jobs and economic stability tourism brings, but not at the expense of their neighborhoods, natural resources, and sense of belonging," Fu said.

Fu notes the downsides of tourism, like increased traffic,

decreased housing affordability, environmental challenges, and the "cultural erosion" of communities. However, she also brought to light its bright side: tax revenue, jobs, and economic stability.

It is true: The tourists and the snowbirds get a bad rap with the locals. Yet, it cannot be forgotten that these visitors power the state.

VisitFlorida.org found that Florida's revenue from tourism, of which snowbirds were a significant contributor, was \$134.9 billion in 2024. This translates to an average of \$2,000 tax savings per household in the state. An estimated 99 cents per dollar spent on tourism in the state is retained in the Florida economy (a two-cent increase from 2023). The tourism industry supported 1.8 million jobs in 2024.

In 2024, Florida saw 143 million visitors, and when the second-quarter 2025 data was last reported, it was on track to

break that record, according to VisitFlorida.com and FLgov.com.

Along with the increase in tourism in Florida, Florida's economy is becoming increasingly dependent on tourism. VisitFlorida.org reported that "the Travel & Tourism sector accounted for 7.8% of Florida's Nominal Gross State Product (GSP)."

"Native Floridians might remember that nearly all of us are newcomers to this land unless we are Indigenous, and that humility, shared responsibility, and care for place matter more than one-upmanship over who arrived first," Hannel reminds us.

Addressing new and seasonal residents, "Florida is not a backdrop but a living place, and that we stand not above its land and waters, its birds, fish, and animals, but alongside them, owing a debt of care and restraint for the harm we have already done," said Hannel.



A top tourist destination in the world, Florida, has 15 international airports throughout the state to facilitate year-round visits. (Photo by Elijah Penn)

# A vision of growth and access: President Burkee outlines his plans for Saint Leo

**Sophia Sullivan**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

In between busy days filled with important meetings, emails, and his daily duties, Dr. Jim Burkee, the new president of Saint Leo University, makes it a priority twice a day, nearly every day to step out of his office to meet potential students. When the campus tours pass by his office in St. Francis, Burkee and his wife make it their mission to personally greet these potential students.

This small gesture shows what Burkee believes Saint Leo should be: a welcoming place deeply rooted in its values and dedicated to opportunity and growth.

Now in his first year as university president, Burkee is leading with a vision of ambition at Saint Leo, centered on enrollment growth, student retention, and expanded access across its traditional campus, online programs, and international reach. As a first-generation college student

and former professor, Burkee said the university must not only focus on attracting new students, but also on strengthening student experience and recommitting to its radical hospitality mission.

Hailing from a working-class family in Wisconsin, Burkee understands the impact that going to a college like Saint Leo can have on a young person's life trajectory.

"Higher education serves a social purpose in creating access and opportunity and upward mobility, and it's probably the only significant lever left in our world today that can, within a lifespan, lift families out of certain socio-economic categories," said Burkee. "It changes the trajectory of families and communities and ... it means that our eyes have to be on creating access."

That vision, Burkee says, is rooted in his own experience with higher education. Before working in administration, Burkee worked as a college professor. With degrees in

history and much time spent in the classroom working with students, he is able to have a unique view of the world of higher education, and those experiences continue to influence his views on leadership, strategy, and the role of universities in students' lives.

"We're in a time right now, politically, of a pretty wide pendulum swing. And I think it's going to mean that it's going to swing way back in another direction, because it always has," said Burkee. "And, so, for me, it means strategic planning and thinking about where that pendulum is going to swing, and I've got a pretty good idea of where it's going to go." His training as a historian provides him with foresight and a sense of perspective during times of instability.

That perspective ultimately shaped Burkee's decision to pursue the presidency at Saint Leo.

The process of getting this job looked a little unconventional

for Burkee. After working to stabilize his previous institution, Avila University, he and his wife purchased a new home in Kansas City. The day they were moving in, Burkee received the call offering him the job as Saint Leo University's twelfth president.

Burkee said that he and his wife had thought about moving to Florida before the presidency at Saint Leo had become a possibility. Having vacationed throughout the state over the years, the couple had considered Florida a place they could eventually settle down and retire.

Aside from the allure of living in warm, sunny Florida, Burkee emphasized that lifestyle alone was not the only thing to draw him to Saint Leo. He felt strongly that his personal values and beliefs aligned with Saint Leo's mission.

"Saint Leo is my dream institution," he said. "I've long believed that the world needs an institution like Saint Leo in the



"This is where I belong," said Burkee. (Photo contributed by The Lions' Pride Media Group)

# A vision of growth and access: President Burkee outlines his plans for Saint Leo (cont.)



President Burkee is making the student experience a priority at Saint Leo by invoking radical hospitality, optimizing campus amenities, and more. (Photo contributed by The Lions' Pride Media Group)

Catholic space.”

Burkee noted that Saint Leo is already poised to function as a “university of access,” with all that it offers internationally, online, and on its main campus in Saint Leo, Florida. Strongly inspired by the precedents and thoughts of one of Saint Leo’s previous presidents, Dr. Arthur Kirk, Jr., Burkee has big plans for Saint Leo.

“I think that Saint Leo should be the largest Catholic University in the United States, maybe the world,” said Burkee. “It’s not a stretch. We were almost there 10 years ago, and this place is made for it.”

Not only does Burkee have a vision for the university, but he has begun implementing initiatives to advance it. His administration is focusing on strengthening enrollment and student retention, areas that have been persistent concerns for Saint Leo.

“We’re going to increase enrollment by simply strengthening the student experience and keeping the students who are here,” said Burkee.

One of the ways Burkee is beginning to advance this student-focused vision is by welcoming students into his own home for dinners and socialization. He is also encouraging and offering incentives for professors to do the same with their students, whether it be taking them out to dinner or hosting students in their own homes.

Beyond these personal efforts, Burkee said the university is pursuing broader, structural strategies to strengthen enrollment.

Burkee shared his plans for introducing partnerships to the university to assist with the low rates of enrollment. Saint Leo will be partnering with an “international recruiting company” to expand Saint Leo’s reach globally, along with a partnership to improve the experience of the university’s education centers and to even construct new centers.

“So, I’m a big believer in partnerships,” he said. “As stable as Saint Leo is, our resources are still fairly limited, and, so, when you partner with another organization, it means you

multiply exponentially, in some cases, your marketing resources and your reach.”

Another area Burkee has pinpointed is the virtue of radical hospitality, which is something previous president, Dr. Edward Dadez championed. It refers to a commitment to creating a welcoming campus culture where faculty, staff, and students share the responsibility for making one another feel supported, included, and connected.

“We boast radical hospitality here, and we have to live it, and when we live it, when we really are what we say we are, people are going to stay,” said Burkee.

Burkee is also passionate about investing in Student Activities to improve campus life and the sense of community on campus. This includes extending the hours of places like Benedict’s Coffee House to allow students to gather in the evenings and on the weekends and remain on campus.

These efforts are unfolding against the backdrop of several difficult years for the university. Saint Leo has faced years of financial constraints and declining enrollment, leading to program eliminations, leadership changes, and budget reductions that students, staff, and faculty have felt across campus. Burkee, however, expressed his commitment to restoring institutional stability and positioning Saint Leo for long-term health and growth.

“There will always be in a healthy institution a churn of programs that become obsolete and those ... new programs on the horizon,” said Burkee.

In addition to programs, Burkee explained that it is vital for a stable university to have the correct people on its team to help it grow and thrive.

“I would suggest to students and faculty and staff ... if there were not fairly significant, visible changes, that would worry me,” he said. “I would be worried were there not changes.”

According to Burkee, part

of that process involves ensuring that the university has the correct leadership to help it move forward.

“We’ve come in with some fairly ambitious and aggressive plans to grow Saint Leo, and one would expect that not everyone’s going to be on board with that vision, and so it’s important for an institution to not shudder at the notion that some people are going to step off the bus or be helped off the bus,” said Burkee.

He emphasized that these changes should not be seen as a cause of concern, but as a step in the right direction for a healthy, thriving university. He noted that Saint Leo has undergone personnel change in even worse circumstances, and that current changes are not large-scale cuts, but focused on recovery.

Burkee tied those decisions to the university’s financial realities and to lessons he said were modeled by former president Dr. Arthur Kirk. Reflecting on Saint Leo’s earlier years, Burkee talked about photographs of the campus during Kirk’s tenure as a reminder of how investment shaped the university’s growth.

“Dr. Kirk ... was fond of reminding people that nonprofit did not mean that we don’t make a profit. We need to make a profit,” Burkee said.

He emphasized that those profits were never intended for shareholders but were reinvested back into the institution for funding campus improvements, academic programs, and student life. Burkee said the contrast between the campus today and images from its earlier years illustrates what sustained reinvestment can accomplish.

And, after years of leadership turnover, Burkee is focused and ready to work on his long-term commitment to Saint Leo.

“It’s my prayer that we’ll have a nice, long decade plus life here at Saint Leo, where we can build something exceptional,” said Burkee. “It only happens when somebody stays.”

# A Black pioneer in segregated Florida: Rudolph Antorcha at Saint Leo University

**Brenden Miller**  
*Staff Writer*

If you walk across the Saint Leo University campus today, you'll probably pass a bronze statue of a young man titled "A Spirit of Belonging." He isn't standing tall in some heroic pose or making a grand statement. He's just walking forward, calm and steady. That young man is Rudolph Antorcha. To students passing by today, he's just a monument. But in 1898, he was something much bigger: a teenager who traveled from Cuba to Florida to claim a place in a world that wasn't built for him.

He arrived in a Florida shaped by Jim Crow laws, a system reinforced by the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, which legalized segregation and made racial separation part of everyday life in the South. For a Black man, your skin color decided where

you could eat, sleep, and learn. Going to a mostly white school wasn't just difficult; it was a direct challenge to the rules of society.

The Benedictine monks at Saint Leo saw something beyond those rules, guided by the belief that every person has dignity. They recruited Antorcha from Havana. For a brief moment, they chose what they believed was right over what was easy. They opened their doors to someone who had never been meant to walk through them.

The Florida that Antorcha entered was deeply divided. Jim Crow wasn't just a social habit; it was the structure of life. Education, especially, was protected as a white-only pathway to opportunity. So, for a small Catholic college to admit a Black student from Cuba was not just unusual; it was bold. That decision is documented in "Pioneer College: The Centennial History of Saint Leo College, Saint Leo Abbey,

and the Holy Name Priory" by James J. Horgan, which preserves this nearly forgotten story.

Antorcha didn't just show up; he did well. In his first year, he excelled in English, reading, and spelling—an impressive feat, given that he arrived from Havana speaking Spanish. Records describe him as polite and hardworking. But being the "first" is never simple. When you're the only one, every mistake feels bigger. In a society waiting for him to fail, Antorcha kept proving people wrong.

Just by sitting in a classroom, he was challenging the racism of the time, but being a pioneer takes a toll. As Horgan explains, progress is rarely smooth. By his second year, things changed. School records suggest his behavior declined, but the larger reality was the pressure surrounding him. A letter from 1899 shows that Florida's segregation laws were

tightening, and the school was being warned about harboring a Black student. The risk of keeping Antorcha was too high.

So, in 1899, his time at Saint Leo ended. He was given \$25 for a boat back to Havana and made to sign a statement saying he left on good terms. On paper, it looked peaceful. In reality, it was a way to protect the institution more than the students.

He wasn't sent away because he failed; he was sent away because the world around him wasn't ready to stand with him.

Antorcha didn't leave behind a famous speech or a written legacy. He left behind something quieter but just as powerful: a path. For more than a century, his story was almost forgotten until researchers like Horgan brought it back into the light.

When Saint Leo unveiled his statue in 2013, it wasn't just about history; it was about admitting that belonging has always been something people had to fight for. The life-sized sculpture, "A Spirit of Belonging," was unveiled at a ceremony on Martin Luther King Jr. Day to honor that legacy.

Former Saint Leo President Dr. Arthur Kirk Jr. noted that the monument represents the institution's core values. "This is a particularly important story for us to tell. We have a core value of respect for all people. To integrate in 1898 when it was against the law in Florida to integrate, it's just a very, very powerful statement of that commitment."

Today, Saint Leo University serves students from all over the world. Diversity is no longer a risk; it is a strength. That didn't happen by accident. It started with people like Antorcha, who walked into spaces where they were never expected to be. He may have been sent back to Havana over a hundred years ago, but his presence never really left. His footsteps are still here, reminding students that sometimes, just showing up is how change begins.



"A Spirit of Belonging:" The bronze statue of Rudolph Antorcha stands as a permanent reminder of the first steps taken toward integration at Saint Leo University. (Photo by Brenden Miller)

# Lightning strike gold in Stadium Series victory

**Elijah Alvarado**

*Sports Editor*

Sunday, Feb. 1 was an electric night in Tampa, FL as the Tampa Bay Lightning hosted their first ever NHL Outdoor Stadium Series against the Boston Bruins. Now many fans are reflecting on how happy they are to have witnessed this once in a lifetime moment.

This weekend, the City of Tampa hosted its annual Gasparilla festivities, which was the theme for this year's NHL Outdoor Stadium series. The entire event was decorated with pirate decor to match the theme.

Augustine Pescatore, a sophomore majoring in business management and forward on the Saint Leo University Men's Ice Hockey Team shares his perspective on the event as a true hockey lover.

"It was one of the best hockey games I've ever attended, and without question the best last-minute decision I've made," said Pescatore.

One of the biggest concerns leading up to the game was the Tampa weather. In Tampa, it is very challenging to predict and know if it will be suitable for an ice hockey event.

According to WFLA News Channel 8, the temperature was 41.8 degrees Fahrenheit, making it a perfect temperature for ice hockey.

Leading up to the game, fans were concerned the ice rink would not be able to hold against the Tampa climate but, believe it or not, the cold was becoming a threat for the ice and players.

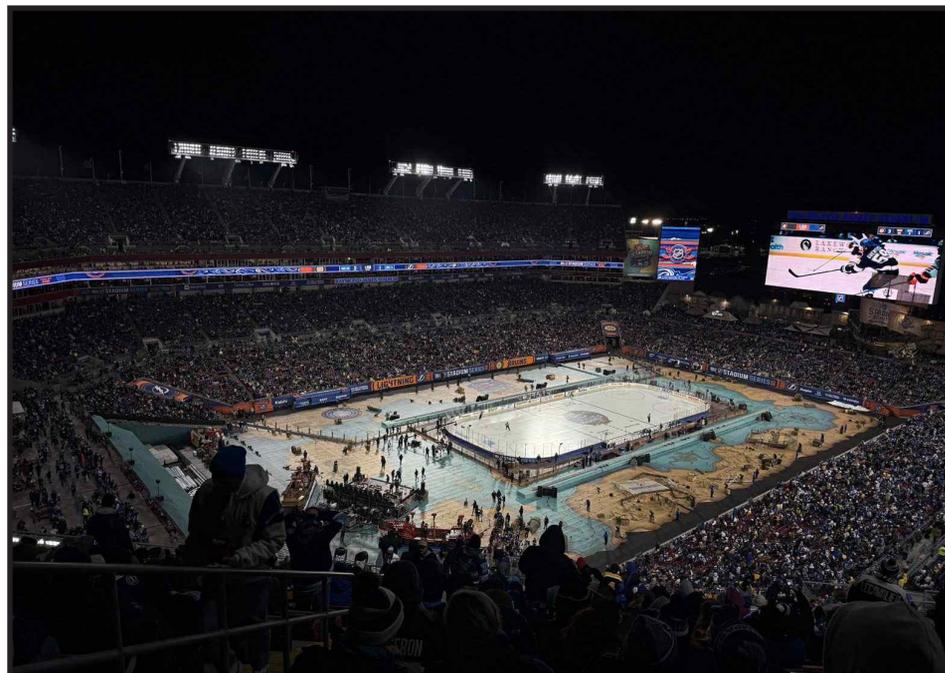
During the broadcast of the game, ESPN reporter Emily Kaplan said, "It is so cold that beginning in warmups and throughout the game, the NHL will actually be heating the ice to keep it the right temperature, as the temperature drops out here."

The Lightning not only made history in Tampa Bay, but had a historical franchise record of coming back from a four-goal

deficit and winning the game with a final score of 5-1, with 64,617 spectators in attendance.

Jacob Green, a senior psychology major and alternate captain for the Saint Leo University Men's Ice Hockey Team, shared his exciting experience.

"I was so happy that I was able to be in attendance with my teammate on the Saint Leo Ice Hockey Team, Augy Pescatore, and that game will be a story we bring up for the rest of our lives," said Green.



Not many hockey fans would ever imagine an ice hockey game under the shining stars. (Photo courtesy of Amber Montgomery)



**02.20.26**

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12900 LAKE JOVITA BLVD,  
DADE CITY, FL 33525

**7:30AM**  
CHECK IN + BREAKFAST

**8:00AM**  
WARMUP (FREE RANGE BALLS)

**8:30AM**  
SHOTGUN START

# Campus News

- Dr. Jim Burkee becomes Saint Leo's new president
- Service Day 2025
- Charlie Kirk memorial on campus
- 2025 Fall Family Festival
- Saint Leo's first graduating class of nurses
- Saint Leo's 9/11 memorial event
- New Target in Wesley Chapel
- Dr. Cillo pined in the face for fundraising
- New spots in Dade City--The Haven Cafe and the Garden Bistro
- Announcement of the Made by Us Marketplace



# Sports

- John Cena retired
- Kansas City Chiefs lost Super Bowl after two consecutive wins
- Alex Ovechkin breaks Wayne Gretzky's record for all-time NHL goals
- Rory McIlroy completed the grand slam
- George Foreman passed away
- LA Dodgers won World Series back to back in 2024-25
- Kendrick Lamar's Super Bowl halftime show
- Mike Tyson came out of retirement to fight Jake Paul
- Basketball gambling scandal
- Shohei Ohtani's historic post season

# Top TLPA

1. Navigating job trends: The skills you need to know
2. From Classroom to Career: Saint Leo University's Business School
3. The power of rest: Why it's essential for success
4. Summer classes: A great option or unnecessary stress?
5. Wendell Speer: The Saint Leo Published Writer
6. Professor Cillo gets a little extra (shaving cream)
7. 2024 unpacked: A year of triumphs, and memories
8. Banned in a blink: The impact of the following ban
9. A night under the stars
10. The Trump administration

# Top Stories

# 2025

# MG Stories

is in 2025: What graduates

Career: Saint Leo

s Day - Career Fair

Why taking a break is

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smart strategy or

School Security Guard and

a taste of justice (and

year of laughs, tears,

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TikTok went dark on Jan. 19

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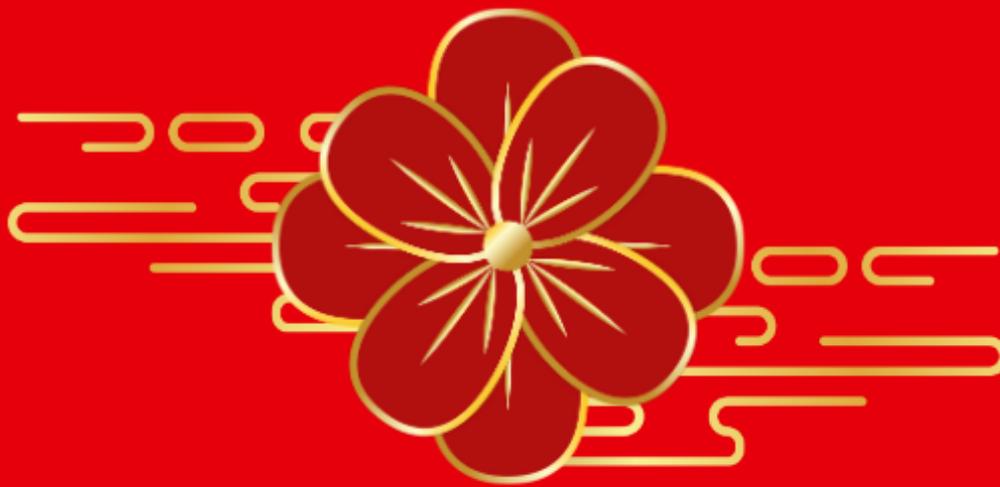
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## Arts & Culture

- Beyonce's "Cowboy Carter" tour
- The Coldplay couple
- "6-7" trend
- "Stranger Things" finale
- Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce engaged
- Demi Lovato and Jonas Brothers concert
- Selena Gomez and Benny Blanco get married
- AI music hitting top of the charts
- Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni legal battle
- "Zootopia 2" released



## World News

- Wars in Gaza and Ukraine continue
- Trump sworn into office for his second term
- The US government shut down
- Tik-Tok ban
- Hurricane Melissa affected the Caribbean
- Los Angeles wildfires
- Charlie Kirk assassination
- Pope Leo sworn in
- Nobel Peace Prize awarded to María Corina Machado
- The Louvre robbery

# Why “new year, new me” rarely works: The truth about New Year’s resolutions

**Hadassa Ferreira**

*Arts and Culture Editor*

“New year, new me!”

“New year, new life!”

“New year, more changes!”

These are slogans that mark the minds of billions of people at the beginning of each new year. These sentences aim to boost new outcomes; however, most times, resolutions end up dying as promises of a future that never arrives.

December comes, and people start writing down their lists of resolutions, then January passes by, and “Quitter’s Day” arrives. By February, their lists of resolutions are dumped in the trash.

According to a 2024 health survey by Forbes, most people’s intent to keep New Year’s resolutions lasts only two to four months before they give up or forget their goals. According to the survey, 8 percent of people give up their resolutions after a month, 21.9 percent last two months, 22.2 percent last three months, and 13.1 percent, four months.

Most New Year’s resolutions fail because people often don’t

understand why they truly want those changes, or how their existing habits and sense of self already compose a lifestyle that is beneficial to them.

Although people genuinely believe they want to achieve specific results, internal fears often hold them back by creating resistance to change. These fears may stem from uncertainty about how new changes will affect their lives, or from a fear of abandonment, since change can sometimes mean losing loved ones or growing distant from people who were part of their old routine.

Another factor behind failed resolutions is that many people have a weak sense of identity. They struggle to recognize who they truly are, and which changes or outcomes genuinely align with their own needs and values. It is very common that in someone’s resolution list, many of the goals are based on what “everyone else” is doing. Focusing on who you are and the possible new version of you is a better approach than focusing on what you want to achieve.

Moreover, New Year’s resolutions bring not only expectations, but also large amounts

of pressure on people, and pressure and expectations are the perfect path to frustration.

“I think it’s more difficult to fulfill a New Year’s resolution depending on how much pressure there is to stick with it,” said Tamar Olgin, a senior majoring in psychology.

For resolutions to be successful, it is necessary for people to take a deep trip inside themselves and analyze the reasons their bad habits are there. After that, they need to discover a way of fixing those things that impede them from reaching their goals. It is crucial to address the internal fears and treat them honestly, acknowledging their presence and spending time processing them. This is what opens space to new beginnings.

To achieve success, it is crucial to have mental health and a strong and stable mindset. People think as many new outcomes as possible is the best, but they do not realize that adding too much to their plate might be more of a burden than a help.

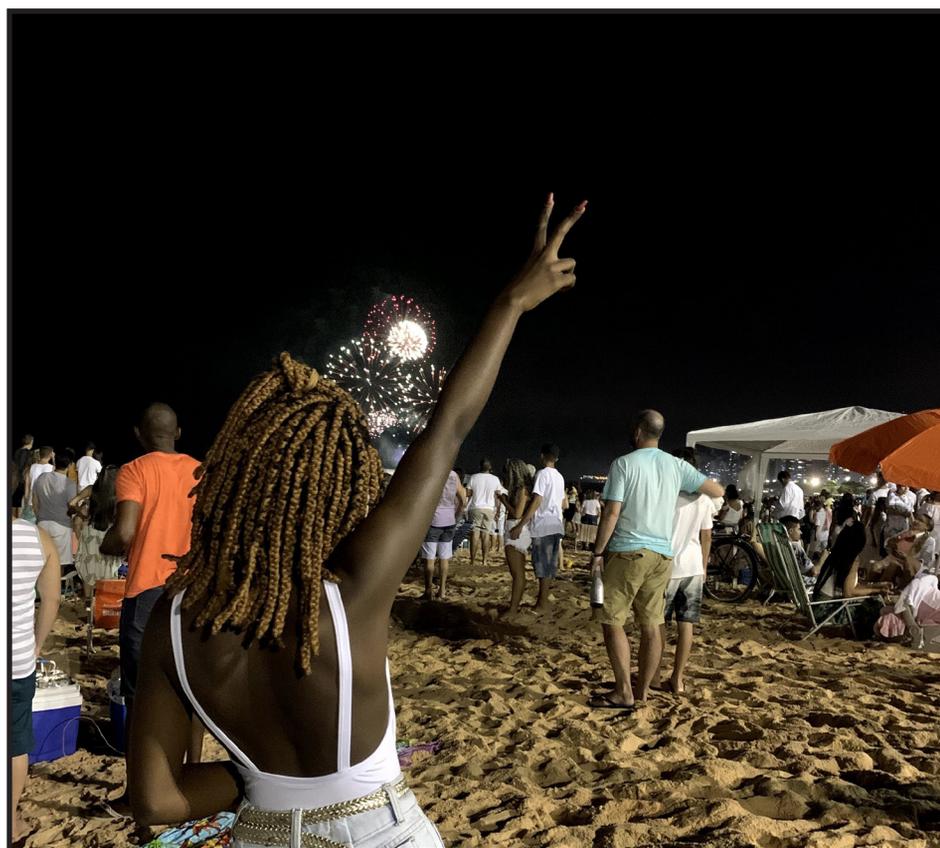
It is also important to remember that people have a hard time fulfilling their New Year’s resolutions because, most of the time, they tend to add big goals to their list that are hard to achieve. Instead, it is best to think about small goals to add to one’s routine

in a way that makes sense to the person that one already is. It is important to look at yourself with compassion without comparison or pressure.

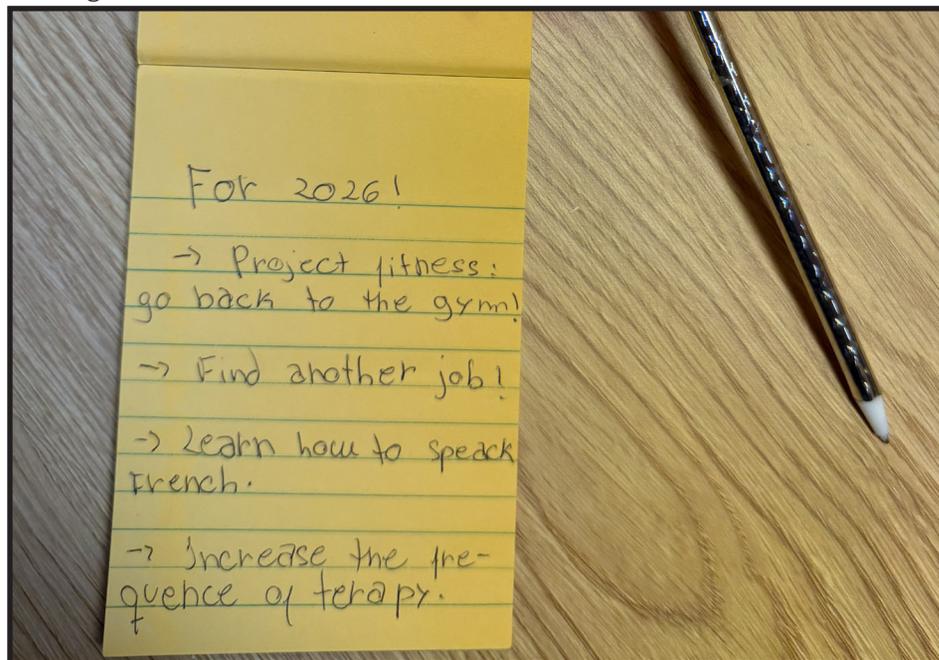
“In my view, the most effective way to maintain a New Year’s resolution is to break it into monthly goals rather than committing to one big year-long promise. Shorter time frames make habits easier to build, and if something isn’t working for you, there’s a natural point to reassess and pivot,” said Manuela Henao-Coca, a senior majoring in business management and international studies.

If people really want to partake in the journey of New Year’s resolutions, it is best to plan concrete and small steps towards significant change. It is good to have an empowering support structure, such as a community that believes in your capability to change and support you.

The most important part of New Year’s resolutions is starting and trying. If, throughout the course, you realize the chosen resolutions do not match your true self, it is okay to change your mind and ditch your New Year’s resolutions. What truly matters is perseverance and the constant commitment to self-improvement.



New Year’s resolutions seem to be, many times, the path to success and change. However, if not done carefully, they might just fail, and your life might never get out of that place. (Photo taken by Hadassa Ferreira)



The best path to fulfill your New Year’s resolutions is by deeply reflecting on who you are and which changes make sense for you. (Photo taken by Hadassa Ferreira)

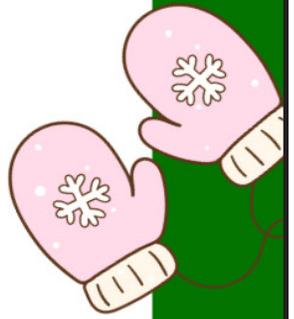


# NEW YEAR & WINTER

# WORD SCRAMBLE



By: Madison Wilson, Editorials editor



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# Shorts or jackets? Students' reactions to Florida winter

**Alina Rezepova**  
Staff Writer

The Florida winter is described as something fictional and impossible: There is no frost or snow, and people are able to wear shorts and enjoy the sun. However, is this really the case, or just what students from freezing, snowy countries think?

Although winter in Florida is usually warm, occasional cold fronts bring sudden drops in temperature that catch many people off guard. How do students from different parts of the world really experience winter weeks in Florida?

For those students who came to study in Florida from cold countries, winter in Florida seems incredible because it often brings sunshine, warm temperatures, and green landscapes instead of freezing weather.

For someone used to winter temperatures dropping below -13 degrees Fahrenheit, a day that is 50 degrees Fahrenheit may feel surprisingly warm and comfortable, leading many to believe they can do without winter clothes if there is no snow.

According to The Weather Channel, Florida's winters often experience significant temperature swings, with average lows sometimes dropping into the forties degrees Fahrenheit, making cold snaps feel surprisingly chilly for residents and international students.

"I have always thought that it is never cold in Florida and that there is only one season here: summer," said Sezim Sharshenalieva from Kyrgyzstan, a sophomore majoring in marketing at Saint Leo University.

"For a person who does not like cold and subzero temperatures, winter in Florida is a good option," continued Sharshenalieva.

People who are born and raised in countries where winter lasts from November to March automatically shiver at the word "winter." To survive, they wear warm down jackets, scarves, hats, and knee-high boots.

"The winters here is not as cold as in my country, but the cold here has nothing to do with the snow," stated Sharshenalieva. "When you live in a warm climate, you get so used to it that even a little coolness becomes noticeable."

"When I was going to study in Florida for the first time, I did not even think about the fact that I might need warm clothes here, which I had to buy with the onset of the first cold weather," added Sharshenalieva.

However, not all students can easily adjust to the Florida winter, especially those who come from warmer countries. Those who come from hotter countries, such as the Bahamas, Colombia, and others, relate to winter in Florida in a different way.

In hotter countries, the temperature does not drop below 75 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter. For students from hotter countries, 65 degrees Fahrenheit is already quite cool weather, and they constantly wear a jacket to keep warm.

"Winter in Florida has been an intriguing experience for me. I was expecting something much colder, but it is quite comfortable,"

said Juan Roa from Colombia, a senior majoring in marketing at Saint Leo.

"Even in the coldest months, it never gets as cold as it does here in Florida. In Bogotá, winter still feels temperate, while in Florida, the mornings and nights can feel genuinely cold to me," stated Roa.

However, winter is not always associated with snow and in more tropical countries, winter is accompanied by constant showers and clouds despite the relatively warm temperatures outside.

According to Terra Colombia, in Colombia, winter begins in November and is determined by a large amount of precipitation. In some areas, it can rain for days without stopping, even though the air temperature remains at 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

"In Colombia, winter is mainly rainy, not cold. I am from Bogotá, and during winter, we get a lot of rain, cloudy days, and gray skies, but the temperature does not change much," said Roa. "It stays relatively mild all year, so winter feels more wet than cold."

Local students in Florida also perceive winter differently;

even a brief cold snap feels unusual. For Floridians, winter weather is a reason to boast of a warm microclimate, but at the same time, they feel its real coolness compared to normal summer temperatures

"Throughout January and February, I try to always wear a jacket, or if I am driving somewhere, I turn the car heater up, especially in the evening when it starts to freeze," said Yulissa Barrios from Florida, a junior majoring in marketing at Saint Leo.

"It has been pretty cold at night in Tampa for the last two weeks, and I have had to put on a jacket every day," added Barrios.

It is interesting to observe how students from different cultures adapt to the same climate. For every person, Florida winter is a personal discovery that changes the usual idea of weather.

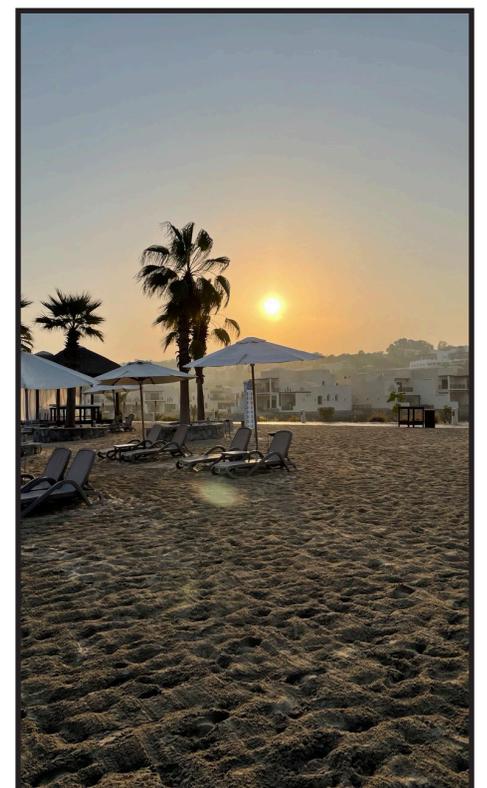
Winter in Florida is a kind of experiment for students, as some test their comfort limits while others learn to adapt. Mild, sunny, and sometimes unpredictable, it offers a unique experience and leaves vivid memories, reshaping the idea of winter for everyone.



In Russia, winter is not just a season but a lifestyle, with snow-covered roads, frozen forests, and months of subzero temperatures shaping daily routines. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



For Bali, winter is part of the rainy season with humid days, sudden downpours, and lush green landscapes. Snow is unheard of, even when the calendar says "winter." (Photo by Alina Rezepova)



In the UAE, winter is the most pleasant season of the year. Cooler evenings replace the extreme heat, allowing life outdoors without the need for snow, ice, or heavy clothing. (Photo by Alina Rezepova)

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## American Idol Finalist Coming to Saint Leo March 6

Zachariah Smith, a Top Five finalist from Season 21 of American Idol, will perform live at the Saint Leo University Wellness Center on Friday, March 6, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Smith gained national recognition for his powerful vocals and memorable performances on American Idol and has continued to build momentum in his music career since the show. He has released multiple singles and is currently working on an upcoming album. His most recent song "Runaway Train" can be found on all major streaming platforms and has been selected to the "New In Country" playlist on Apple Music.

The performance offers the Saint Leo University community and guests the opportunity to experience a nationally recognized artist in an intimate campus setting.

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SAINT LEO

# Winter wildlife: Migration in the Sunshine State

**Faith Skierkowski**

*Copyeditor*

Florida is a diverse state, home to many populations of unique animals that fly, swim, and glide through our ecosystems. Like humans in the winter, many animals flock to Florida to escape the cooler temperatures; a few of these include manatees, sandhill cranes, striped bass, and milkweed bugs.

Manatees are slow, peaceful mammals that migrate to the warmer waters of rivers, springs, and even powerplant outflows as temperatures begin to drop below 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

All around the waters of Florida, you will find designated manatee zones that call for no-wake and reduced boat speeds to protect these majestic creatures. According to WFTV 9, on Jan. 19,

at Blue Spring State Park, rangers counted over 700 manatees taking refuge from the cold waters of the St. Johns River.

The best times to observe this mingling mayhem of manatees are mid-November through March, with peak numbers in January and February. It is important to remember not to harm or bother these majestic mammals.

Manatees are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). According to the Marine Mammal Commission, the MMPA was the first legislation to mandate an ecosystem-based approach to marine resource management.

Another migratory species that makes Florida its home during cold weather is the sandhill crane.

Florida is home to two subspecies of sandhill cranes: the non-migratory Florida sandhill crane and the larger, migratory greater sandhill crane.

The greater sandhill crane chooses Florida as a winter snowbird, but nests across North America and breeds in northern regions during summer. Our year-round resident Florida sandhill cranes can be found in freshwater wetlands, prairies, and even your local golf courses.

“Although they’re no longer extinct, I can’t help but feel protective over sandhill cranes. I was born and raised in Florida, so seeing them cross the street or pecking at someone’s front lawn is not a foreign phenomenon to me,” said Brenna Schauer, a Saint Leo University alumna.

“My favorite thing about sandhill cranes is the fact that they mate for life. It’s both so incredibly touching and horribly gut-wrenching—especially when you realize that if one dies, the other is often left to mourn alone,” continued Schauer.

Just like our manatees, they are a state-threatened species, making it against the law to harass or kill them. It’s important to remember, never feed the cranes as it can disrupt their natural diet or create a co-dependency on food.

“Cranes are attracted by open settings (mowed grass) and the availability of foods such as acorns, earthworms, mole crickets, and turf grubs,” according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Here is a little advice: If there are cranes in your vicinity, try to remove the number of reflective objects around, because they have been known to cause damage and ruckus when they observe their own reflections.

One of the most popular hobbies in Florida is fishing, and you can expect to see a few more striped bass on your hook than usual during the wintertime. Striped bass migrate to southern waters during the winter to find cooler waters under

75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Major populations of the species head to the Carolinas, but a few unique populations come down to Florida to areas like the panhandle in the Ochlockonee River and Lake Talquin, and some even hang out with the manatees in the St. Johns River.

This species of fish seeks shelter in deeper holes like bridge pilings or in current breaks, along with their food, since they don’t stop feeding in the winter, but simply change their feeding patterns to bottom-dwelling prey that lie in deeper waters.

Finally, large milkweed bugs migrate to Florida to join other southern populations, to escape the winter, and continue to breed and feed with the remaining native Florida population, which has a year-round presence in southern Florida.

These intrepid insects consume milkweed seeds, helping regulate the spread of the plant, which can sometimes grow aggressively.

Milkweed bugs, along with the well-known monarch butterfly, both find their nutrients and feed on the milkweed, so it’s important to help contribute to and foster your local ecosystems by planting native milkweed, as it’s the only food for monarch caterpillars.

Adding nectar-rich plants like coneflowers that bloom throughout spring, summer, and fall provides nectar for adult butterflies to help fuel their migration south.

Florida serves as a critical wintering ground and stopover point for many species. Florida’s unique subtropical climate and geography make it a vital hub for wildlife year-round, but especially during seasonal changes when animals struggle to survive in the cooler environments.

Every small action helps to keep these lovely travels safe and protected. From planting milkweed in your yard, to keeping our waterways clean, and supporting local conservation efforts. Every small effort helps ensure they continue their remarkable seasonal travels.



A peaceful day on the golf course can turn into a fine of up to \$50,000 if you are disrespectful towards these cranes. (Photo by Faith Skierkowski)



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