

MARCH 2026



THE LIONS' PRIDE
MEDIA GROUP



New levels being set: Women's Lacrosse goalie breaks Sunshine State Conference record

Elijah Alvarado

Sports Editor

Sports can be highly competitive, especially at the collegiate level, as many athletes try to continue their careers professionally. High standards are being set in the Sunshine State Conference (SSC), more specifically in women's sports.

On Feb 10, Jessica Harclerode, a senior majoring in elementary education and goalie for Women's Lacrosse at Saint Leo University, set a new level in the



"I wouldn't be where I am today without the other players that I've played with this far," stated Harclerode (Photo courtesy of Jessica Harclerode)

SSC, breaking the record for career saves in Women's Lacrosse.

"I felt really accomplished and it was kind of like a full circle moment, because when I got to Saint Leo and I played my first season as a freshman, I was breaking school records," said Harclerode.

According to Saint Leo Athletics, she passed Florida Tech's goalie Stephanie Stuart, who previously led the conference with 504 career saves. Achieving a milestone can have different effects on everyone, but it is a step forward. Harclerode currently holds 509 saves.

"Ultimately my goal was to be able to do more than that, and I think standing on the field as a senior, just taking it all in and my teammates cheering me on from the side, it was really a full circle, amazing moment," added Harclerode.

Accomplishing a milestone is typically a feel-good moment for that individual to celebrate, but, for Harclerode, celebrating a personal milestone is a moment that is shared with everyone.

"As a captain, I always want make my team proud and show



"I definitely had growth with just [being] comfortable and confident on the field," stated Harclerode. (Photo taken by Micheal Hayeck)

them I'm capable and they can look up to me. So, I think it was just a proud moment for a lot of people, including myself," said Harclerode.

Just like any other challenge or obstacle, it takes a lot of mental and physical strength to give the best performance possible and be satisfied no matter what. Over time, Harclerode has seen significant growth in her career.

Harclerode has had many bright moments in her career, but after hitting such a major milestone

it has given her a mental boost on the field, which will lead her to success in the future.

"I feel like really nothing can stop me now," stated Harclerode.

Now that Harclerode has set the record for career saves at the college level, many youth athletes are looking up to her.

"There's always highs and lows, and without self-confidence and belief in yourself, you're never going to reach the goals you want to get," said Harclerode.

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 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 Tapia School of Business.

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The place where Saint Leo University breathes

Sayuri Vargas-Hernandez
Staff Writer

Saint Leo University welcomes students with an atmosphere that feels calm from the moment they arrive. The Saint Leo campus is known for its peaceful, natural settings, such as its green lawns, tall trees, gentle hills, and quiet water views that create a sense of comfort and belonging.

The university sits on almost 300 acres in the small town of Saint Leo, Florida. The land is truly special because hills are not common in the state of Florida.

As students walk across campus, they see open skies, bright sunlight, and trees moving in the wind. Palm trees, oak trees, and wide lawns make the campus feel open and peaceful, giving students a feeling of calmness even when their schedules are busy.

“One of the most enjoyable aspects of the nature and outdoor spaces at Saint Leo University is the peaceful and scenic

environment that surrounds the campus. The university sits on Lake Jovita, offering breathtaking lake views and wide green spaces that create a calm and beautiful atmosphere. I appreciate how the campus blends natural beauty with everyday student or work life,” said Vyron M. Folds, assistant director of the Office of Student Engagement & Leadership.

Lake Jovita is one of the most important natural areas that complements the campus.

The lake is a popular spot for walks, photos, and quiet time alone or with friends. Also, the green fields found all over campus are used daily by students who often sit outside to study, read, or relax.

Clubs and organizations use these areas as well for activities and events, which help build a strong sense of community. The campus has so much nature; students naturally spend more time outdoors, meeting new people, and enjoying the warm Florida weather together.

The environment supports the university’s culture of respect, hospitality, and balance. Nature

plays an important role in students’ emotional well-being. College can be stressful, and having quiet outdoor spaces helps students feel better.

“One of my favorite things about Saint Leo University is its nature. I love just sitting and enjoying the silence and all the plants around me. I also love going down to the dock and just listening to the sound of the gentle waves and the birds calling mixed with a fish jumping every now and then,” said Elijah Kennedy, a sophomore student majoring in business management.

A short walk under the trees, sitting by the water, or watching the sunset, can reduce stress and bring comfort. These small moments help students feel more stable and connected to themselves and to the campus.

Many buildings are surrounded by green areas, and the paths between them are lined up with trees. Students often gather near the Student Community Center (SCC), sit by the fountains, or relax on the lawns. These shared spaces make

it easy to spend time with friends and family.

“As I walk, I often have the opportunity to greet our talented and respectful students and humble groundskeepers, which is always a highlight of my day. I also enjoy seeing our student athletes practicing, a reminder of their discipline, teamwork, and commitment to excellence. Perhaps most of all, I appreciate the sense of peace that comes from spending time on our beautiful campus. It is a place that reflects both the spirit of our community and the mission of the university,” said Dr. Passard C. Dean, D.B.A. dean and professor of the Tapia College of Business

The natural beauty of Saint Leo is more than something to look at. It shapes students’ daily experiences and fosters a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The hills, trees, water, and open skies offer comfort, inspiration, and happiness. For many students, this environment has become one of the most influential parts of their college years.



A favorite sunset spot by The Bowl where students can enjoy the view and take a perfect sunset picture (Photo was taken by Sayuri Vargas-Hernandez)



A campus favorite tucked between the Tapia College of Business, the Student Activities Building, and the dining hall, a perfect spot to relax, read, or clear the mind between classes. (Photo was taken by Sayuri Vargas-Hernandez)

Women in campus leadership: Voices, vision, and impact

Brianna Brinker

Campus News Editor

March is Women’s History Month, which celebrates the success of women and their meaningful contributions to society. Women have taken on many leadership roles at Saint Leo University, practicing and learning real-world skills for their futures. Students like Alexis Reyes, Tamar Olguin, and Erin Romano are three such women who lead on campus and strive to make a difference in the Saint Leo community.

Alexis Reyes, a junior majoring in business management and marketing, is the Resident Assistant (RA) for upperclassmen housing in Apartment 5. Before she landed the role, she was passionate about achieving it.

“I genuinely wanted to help create a supportive and engaging living environment.” Reyes said.

Some of her responsibilities within this position are planning community-building events, enforcing housing policies, and serving as a mentor. There are certain qualities that make you stand out as a leader. Reyes describes herself as a strong listener, reliable, and approachable.

“I believe communication is very vital to success. I also stay calm under pressure, which helps me handle situations thoughtfully and fairly,” Reyes said.

As a leader, great qualities come with many challenges, and one that Reyes faces is being intentional

about staying connected with all her residents. With residents having different schedules and personalities, Reyes makes an effort to reach people in different ways.

“It pushes me to be more creative and proactive as a leader,” Reyes said.

One piece of advice Reyes gives to those who are interested in taking up a leadership role is “don’t wait until you feel completely ready. Put yourself out there, apply, and trust your abilities.”

Tamar Olguin Alzate, a senior majoring in clinical psychology, is known for many leadership positions on campus that she has fulfilled. During her time at Saint Leo, she was the Student Body President of the Student Government Union.

This year, she has taken on two positions: Social Media Ambassador for the Saint Leo University Communications Department and the worship leader for Truth Seekers Nondenominational Bible Study and Church.

“The most rewarding part about being a social media ambassador is sharing the love I have for my university with other students. Additionally, being a worship leader, seeing young adults fall in love with Jesus, and worshiping God is its own reward,” said Olguin.

Olguin shares her responsibilities for both leadership roles, such as executing video ideas

for the University Instagram page and creating a set list for church every Sunday. Olguin shares that the qualities that make her a good leader are her listening and communication skills.

“I love to create a space where students feel comfortable talking and expressing themselves,” said Olguin. She shared one piece of advice to students interested in leading on campus.

“If you want something, then it’s your responsibility to go for it. Experience and learning come with the job, and learning from mistakes is a gift we shouldn’t take for granted. There were so many times that I thought I couldn’t do things, but if I never tried, I would’ve never had the wonderful college experience that I’ve had.”

Erin Romano, a senior majoring in English, is the president of the Saint Leo chapter of Turning Point USA.

“The most rewarding part of being in my current leadership position is being able to witness the community that has been formed

through the club,” said Romano.

Some of Romano’s responsibilities include organizing events, delegating tasks, and ensuring a safe environment for like-minded and opposing opinions alike. What makes Romano such a good leader is her willingness to step up in uncomfortable situations.

“I have often been told that social situations are not something I fear, but something I embrace,” Romano said.

Romano says a challenge she faces is that the work is never complete, and being a leader is a 24/7 role.

“Before becoming a leader, I did not realize how active my role would require me to be. Truly, everything starts from the leader, and if the leader does not understand this, everything below will remain stagnant,” said Romano.

These three young women have shown what leadership truly means through their actions and loyalty to their roles. Take this as motivation to be a leader within your community. Leaders are the ones who guide others instead of being guided. It takes strength, passion, and a unique person to lead people towards the right direction, and that’s what Reyes, Olguin, and Romano have done on campus and will continue to do so.



A leader builds a strong community of people through being supportive and having good communication. (Photo courtesy of Alexis Reyes)



A great quality of a leader is speaking up on what is right. (Photo courtesy of Erin Romano)



Being a leader is taking on responsibilities and fulfilling them for their intended purpose. (Photo courtesy of Tamar Olguin Alzate)

Where generations reunite: Alumni Weekend 2026

Sayuri

Vargas-Hernandez

Staff Writer

Saint Leo University came alive for Alumni Weekend from March 6-8. Alumni generations returned to the place where they created unique experiences for a three-day celebration. As they gathered in community, they continued to celebrate the Benedictine values that guide the university as it grows today.

“Planning for Alumni Weekend is a year-round process that can begin up to a year in advance. After reserving campus spaces for the various events, our marketing efforts begin with a 'Save the Date' message that typically goes out in September,” said Sarah Olsen, director of Alumni Engagement.

There is a new service project called “Pack the Pantry” that played an important role in this year’s celebration because it is the initiative that invites alumni to donate canned goods, microwaveable meals, and toiletries for the student-run Leo Food Pantry, which provides students with up to five free items each week.

Donation bins were placed across campus and filled quickly throughout the weekend, showing strong alumni support and reminding the community that Saint Leo’s spirit of care continues long after graduation.

The weekend event began on Thursday, March 5, with the Alumni Association Board of Directors meeting in the Wellness Center Yoga Room. Board members discussed university updates and long-term goals for alumni engagement. Later that day, the Glen E. Greenfelder and Janet L. Denlinger Boardroom hosted the annual Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

“Dr. Jim Burkee was speaking about his agenda for Saint Leo and where it is going. I like his idea of focusing on the New England states and the Midwest so we can recruit more students



Saint Leo alumni return to the field to watch the Lions play during Alumni Weekend. (Photo was taken by Jorge Negron)

to come to Saint Leo,” said Kevin Callahan, ’75 alumnus.

Families, former teammates, and faculty came together to honor alumni whose achievements and service reflect Saint Leo’s mission, creating an atmosphere of pride that carried into the rest of the weekend.

“We also collaborate with Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club and merchants in the surrounding communities of Dade City, Wesley Chapel, and Plant City to help make the weekend a success for our alumni and guests,” added Olsen.

Friday’s events blended tradition with campus life; the day opened with the Alumni Weekend Golf Outing at Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club, where alumni enjoyed a relaxing morning of conversation and friendly competition. Later in the afternoon, alumni and families gathered at Thomas B. Southard Stadium for a baseball tailgate and game against Roosevelt University. Music, food, and team spirit brought the crowd together before cheering on the Lions.

One of the most meaningful gatherings of the day was the 50th

Reunion Celebration for the Class of 1976 at Lake Jovita. Alumni shared dinner, stories, and memories about how Saint Leo shaped their lives.

Friday evening also featured the Spring Choral Concert, “The Holy Name”, performed by the Saint Leo Singers and Chamber Singers at the Abbey Church. The night ended with the Taste of Saint Leo, an all-alumni reception at the Wellness Center with food and beverage tastings from local businesses and live music by “American Idol” finalist Zachariah Smith. Winners of the golf outing were announced during the event.

Saturday began with “Breakfast with the President,” where President Burkee delivered remarks and presented the 2025 Alumni Awards, recognizing alumni who have made significant contributions to their professions, communities, or the university. Affinity Meetups at Benedictine Hall gave alumni the chance to reconnect with academic programs, student organizations, and groups that shaped their student experience.

The afternoon brought one

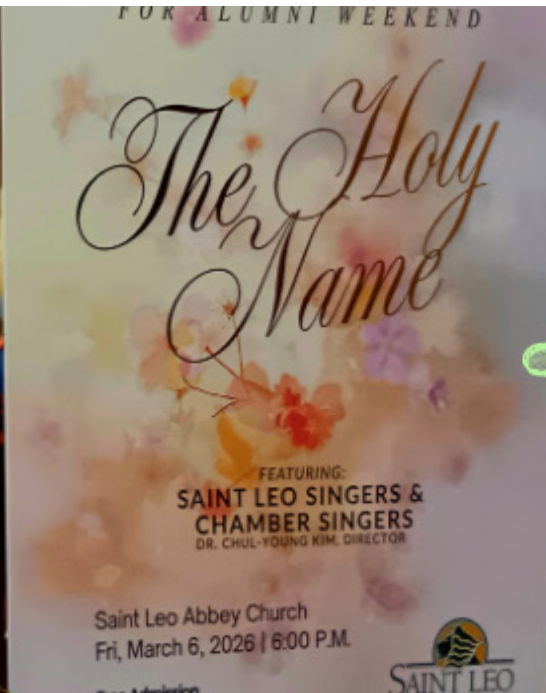
of the weekend’s most energetic events: the Lion’s Fest Pool Party at the Wellness Center Pool. With food, drinks, live music, and a cookout, the event drew a large group and highlighted the campus’ scenic views. Athletics remained central throughout the day, with alumni volleyball, men’s tennis, baseball, lacrosse, and beach volleyball.

The men’s lacrosse game also included the Luhn Family Stadium Naming Ceremony, marking an important moment for the athletics community.

The weekend closed on Sunday with the Mass of Remembrance at the Abbey Church, honoring the Class of 1976 and remembering Norm Kaye, a key figure in Saint Leo’s athletic history. A Farewell Brunch in the Dining Hall followed, giving alumni a final chance to gather before heading home. Many attendees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to return to a place that continues to influence their lives, reaffirming that the Saint Leo community remains strong across generations.



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1. "The Holy Name Spring Choral Concert" featured the Saint Leo Singers and Chamber Singers under the direction of Dr. Chul-Young Kim. The event held many hymns of praise, many parts being a cappella. (Photo by Elijah Penn).

2. On the night of March 6, the Saint Leo Singers preformed "At His Name," a series of song and narration telling the life and journey of Jesus Christ from Lent to Easter (Photo by Elijah Penn)

3. On Saturday, the Saint Leo women's volleyball team played Saint Leo volleyball alumni in a good-natured matchup. (Photo by Jorge Negron)

4. A group of Saint Leo Alumni danced the night away to Zachariah Smith's performance on Friday. (Photo by Ben Hasapidis)

5. The Saint Leo baseball team took on Roosevelt University to kick off the weekend. (Photo by Jorge Negron)

6. One of the standout events of the weekend was the Alumni Golf Outing at the Lake Jovita Golf & Country Club. (Photo by Ben Hasapidis)

7. Caroline Magill, a senior majoring in Medical Humanities, poses for a photo with American Idol finalist Zachariah Smith. (Photo by Ben Hasapidis)



Line in the mud: State versus local government over wetland rules

Elijah Penn
Copyeditor

The 2026 Florida Legislative Session has brought many bills that are being closely watched by Floridians, from changing the state bird to reducing the purchasing age for firearms. However, another bill that has gained a lot of attention recently is House Bill (HB) 479 by Representative Randall “Randy” Maggard of District 54, which includes the Saint Leo community.

Upon its original filing, HB 497 stated, “The regulation of water quality, water quantity, pollution control, pollutant discharge prevention and removal, and wetlands, including any delineation, is exclusively preempted to the state,” preventing county and municipal governments from enforcing rules relating to those issues.

The bill also included a provision that allowed the state to refuse funding to municipalities or counties that violated this statute.

HB 479 was met with mixed reception, with notably strong opinions from its opponents. Craig Pittman of the Florida Phoenix went as far as describing Maggard’s bill as the “Worst Bill of the Year.”

This isn’t the first year that Maggard has proposed this statute change. In fact, Maggard ran similar bills in 2023 and 2024, although neither made it to the House floor.

However, on Jan. 14, HB 497 was substituted to only focus on preventing local governments from enforcing wetland buffer laws beyond a minimum of 15 feet and an average of 25 feet.

It would also repeal Section 373.591 of the Florida Statutes, effectively disbanding “Management Review Teams” for conservation, preservation, and recreation lands owned by state water management districts.

While changes in the bill, since it was originally introduced, have addressed many of the major concerns of critics, many still raise alarm about the potential effects of the bill, even in its narrowed scope.

Critics of HB 497 point

to environmental concerns or limiting “home rule” when the state restricts the authority of local governments over the land in their borders. Supporters point to the time and cost savings for landowners wishing to develop land adjacent to wetlands.

If passed, the bill will directly impact the practices of current local governments. Pasco County currently requires buffer sizes up to 50 feet for specific waterways such as the Anclote River. Buffer size requirements are based on the size, connectivity, and water quality of the wetland.

Almost two-thirds of Florida counties have wetland buffer requirements that often go well beyond state law requirements. These codes would be invalidated by the new statute.

Maggard was unable to provide a comment by the deadline when reached by The Lions’ Pride Media Group.

When presenting the bill to the Natural Resources and Disasters Subcommittee, Maggard stressed that the bill would not eliminate wetland buffers but prevent the state’s average buffer from being increased by local governments.

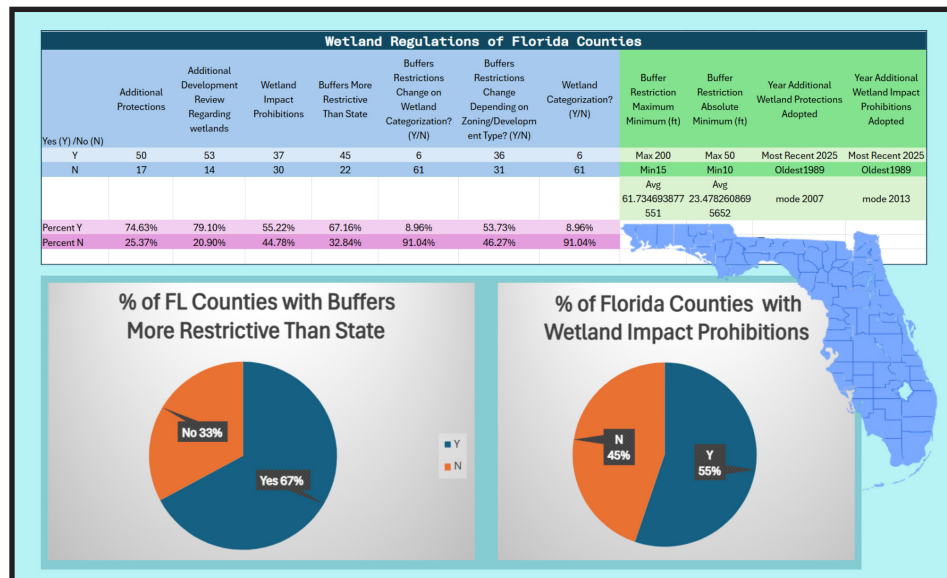
“Wetland buffers are an upland area not aimed at protecting water quality or quantity, but protecting the wetland from secondary impacts from nearby development,” Maggard also stated.

Maggard noted that approximately one-third of Florida is wetland. Thus, many building projects are affected by wetland buffer rules.

Maggard considers Management Review Teams to be a superfluous step that slows down public accountability and often lacks the required volunteer board members.

When asked by Rep. Kelly Skidmore why the state is more qualified to set wetland buffer laws, Maggard contended that most counties were “putting random numbers” for wetland buffer sizes.

“Water is science. If we ever let it become emotional, we’re in



Based on data from county codes, 45 Florida counties (approximately 67 percent) have wetland buffer regulations that are stricter than state regulations. Almost 75 percent of counties have additional wetland protections that the state does not mandate. (Graphic by Elijah Penn)

trouble,” said Maggard, “Nobody knows the water layout more than water management ... they do one thing only: water. We know water better than anyone, the state does.”

“I don’t think it’s right to take that person who bought that property, and you take more of it. We take a right-of-way from them on the road; now we’re taking more than what the state says we have to take on [wetland buffers],” added Maggard.

Thomas Ries is the president and founder of the Tampa Bay-based not-for-profit organization Ecosphere Restoration Institute, which works to restore critical habitats; like Maggard, Ries also worked for the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

Ries supports larger buffers and worries that if HB 479 is passed, the state will be unable to adequately review the increased project load, and reduced wetland buffers will have negative consequences, such as habitat loss or even flooding and water shortages.

“I hate to see the local decisions made that fit that area get taken away so everything is more power and control state level,” said Ries.

“The state is not small. The geographics of the northern part or central and southern are not all the same. And, so, if you’re in one of those,” Ries continued, “you may

have to have slightly different rules for your situation. So, that should be the way it goes—not one size fits all.”

From his experience with SWFWMD and going through permitting for restoration projects, Ries has seen firsthand how overtaxed and understaffed state and federal agencies are. He worries that the increased burden of reviewing all wetland buffers would exacerbate long wait periods.

Additionally, Ries explained that wetland buffers indirectly prevent flooding as they allow greater capacity for the wetland to hold water after major storms, before that water ends up in someone’s yard or home, where a buffer would otherwise be.

Ries cited a USF study that found that most existing wetland buffers were not adequate to protect wetlands. Even when the buffers were large, there were often secondary impacts due to the proximity of urban spaces where impacts such as fertilizer runoff or improper lawn debris disposal encroached into the buffer habitat.

The controversy surrounding Maggard’s bill underscores the complex nature of state politics and how even the most seemingly minuscule changes have wide-reaching impacts on the lives of Floridians, for the better or worse. Unfortunately, a single course of action or remedy is seldom agreed upon by everyone.



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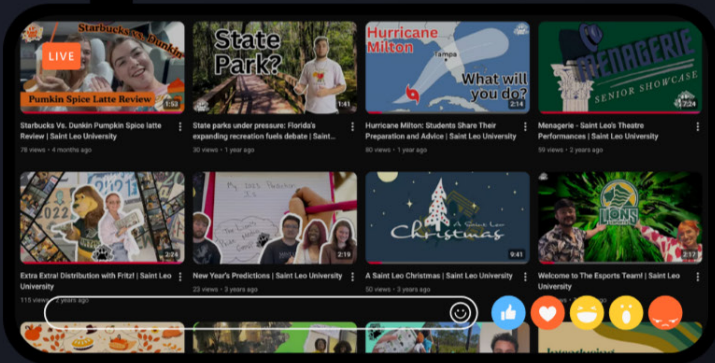


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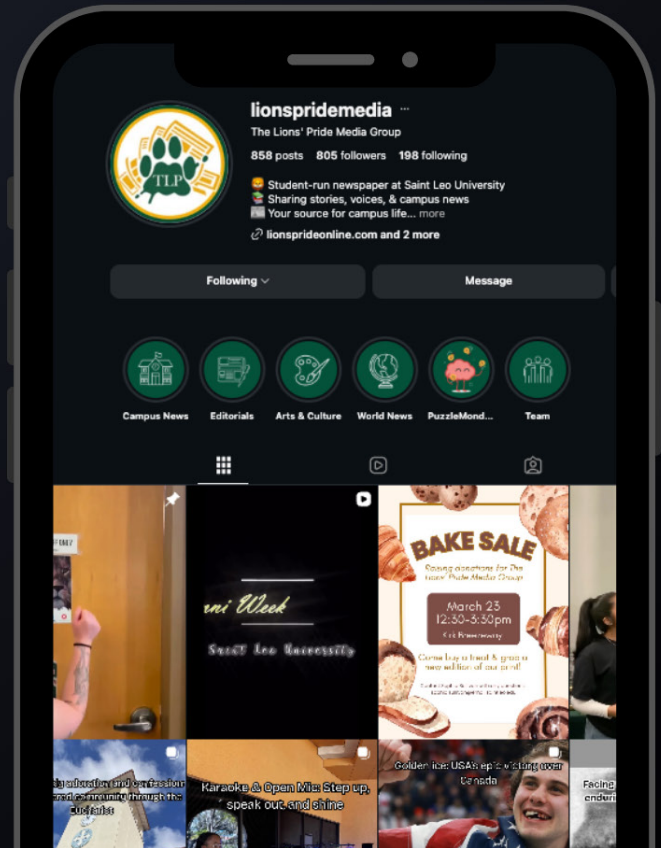
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By: Madison Wilson, Editorials Editor

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Closer to the earth: How to rebuild your connection with nature

Hadassa Ferreira

Arts & Culture Editor

March arrived and brought back the long-awaited time of spring! After months of winter chills, people will be able to get outside, breathe fresh air, feel the warmth of the sun, and explore the environment and all the blessings nature can give them.

Mainly for Floridians who were born amid a state that is surrounded by nature everywhere, having the opportunity to enjoy nature is a crucial factor in their lives since their emotional connection to it is huge. For someone who has great memories of spring, surrounded by their feet on the sand, collecting rocks and leaves, or even observing cute animals, spring is a special moment.

However, not everyone has this special connection to nature. Some people who grew up in big cities, amid concrete everywhere, might not see the same value in nature or find it harder to feel a deep emotional attachment to nature.

Some people might see nature, specifically in the spring, as an inconvenience: a lot of bugs, intense hot weather, high humidity, undesired animals that are everywhere, such as those little lizards and frogs you see all around pathways in Florida. Therefore, they find it harder to get emotionally connected to it and see its benefits.

It is a fact, though, that nature is very special and brings several benefits to people's lives. For instance, according to an article by UC Davis, human bodies can relax in natural environments since nature provides breaks to the intense and exhaustive routine and helps physical wellness by decreasing cortisol levels. This is why it is important for those who do not have a connection with nature to find good ways to bond with the natural environment.

A good way to connect with nature is by recognizing its spiritual value in human lives. For those who are religious, nature is a good way to perceive God, for example. Nature, as a creation of God, tells us about



Saint Leo's Lake Jovita has an amazing view, mainly at sunset. Experiencing the sunset at Saint Leo University is very thrilling. (Photo by Hadassa Ferreira)

Him all the time.

As stated in Psalms 19:1-4, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun."

Art is another great way of connecting with nature. Those who need creativity to develop beautiful artwork can find in nature an infinite number of inspiring sources and elements that can help in the creation process. Nature provides a variety of colors, textures, essences, and sounds that can raise people's creativity.

"One of literature's great roles is connecting us through our common humanity. But we also get to connect to other species, geographies, natural features, the elements, etc., through stories, essays, poems, and other forms of art. Besides educating us, art and literature broaden our knowledge, compassion, and empathy. As we understand our place in the web of life, our values can evolve towards respect for all creatures and natural places," stated associate professor of English and creative



At Saint Leo, everywhere you look, you can find a piece of nature that can make you feel emotional. It is an amazing place to reflect on the role of nature in your life. (Photo by Hadassa Ferreira)

writing Gianna Russo.

Finding an emotional connection with nature is also a great way of perceiving yourself. Humans are part of nature; we are natural beings, and slowing down to feel the environment around us is an effective way of perceiving our emotions and understanding our purpose on this planet on a larger scale.

Travelling and experiencing new natural places is also a good way of finding a deep connection to nature. Many people, when choosing a destination for their trips, think about historical sites or even places with a lot of technological entertainment. However, the United States is full of natural sites, such as national parks, where people can enjoy beautiful natural views. Camping in natural parks offers one of the best ways to truly experience nature.

Florida is a state full of options for eco-tourism, and Saint Leo University is the perfect campus to enjoy some of those. Our campus

is full of natural beauty everywhere you look. It is a nice place to take a walk, fish, and swim.

"Living and working at Saint Leo allows us to enjoy nature if we just take the time to do so. We can appreciate the azaleas that are blooming right now, the visits by sandhill cranes, the soft sounds of the lake, the peacefulness of the grotto, and the wide, open lawns where we can relax, read, visit, or simply reflect," added Russo.

One of the best advantages of being a college student is that this phase is perfect for learning and developing new habits. Often, in a place like Saint Leo, people who have not been used to enjoying nature or connecting with it have the opportunity to do so.

Do not lose the opportunity of finding the best way of connecting with nature. Always keep in mind that everyone is different, and you can do what is best for you and what works more in your routine. At the end, what matters is to stay naturally connected!

Natural beauty and natural mind among Saint Leo women

Eva Costa

Staff Writer

It is finally March, and it is that time of year to celebrate Women's History Month. But beyond celebrating women, March is also the time to celebrate nature, and there is no better way of celebrating both women and nature than to talk about natural beauty products.

Although nature has always been the source of components to create beauty products, with the advances of technology, women started using chemical beauty products. Recently, though, there has been a movement among some women focusing on natural skin care, medicine, and makeup.

This phenomenon also happens because most women end up feeling comfortable after they experience the soft effects of the products. Moreover, the results of their use give them a sense of confidence when they see their good-looking faces and bodies in the mirror.

This is why, in celebration of women and nature, it is interesting

to share the many ways women in college can use natural and healthy products in March.

Dalyn James, a freshman student majoring in criminology and psychology, believes that using natural products for beauty rather than industrialized ones can be less harsh on the skin.

"As a natural product, I use the liquid vitamin E skin oil, which I feel that it heals my face," James affirms. "If I have bad breakouts or my skin is extra dry, if I put this vitamin as a face mask and leave it overnight, in the morning my face looks like nothing bad happened with it."

Furthermore, Isabelle Grey, a sophomore student majoring in elementary education, also agrees that using natural products for skin is a better option because most industrialized ones have harsh chemicals for your face.

"I've seen a lot of people who have poisoned chemicals in their faces without noticing them, so I rather use natural products because they look healthier for me,"

Grey affirms.

"I don't know any 100% natural product, but anything with the plant Aloe Vera like a skin care mask is probably a better option to use, just the plant," said Grey. "My grandma used to grow aloe vera plant in her backyard and when I used [it] one time as a skin care I felt that my skin looked soft and brighter," she concluded.

To specify more about those techniques, Caroline Magill, a senior majoring in medical humanities and intern for the Saint Leo greenhouse, explained that natural plant ingredients can support healthier beauty.

"From what I have learned in my Saint Leo 'Medicinal Botany' and 'Honors Plants & Potions' courses, there are several plants that have a long history of supporting healthy skin. Aloe vera helps soothe and hydrate the skin. Rose, especially rosewater, contains natural antioxidants and vitamins that support brightness and smooth texture. Coconut oil provides emollient fatty acids that

help soften dry skin, and witch hazel is a gentle, plant-based astringent. These botanicals have been used for generations in beauty and skincare," affirmed Magill.

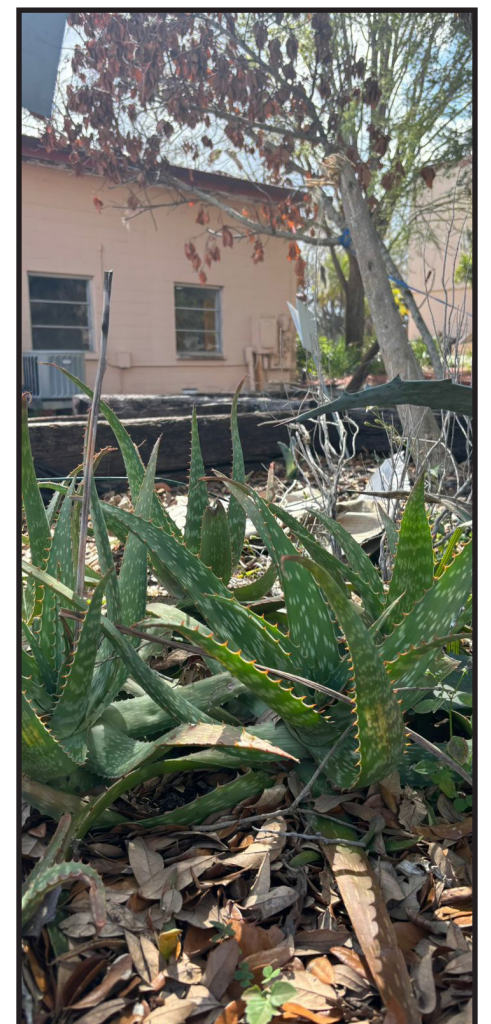
Magill also thinks this is healthier because those natural ingredients contain compounds that work with the skin instead of overwhelming it.

"The garden is an incredible hands-on resource, and many students don't realize how much it can teach them about wellness, sustainability, and the benefits of natural botanicals. I encourage everyone to stop by before the end of the semester for a tour and see how the Saint Leo Garden can help you become a healthier student." Magill concluded.

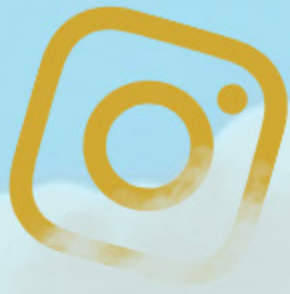
To learn more about how natural products can benefit their skin, students are more than welcome to stop by the greenhouse.



The Saint Leo Greenhouse is near deChantal Hall, where most biology majors study plants or use it for exciting experiments. (Photo by Eva Costa)



An example of a natural plant that can serve as a source of natural beauty is the aloe vera. It is located in Saint Leo University Greenhouse. (Photo by Eva Costa)



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Artwork inspired by Kathy McKendree

