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# PANTHER *MAGAZINE*

Vol. 1 Issue 11

A Forum for Free Student Expression at Florida International University

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# OUR CARBON PAWPRINT

PHOTO COURTESY OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

# SO FRESH, SO CLEAN

## Office of Sustainability encourages low-carbon practices at University

**MARTINA BRETOUS**  
News Director

While many believe sustainability applies only to the environment, the Office of Sustainability at the University strives to show it comprises people, planet and profit.

“The Office of University Sustainability is here to make FIU green. So basically, our overall mission is to reduce our carbon footprint,” said Alexandra Dutton, sustainability manager at the Office of Sustainability. “We do that through education outreach with our students, faculty and staff, and working behind the scenes with the different departments to implement projects, procedures or policies that ... affect us operationally.”

Dutton says the office has many “reporting-type projects,” to the Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System—a nationwide self-reporting framework designed to evaluate universities’ sustainability performance—and her role is overseeing those projects and the various programs carried out by the staff

In 2015, President Mark B. Rosenberg joined the American Campuses Act on Climate, launched by the White House, and issued a six-part pledge to increase low-carbon practices on campus. One of the University’s goals was to reach a 15-point increase in their rating by 2016 and a gold STARS rating by August of 2017, when the annual report is due.

“We’ve been working with departments to try and see what they can do in their own areas to increase our score on the different credits that pertain to them so we are working on it,” Dutton said. “Hitting STARS gold is definitely a very hard goal in a short amount of time so we’re getting close to there and hopefully, we can reach

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We have already experienced sea level rise, or what they call sunny day flooding, during high tides and we have ... research centers on campus that go out, measure flooding and we can see the trend over time is increasing,

Alexandra Dutton  
Sustainability Manager  
Office of Sustainability

”

that by August.”

The STARS rating evaluates Universities in four areas: academics, operations, engagement and planning/administration.

“We report things like how many classes does FIU have that incorporate sustainability, or what are we paying our employees, is it a fair salary?” said Dutton. “Even things down to the basics ... what is our recycling and waste [percentage], how

much water are we using, things like that.”

While the office does put a focus on the environment, Dutton notes that sustainability reflects a much bigger scale.

“... Sustainability, and a lot of people get this wrong, is not just about the environment,” said Dutton. “Sustainability is actually the intersection of three pillars which is: people, planet and profit, which is one reason why we look at our employees [and their salaries].”

Dutton says students can also participate in these practices on their own and help make the University more sustainable.

“Our most popular program that we have is our Nature Preserve volunteer days ...” said Dutton. “We get a lot of students that are either there for extra credit ... and we also get students who are out there because they like to be in the environment and it’s like another form of working out.”

The office also organizes events throughout the year including Campus Sustainability Day, RecycleMania, and various tabling events depending on what the staff decides.

“I feel like we are in a time of transition and, especially for climate, we’re at a really crucial time where we need to make some hard choices and changes to preserve our environment and planet for our future generations and if we don’t make those choices, we will definitely suffer the consequences,” said Dutton.

South Florida is particularly vulnerable to climate change, Dutton says, and that appears in the sea level rise.

“We have already experienced sea level

rise, or what they call sunny day flooding, during high tides and we have ... research centers on campus that go out, measure flooding and we can see the trend over time is increasing,” said Dutton. “And a lot of time, people think sea level rise is like a slow tidal wave coming from the ocean but that’s not the case here in South Florida.”

Because South Florida sits on porous limestone, the ocean water comes from underneath, Dutton says, penetrating the rocks and going through the sewer system, which is why flooding can often be seen in areas that aren’t near the ocean.

The Office of Sustainability piloted the RideFlag app in the spring, a carpooling service designed and customized for FIU, and plans on doing a “huge push for it” in the fall after they’ve worked out some kinks in the application, Dutton says.

“At FIU, we are largely commuter based ... so the carbon emissions from just students commuting to campus is our largest force of emissions which is why we work with the Department of Parking and Transportation to do carpool initiatives, or have electric vehicle charging stations and improve the public transportation around campus to other campus and around the community.”

For more information on the Office of Sustainability, visit [gogreen.fiu.edu](http://gogreen.fiu.edu).

*Tune in to the Claw & Growl to hear Alexandra Dutton, on The Roar, Student Media’s radio station, on Friday, April 14 at 10 a.m. to talk more about the office’s initiatives.*

## Series educates students on endangered fish

**BARBARA BRITES**  
Staff Writer

The Ocean Life Series: A last stand: Ecology and Conservation of the Smalltooth Sawfish in Southern Florida hopes to educate the community about this endangered fish.

According to Aileen Soto, program manager for FIU in the Keys, the Series is going to focus on a species of fish called the Smalltooth Sawfish, which is one of the world’s most endangered fish and South Florida is probably one of the last places where we can find it.

“The cool thing about this sawfish is that it gets to be about 15 feet or more but very rarely people ever sees it,” Soto said. “The numbers for the Sawfish is severely declining so, the more we understand about this organisms the more we can help protect and conserve them.”

It’s important to talk about organisms in our community that we don’t know enough about, especially those that are considered endangered or threatened, says Soto.

The series will feature a new FIU faculty member,

Assistant Professor Yannis P. Papastamatiou, Ph.D. who is going to be talking about the current sawfish numbers, what he has learned about them and how long he predict it will take for sawfish population to be at its healthy size again.

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The numbers for the Sawfish is severely declining so, the more we understand about this organisms the more we can help protect and conserve them,

Aileen Soto  
Program Manager  
FIU in The Keys

”

“He is going tell us what he has learned about the life cycle of this organisms and how can we help protect and conserve them, Soto said. “His research is very cutting edge so we figure it will be very good for the Florida Keys community as well as the FIU community to get to know him.”

Soto explained that the

Ocean Series goal is to bring in speakers knew to FIU that are doing environmental research, usually marine science related, and to really expose them so the community knows more about the studies taking place in the South Florida area.

The free event is open to the public and will take place from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, April 21, 2017 at Murray E. Nelson Government and Cultural Center, Located in Key Largo.

“It’s a good way for students to get to know some of the new faculty members that are joining the university and it is also a good way to gain some insight into the research that this faculty are doing,” Soto said. “If students are interested in getting involved in this type of studies, this is a perfect forum for them to get to know faculty in a more casual setting as well as network with other people that are also interested in this topic.”

School of Environment, Arts and Society hosts events every third Friday of every month. For more information on the Ocean Life series and upcoming events, visit [seas.fiu.edu](http://seas.fiu.edu). Subscribe to their mailing list to obtain a weekly newsletter.

### EDITOR’S NOTE

## Politics aside, the environment is important



CAYLA BUSH

We are living in times that will test the endurance of our environment. When we made the list of themes for this semester, we had no idea the political statement that running an environmental issue would be.

Politics aside, we put together a comprehensive guide to reducing personal effects on the earth we inhabit. Our News section explains the purpose of the Office of Sustainability and provides information for students who want to get involved in protecting the environment.

Our Entertainment section focuses on students’ contributions to maintaining the campus, such as the Garden club

and the Organic Farmers’ Market.

One of the strongest pieces in our paper comes on page six; columnist LaQuavia Smith explains the effects of systemic oppression and racism on environmental practices across the nation.

Our Sports writers explain the effect people have on the environment, and most importantly the University on the ecosystem we’ve created.

The environment goes beyond nature; it’s also the culture and community which we’re immersed in.

It’s been a pleasure and an honor to contribute to our environment as editor in chief this past year. As I prepare for graduation, I know that Student Media will be in very capable hands for the next year, and that they too will positively affect our environment.

Thank you, FIU!

## Recycling 101 on campus



### Recyclable

Plastic bottles



Glass bottles and jars

Aluminum, steel & tin cans



Paperboard (cereal, juice boxes etc.)

Newspapers & magazines



Office & school paper

Flattened cardboard

Mail & phonebooks

Paper bags

### Non-Recyclable

Plastic cups with a wide mouth (i.e. Starbucks)

Plastic food containers

Plasticware (forks, spoons, knives, etc.)

Plastic bags (i.e. Ziplock)

Styrofoam

Anything with food waste on it (i.e. pizza box, food leftovers, etc.)



Information found on website of FIU's Office of Sustainability: [go.green.fiu.edu](http://go.green.fiu.edu).

MARTINA BRETOUTS/PANTHER PRESS

# Becoming environmentally conscious: a 'learning process'

MELISSA BURGESS  
Assistant News Director

Last January, Liz Fuentes, a senior majoring in philosophy, sold produce on a small table in the student-run Garden Club and transformed it into a successful organic farmers market in the breezeway of the Green Library at the Modesto Maidique Campus.

Fuentes, the president of the Organic Farmers Market Consortium, said that being a part of the Agroecology program was the reason she started getting involved with selling produce from the student-run garden.

"We would hang around and volunteer but the market was dying because we were in a spot where there was no traffic and it was uncomfortable because it would rain or it was too hot," said Fuentes. "No one really wanted to take responsibility for selling the produce but I really enjoyed, so I decided to take care of it."

Fuentes said that as she took on the responsibility of the market and became more involved in the Agroecology program and making friends, she encouraged others to participate in the farmers market.

"One of my friends from the Agroecology Department does natural medicine and I started learning from him," she said. "I had all those empty tables so I told him to join and I told my other friends from the agroecology and philosophy program to do events with us and very slowly, the market started to grow."

Fuentes took on the responsibility

of being the organic farmers market president with the help and support from her friends and other students involved in the program. Her role as president includes coordinating with different organizations on campus and discuss ways to improve the market for the future.

"For me, the farmers market is like my baby," she said. "It's not

“

Look at the oranges that come in plastic wraps. Why do you need to buy an orange inside of a plastic wrap? The orange alone, comes with its own skin and you can recycle the orange peel by drying it and then burning it and it's a wonderful incense. It's just a learning process and I feel like you never learn enough,

Liz Fuentes  
President

Organic Farmers Market Consortium

”

just about being the president of something, but you have to make your schedule fit it. It's not only planning for these events but you [also] have to be responsible that everything is going well and make sure that you're providing quality to the students."

Originally, Fuentes was an engineering major before switching to philosophy. She said that as she

learned more about engineering, the more disappointed she became because of the issues that would affect the world in the future.

"I started learning about agriculture because I think it's very important to survive," said Fuentes. "As I started studying, the more I learned, the more interested I became. I started learning about what we could do better for our city and our personal lives so I started implementing it into my life ... It's been a very interesting path and very challenging because of the society that we live in, but it's all worth it."

Kevin Maia, a senior majoring in anthropology and member of the Organic Farmers Market Consortium, said he believes Fuentes is what keeps everything at the farmers' market together.

"I think Liz has done a great job and she's been able to work with administration well and she handles everything so smoothly," said Maia. "A day that she's not there, the market is chaos. Then Liz arrives and the sun breaks out from behind the clouds and all of a sudden, the chaos is back in order."

Fuentes says being environmentally conscious starts at home and encourages students to be mindful of their waste, "especially here in Miami," she says.

"...Look at the oranges that come in plastic wraps. Why do you need to buy an orange inside of a plastic wrap?" said Fuentes. "The orange alone, comes with its own skin and you can recycle the orange peel by drying it and then burning it and it's a wonderful incense. It's just a learning process and I feel like you never learn enough."

## 'Baynanza' event invites students to clean and protect red mangroves

DOUGLASS GAVILAN  
Staff Writer

The county's annual environmental cleanup returns to the Biscayne Bay Campus on Earth Day.

Baynanza, a month-long series of beach and marine cleanups for the Bay, will focus on the campus on April 22 from 9 a.m. to noon. Volunteers are invited to participate in the clean up and the educational activities hosted throughout the day.

"What's unique to BBC is that we will be working on the protection of red mangroves," said Nick Ogle, the event coordinator for Baynanza at BBC. "There is a big danger in that the roots of these plants can suffocate at times due to plastic bags that drift along."

Attendees who sign the online form will also have the opportunity to receive a free shirt, according to Ogle. The design would be the winning artwork created by a child in the county.

Volunteers may be asked to take boats supplied by the county to the nearby islands off the coast of the bay in order to remove debris.

The bay is home to many different wildlife which includes manatees, dolphins and stone crab to say

the least. At the BBC location, the red mangroves are the most important plant as it is the most affected by marine debris, according to Ogle.

"One of the main purposes of Baynanza is

“

It's a great thing to see people come together to help clean the environment. Some people just love to throw their trash out there and that's just not cool,

Jazmin Shepherd  
Junior  
Psychology Major

”

protection of the red mangroves in the area," said Ogle. "They work as a nursery area. When there's a dense mangrove area, it allows for protections from storm surges and hurricanes. The root area also works for as a shelter for marine life. We also use the seedlings of the mangroves toward restoration

projects."

Some of the seedlings are moved to a shade house located on BBC, while others are planted by children K-12.

According to the National Wildlife Foundation, red mangroves are one of only four different mangrove plants located in the U.S. They are also considered to be the most known plant and most commonly found in Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

They are easily identified by the above water root, which help transport air around. Garbage can interrupt air coming in. The plant's main threats include frost, hurricanes and human waste.

"It's a great thing to see people come together to help clean the environment," said Jazmin Shepherd, a junior psychology major. "Some people just love to throw their trash out there and that's just not cool."

Baynanza is open and free for the public and for all ages. Registrations are currently available at <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/baynanza.asp>. Potential volunteers should be advised to complete the volunteer form as soon as possible since locations have a maximum amount of people that could attend, according to Ogle. There are 21 different locations ranging from North to South Miami where people can attend.

# BRANCHING OUT

## Naturalist for Office of Sustainability takes students on eco-excursions

**NIA YOUNG**  
Entertainment Director

**G**raduating senior Aleme Benissoit reminds students that FIU is home to much more than just teen spirit and stray cats.

Benissoit, a sustainability and environmental studies major, is rounding up his experience at FIU. As he prepares for graduation this May, he takes time out of his schedule to care for FIU's diverse and unique ecosystems.

"We have three main ecosystems [at FIU]: A wetland ecosystem, a Pine Rockland ecosystem, and we also have the [Tropical] Hardwood Hammocks... Mainly, we have the preserve and most of the students use it for outdoor classes. They can have hands-on activities, and learn about different ecosystems in South Florida."

Benissoit continues explaining that the nature preserve is like a piece of the Everglades. "You will find native plants, wildlife, and things that are very important for the

environment."

Benissoit works on campus at the Office of Sustainability as a Naturalist.

"A naturalist is someone who can tell you about plants, animals... anything that you can find in nature," said Benissoit.

His job at the Office of Sustainability requires that he leads visits to the nature preserve for biology classes and other groups, as well as train interns about environmental education and conservation.

"I enjoy working at the preserve with volunteers. When they come I learn something from them and I give something as well," Benissoit said. "This morning we [had] a volunteer [group]... probably every week we have a volunteer [group] but we have a different topic. Today we call it invasive removal; so we remove those plants that are not native to Florida."

One example that Benissoit asks students to consider is to plant pollinator plants.

"Pollinator plant will help us get more food... bees pollinate half of the foods that we eat, like fruits and vegetables," he said.

Considering the reduction of the Nature Preserve that was approved in 2016, Benissoit is not discouraged saying that "in one week more than 5,000 students signed the petition to



NIA YOUNG/PANTHER PRESS

Aleme Benissoit (front), naturalist for the Office of Sustainability, assists volunteers Jonathan Avila (middle), a sophomore accounting major, and Germination Puigbertrand, a sophomore international business, at the Nature Preserve Volunteer Day.

stop it and that was a big discussion... they finally won but at the same time... I hope they don't really come in the future and do more things like that."

Benissoit looks to the future planning to take his knowledge of agriculture and the environment back

to his native home, Haiti.

"My goal [was] to come here and get more experience, more knowledge, and then go back and improve [Haiti], said Benissoit. However immediately after graduation Benissoit plans to "do more work in the environmental

field... probably conservation or environmental education; I can also do an internship."

Benissoit encourages students to be environmental leaders, saying that "the little things that you do make a big difference."

## Organic Farmers' Market promotes a healthy university

**CHLOE GONZALEZ**  
Assistant Entertainment Director

**A**s part of the University's ongoing sustainability efforts, FIU's Organic Farmers Market has been providing students with vegan, vegetarian, organic and locally sourced foods, as well as organic and handmade products since 2008.

"To me it's a very nice option for students because every Wednesday they have different options to eat, to see art in a different way so it's a nice thing for students," said Sandra Pereira, owner of Encantos Terrariums.

On Wednesdays during the spring and fall semesters, vendors set up their tables with a variety of products including orchids and terrariums, kettle corn, baked goods,

local art and hand-painted products.

"I like that there's a lot of variety and I check it out every Wednesday. I feel like the samosa triangles are the best thing, and the popcorn is really good and the mango. Those are the main things

"I like that that it's a chance for people to buy something that's a little better off for them

Jadelyn Puig  
Sophomore  
English

I come for," said junior event management major, Bobbie Sade, who attends the market every week.

Organic produce is also sold at the market from local farms and by the Garden Club from the University's organic

garden which grows herbs and fruits in the FIU Nature Preserve.

The Garden Club is only one example of the many groups that participate in the market such as Students for Environmental Action, the Office of University Sustainability, University Health Services, the Yoga Club, Student Dietetics and Nutrition and Aramark, among others.

The market formed from a collaboration between these student organizations, outside vendors and university departments to promote an environmentally friendly lifestyle and local, organic products and produce.

"I like that it's a chance for people to buy something that's a little better off for them," said sophomore English major, Jadelyn Puig.

In addition to encouraging healthy

**SEE ORGANIC, PAGE 5**

### AT THE BAY

## Frost museum to restore 'raptor rehab'

**JULIANE SUNSHINE**  
Staff Writer

**I**n an effort to remove invasive vegetation, the Frost Museum of Science will host a restoration event at the Batchelor Environmental Center, a new facility that will focus on animal wildlife.

"The new state-of-the-art facility allows the raptor rehab and animal hospital programs to partner with Florida International University to enhance research and internship opportunities for students and provides homes for animals that have already been acquired for research," said Fernando Bretos, director of Museum Volunteers for the Environment, in an email to Student Media.

Bretos said the center, which was done in a partnership between the Frost Science Museum and the University, will go through two phases.

"The Batchelor Environmental Center is in phase one right now, this is the phase where we will quarantine fish, such as Mahi Mahi and eagle ray — this is to make sure that the fish are not diseased when they go to the aquarium," said Bretos. "The second phase will be a community facility where people such as students, can bring injured wildlife. The animal hospital will treat hawks, reptiles and any other Florida wildlife. Most animals will be returned to the wild after they are healed."

MUVE, working in collaboration

with FIU's School of Environment, Arts and Society is a volunteer based habitat restoration project, that has restored coastal lines and mangroves and will work in restoring the site at the Biscayne Bay.

"Students will join forces with volunteers on the banks of the Oleta River in North Miami to begin restoring the land to a native mangrove forest," wrote Bretos. "Participants will learn about the invasive vegetation, consisting primarily of Burma reed, Australian pine, and Brazilian pepper, and see what conditions are ideal for natural mangroves to thrive in this environment."

7,500 people have volunteered since 2007 and restored 25 acres of coastal habitat, according to Bretos and he says volunteers will be able to "gauge the effects of restoration" by participating in this event.

"In order to ensure a healthy environment, South Florida residents first learn about the environmental stresses we face, then get their hands dirty with their peers and make a difference. Volunteers leave behind a living legacy of native habitats that they can visit and enjoy in perpetuity," wrote Bretos.

Volunteers can sign up through the website or show up on the day of, which is every third Saturday of each month. The Frost Museum of Science is expected to open on May 8, 2017. In the meantime, students or faculty can find out more information on [www.frostscience.org](http://www.frostscience.org)

# FIU Ecologies: Farmers' Market puts green in Green Library

FIU IS HOME TO:

**56,000** STUDENTS

**13** ENDANGERED PLANTS

**15** THREATENED PLANTS

AND

**238** PLANTS AND ANIMALS THAT CALL FIU HOME



CHLOE GONZALEZ/PANTHER PRESS

Students buy locally grown foods and products in the Green Library breezeway on Wednesday, April 5.

## ORGANIC, PAGE 4

eating by supplying local produce, Puig explained that the weekly market also serves as an opportunity to support local businesses.

“They’ve got a lot of handmade, homemade goods and as someone who sells my own handmade goods, I like to support other people making it...it’s a chance for people to make money doing something they like,” said Puig.

With the help of former student and nutritionist, Raisa Cavalcante, the Florida-based online retailer Pure Formulas has been

selling their organic and natural beauty supplies, vitamins and supplements, pet products and snacks at the market for some time.

“I think we’ve had the opportunity to educate people on some of the essential oil products that we have...it’s been great to give some information and educational sort of feedback to them,” said Giovannah Chiu, Director of E-Commerce at Pure Formulas.

Students can buy goods and pick up fresh snacks and produce when they visit the market on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Green Library breezeway.

## The Garden Club cultivates ‘knowledge,’ and ‘home grown, organic vegetables and plants’



PANTHER PRESS

Garden Club members cultivate greenery and plant organic produce in one of FIU's gardens.

**MARTHA PEREZ-MENDEZ**  
Contributing Writer

**T**ucked away behind the Nature Preserve, a small group of students work to cultivate organic vegetables and plants.

As part of the Garden Club, these students seek to fulfill the organization’s single mission: “to provide a space for the FIU community to gain knowledge about the importance of local and sustainably grown food.”

Mahadev Bhat and Krishnaswamy “Jay” Jayachandram, co-directors of the agroecology program at FIU, developed this garden around ten years ago.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture was the main source of funding for us. If we did not have those programs, we would not have the garden, either,” said Bhat.

From its beginnings, the organic garden has relied on this kind of financial support to expand. These professors used this support and more to create this garden from scratch in efforts to establish a place of gathering that allows for a deeper ecologically educational experience.

Amir Khoddamzadeh currently takes on the role of Garden Club advisor and organic garden supervisor. He works with students and the agroecology program in order to ensure that the garden

continues. One way in which they are able to do this is by bringing the FIU community their products for sale.

“Because this is a student club, we don’t have many resources for financial support, but what we do have is the money we get from selling our product,” said Khoddamzadeh.

Each Wednesday at the farmers’ market in the Green Library Breezeway visitors may pick up the organically grown vegetables harvested by club members. Any surplus products not sold there can also be found on Wednesdays and Thursdays at the Earth and Environment Department located in AHC-5 on the third floor.

All funds collected go to supporting and expanding the club’s organic garden. This also raises money for scholarships that will send students in the agroecology program abroad to study sustainable agriculture from gardens and farms in other parts of the world.

Khoddamzadeh says it’s important to note the difference between the garden’s produce and grocery store produce.

“We trust our product. We know that everything is organic here. We are not cheating, adding to, spraying any synthetics, etc. to our product. You can confirm that by trying it for yourself and tasting how pure it is,” said Khoddamzadeh.

Being a consumer of the club’s products is not the only way to get involved. Workshops and meetings are held every Friday at 3 p.m. in the organic garden.

Workshops vary in topic, such as the sustainable farming presentation hosted last week by Joshua Munoz-Jimenez, a former garden manager and one of the first students to graduate from the agro-science major.

Workshops and meetings are meant for the entire FIU community to learn about and enjoy sustainable agriculture.

“Many students are coming from majors such as

engineering, business, med school... they just want to play with soil. They don’t want to think about their laptops or sit in their office. They want to get outside and relax. So, we thought this was the best time to teach them something,” said Khoddamzadeh.

In efforts to provide an effective atmosphere that achieves the melding of leisure and education, the Garden Club/ Agroecology program has established a handful varying garden types. Those available to explore include an edible garden, a fruit orchard, a meditation garden, and more.

Students can join and get involved in The Garden Club’s efforts in seeking fun, awareness, education, environmental integrity, and community support.

Garden Club president, Alana Rodriguez, is a senior environmental studies major with a focus in agriculture studies. She believes the opportunities offered to students is what sets the club apart.

“The cool thing about the Garden Club is that there are lots of opportunities to get involved. The garden is always here, so people can always work on it,” Rodriguez said.

# SAVE THE ELEPHANTS

## Greed will lead the largest land animal to extinction

EYES ON  
THE EARTH



AMANDA JUNG

It's rare to encounter someone who says they don't like animals. We are surrounded by a society of people who claim to be animal lovers.

We have pictures of our pets as our screen savers and take funny videos of them for memories. When you ask someone what their favorite animal is, there's a possibility it's an exotic species that they have never seen in person.

Elephants are amongst those that fall into this category. So many people claim to love elephants, but do they actually know

they are an endangered species or understand what these animals have to face on a daily basis?

Believe it or not, the survival of this species is critical for the well-being of the planet.

During the dry season, elephants "use their tusks to dig for water," but these watering holes also provide water for the other animals, according to Save the Elephants, an organization that works to protect elephants around the globe.

In addition, Save the Elephants states that when elephants eat, "they create gaps in vegetation," which essentially allows new plants and pathways to grow.

These are creatures that boost the health of the ecosystem, yet they are highly endangered. Why is this?

According to Sarah Bird, a senior majoring in environmental engineering, humans use elephants for the ivory in their tusks and for entertainment purposes such as in zoos and circuses.

“[The]bold action”

Nearly 100 elephants are killed each day.

WorldElephantDay.org

underscores the United States' leadership and commitment to ending the scourge of elephant poaching and the tragic impact it's having on wild populations," said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell in a press release to National Geographic.

Current law allows for the sale of ivory and ivory products in limited cases, only if the seller can prove the ivory is old and was lawfully imported. However, new rules further restrict exports and sales across

state lines, including a limit on ivory trophy imports to two per year, per hunter.

Although there are many sources of ivory such as walrus, rhinoceros, and narwhals, elephant ivory has always been the most highly sought because of its particular texture, softness, and its lack of a tough outer coating of enamel," according to The Atlantic.

Many people do not understand that an elephant's blood has to be shed in order to obtain ivory. So many everyday items are made of ivory that you might not even be aware of — jewelry, hair pins and ornaments, just to name a few.

If we want to continue sharing the earth with these precious creatures, serious measures must be taken. We should not be supporting the ivory trade. This means that we should not be purchasing items made from dead elephant tusks.

Nearly 100 elephants are killed each day, and there are currently 400,000 remaining, simply because of the ivory trade, according to the World Elephant Day website.

Society is going to have to get used to living without ivory, unless we want to get used to living without elephants.

It's your choice and I hope you make the right one.

*Amanda Jung is a contributing writer for Panther Press. Her column, Eyes on the Earth, is a commentary on current global environmental issues.*

## Environmental racism is a pressing problem

WHAT'S UP FIU



LAQUAVIA SMITH

By now, I am pretty sure everyone has heard of Flint, Michigan even if they are unsure where it's located. The issue at hand isn't necessarily Flint or any other city, but solely the question of environmental racism.

"If Flint were rich and mostly white, would Michigan's state government have responded more quickly and aggressively to complaints about its lead-polluted water?," wrote The New York Times writer John Eligon.

Environmental racism, according to Your Dictionary, is "the placement of low-income or minority communities in the proximity of environmentally hazardous or degraded environments, such as toxic waste, pollution and urban decay."

It's a problem that isn't new to environmentalist and activists worldwide; however, it's a term many are unaware of, even if it's a fairly common problem in Miami and other melting pots.

Aside from the nationally known incident of minorities within Flint literally being poisoned through hazardous water conditions, incidents of dangerous chemicals

being released, used or accessible throughout lower-income communities is a very conventional occurrence and it doesn't stop at chemicals.

One less publicized act of environmental racism is currently taking place in Detroit. In 2016, over 80 different schools in Michigan closed down due to environmental conditions ranging from rats, mold and even lead poisoning similar to Flint's initial problem.

It shouldn't take over three years to figure out why thousands of children county-wide are calling in sick for school.

Teachers throughout these rural areas are sick and tired. In 2016, according to local newspaper, Your Daily Dish, thousands of students and their teachers staged a "sick-out" protest that forced schools to close down for two whole days.

"The teachers and parents of [Detroit Public Schools] are blaming the wrecked conditions of the schools on Republican Governor Rick Snyder and the legislature's austerity measures to cut costs that is also being blamed for the lead contamination of the water supply in Flint, Michigan," the article states. "Flint residents have been using bottled water since their water supply became contaminated with lead in April 2014."

Michigan is also suffering from musty smells and warped floors. Within the Flint school district alone, three different schools tested

above the federal government's safety standard of 15 parts per billion for lead.

We see fatalities nationwide within specific generic borders of areas. We see children with high percentages of lead in their blood, children with an increase of asthma and children who are more prone to becoming sick in areas that are labeled "low-income," "rural" or "hood."

Aside from Michigan, this environmental racism is occurring throughout Louisiana, California and even Pittsburgh. Not only are there unsafe conditions, but they are being ignored by officials city-wide, state-wide and even on a national level.

"Why don't they just fix the problem?" ran across my mind numerous times, but Michigan is an example of how a poverty issue transforms into the less known "environmental racism." But, before the problem can be fixed, people need to be aware that environmental racism even exists.

Why is it a relatively unknown term and why is it treated like an epidemic that takes years to fix, if not ever. As a campus who is built on minorities, differences, scholarship and merit, we should do our part to inform, become involved and seek change.

*Laquavia Smith is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, What's Up FIU, is a commentary on the latest style and entertainment news.*

### ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE & RACISM STATISTICS

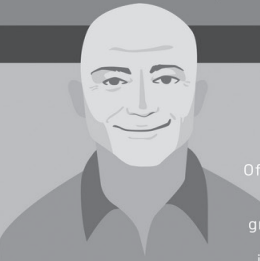
United States of America

#### U.S. RESIDENTS IN "DANGER ZONES", 2014

Within the U.S., there are 134 million U.S. residents living with the danger or "vulnerability" zones of 3,433 chemical facilities, and the 3.8 million living with the (almost, but not quite) "fenceline" zones closest to potential harm, with the least time to react in the event of a catastrophe.



#### DEMOGRAPHICS BY: RACE, 2014



Of the 134 million "americans", the percentage of those identifying as Black or African-American in the "fenceline" zones is 75% greater than the percentage for the U.S. as a whole, while the percentage of individuals identifying as Latino in the "fenceline" zones is 60% greater than the U.S. as a whole."

#### DEMOGRAPHICS BY: AREA, 2012

2012 NAACP report, "Coal Blooded: Putting Profits Before People," communities of color disproportionately encounter toxic work conditions, environmental hazards and polluted neighborhoods. The report consists of 378 coal-fired plants in the United States, 75 of those plants earned an environmental justice grade of "F." Within city proximities of those 75 failing plants, a total of four million people live within three miles of these plants, their average per capita income is just \$17,500 — which is 25 percent lower than the states average.



#### MINORITIES...

Out of those four million people, 53 percent are people of color.



## PANTHER EDITORIAL

### “Going Green” is as easy as 1-2-3

FIU has created green initiatives such as promoting carpooling, maintaining upkeep in the nature preserve, constructing energy-efficient buildings, hosting recycling drives and assigning a recycling bin to every trash can.

But, introducing these initiatives to the University won't mean anything unless students and faculty play their part. Living “environmentally conscious” doesn't have to be difficult — in fact, it's easy.

Instead of throwing out your plastic water bottle, clean it and reuse it. Not only does this lessen your carbon footprint, but it also saves you money.

Another “going green” tactic that is good for your wallet is carpooling. Take advantage of ridesharing apps or carpool with your friends, especially during long drives.

For those students or faculty members that drive to the Biscayne Bay campus or the engineering campus, use the bus FIU offers. Not only does it save gas and gives you an opportunity to chat, work or sleep, but it also reduces the amount of carbon monoxide that is released into the air.

The easiest way to “Go Green,” however, is to go digital. Paper is barbaric. Instead, students should start typing their notes. It saves trees, saves you money and makes it easier for you to study with your classmates.

The same goes for professors. Whether you like it or not, technology is the future and you should let students utilize their tablets and laptops to take notes. Not only does it save the trees, but it's more efficient to have students upload assignments to Blackboard or email them directly to you. This way, the students have the option to work from wherever they are, and you don't have to carry around so many papers.

The point is, it doesn't take a lot of effort to be environmentally friendly. You just have to be aware of what changes you yourself can start today, so take advantage of the different green initiatives that are offered and play a part in saving our planet. Remember, it's the only one we have.

## Veganism best for Earth

### THE LEVELER



AUBREY CARR

The idea of going green usually brings to mind alternate transportation and remembering to turn off the lights when leaving a room, but dieting habits can also affect the planet.

Producing and consuming meat — especially red meat — and animal byproducts is certainly a contributor to climate change.

“Animal agriculture is responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, more than the combined exhaust from all transportation,” according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

This is not only because of the methane gas emitted by animals — although methane gas is even more destructive than carbon dioxide — but also because of the effort that goes into creating land that is suitable for mass animal agriculture.

This entails clearing out thousands of acres of land to house and plant crops to feed the livestock — crops that use massive amounts of water.

Cara Marie Connolly, a junior at the University

of Strathclyde in Glasgow majoring in political science, has been vegan for over three years.

“For Lent, when I was 15 I gave up meat and never went back to it. However, by the time I was 17 I felt being vegetarian wasn't enough,” Connolly said.

“

[T]here are so many amazing alternatives for meat, cheese and even fish.

Cara Marie Connolly  
Junior  
University of Strathclyde

After unearthing information on the treatment of animals by the dairy industry, effects of animal agriculture on the environment, and the health benefits of being a vegan, Connolly decided to leave behind a diet that relied on any animal products.

“It was fairly easy for me as there are so many amazing alternatives for meat, cheese and even fish,” she said.

In the past year, Connolly said that she's “noticed a massive change” in the amount of vegan-friendly products that can be found in the UK, which makes sense, considering that the

amount of vegans in Britain has risen exponentially in the last decade.

Although vegans and vegetarians compose only a small portion of the 64 million population, according to the Vegan Society, over half a million people in the UK adhere to a vegan diet. So when Connolly moved from Glasgow, which she said had been previously voted the most vegan-friendly city in the UK, to Aix-en-Provence in the South of France, she faced a major challenge.

A typical southern French diet focuses heavily on fish and dairy products, but Connolly has managed, finding creative solutions to otherwise inedible recipes and has become a regular at a local falafel restaurant.

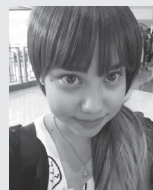
And even though there are multiple ways someone can be environmentally conscious, Connolly believes veganism is the best way to do her part in saving the planet.

“I try to recycle as much as possible, use public transport or car sharing, etc., [but] I think the best thing you can do to be environmentally friendly is be vegan,” she said.

*Aubrey Carr is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, The Leveler, covers global social justice and political commentary.*

## Floatopia-style parties harmful to environment

### PANTHER HEALTH



MAYTINEE  
KRAMER

Floatopia-style parties is an event where attendees bring inflatable rafts, get disgustingly drunk by the beach and treat the ocean like an open garbage can.

If such parties are known for attendees shamelessly tossing beer cans, food wrappers, loose garbage, and all sorts of marine-life-killing flotsam into the current, then why are they still going on?

and a social media account voiced their concerns.

As reported by New Times who spoke to representatives from the Surfrider Foundation, “Floatopia organizers are almost always overwhelmed by the amount of garbage these events create and — no matter how many volunteers they round up — rarely, if ever, leave the beach like they found it.”

Catherine Uden, secretary for the Broward County chapter of Surfrider told the New Times last year that those who clean up don't respect the ocean and the animals that inhabit it.

“These people want to treat the ocean like some pool in Vegas, but they don't understand it's an ecosystem and not a frat house. There are animals in there that are

“

The earth and ocean is not your personal garbage can.

”

The Miami New Times reported that Haulover Beach will play host to a Floatopia-style event, called Floatnik, on April 23. The organization putting on the event, South Florida's Grown and Sexy, has already begun recruiting volunteers to help clean up the beach afterward.

While the organizers want attendees to have a good time, they do demand that everyone avoid taking glass or polystyrene onto the beach.

Their event page states, “For newbies: it's easy... grab a float, some good people, hit the beach, relax, float, meet people and most importantly, PROTECT THE BEACH you came to enjoy by not littering... ‘Floatnik’ in a nutshell! This is a FREE event we put on for you, EVERYONE is invited... except people who can't do the only thing we ask for: PUT THE TRASH IN THE TRASH.”

The fact that the organization is recruiting volunteers to clean up before the event even starts already foreshadows a nightmare much like the one we saw on Miami Beach last year when they hosted a Floatopia party.

Due to the mountains of trash left behind, city officials called for an end to the event, while nearly everyone with a beach address

endangered,” Uden, told the New Times.

Even memories of Miami Beach's hellish trash catastrophe prompted pressure from environmentalists to shut down a version of Virginia Key's Float Bash.

“Buena suerte Haulover #Notopia.” Michael Grieco, the Miami Beach commissioner who fought to kick the event out of his city last year, wrote online late last week.

While it's okay to have fun and party hard, that does not excuse trashing the environment and endangering animals. There shouldn't be any type of Floatopia-style party in any city. It's nothing but disgusting, disturbing, and damaging to the environment.

And for those who want a Floatopia-style party or any type of outdoor social gathering for that matter, you better learn to pick up after yourself and stop throwing trash wherever you want. The earth and ocean is not your personal garbage can.

*Maytinee Kramer is the Assistant Opinion Director for Panther Press. Her column, Panther Health, is a commentary on maintaining one's health during college.*

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## Nature Preserve shrinks as University makes way for football fields

### BRETT'S BREAKS



BRETT SHWEKY

In March 2016, the University's board of trustees unanimously approved an expansion plan that included building two athletic fields on almost three acres at the north end of the preserve. In exchange, the trustees agreed to expand the preserve from the south side.

The plans originally slated the fields to be constructed by the nearby parking lots at MMC.

FIU President Mark B. Rosenberg told

the concerned students at FIU that the plans to construct the fields over the north end of the nature preserve is in the best interest of the school.

"We want you to understand we are working as hard as we can for what's in the best interest of the University" said Rosenberg, as he was addressing the media.

FIU students believed that this was an unfair exchange as the land planned for the swap included an organic garden, along with other features, and will restrict restoring the preserve to almost 1.5 acres.

A report obtained from the Florida State University's Florida Natural Areas

Inventory during the criticism listed five plants housed in the preserve that were deemed as endangered and another two plants that were threatened.

Caroline Castillo, a sophomore business finance major, said that the recent alterations to the campus have caused students to question if the University is as eco-friendly as they label themselves.

"FIU must not be so green if they want to remove part of the nature trail just for some practice fields," said Castillo. "Even though the officials said they would replace part of the nature preserve, it still doesn't take away from the fact that they are still destroying

part of the ecosystem within the preserve."

Sophomore business major Jiskaymie Coo said that the University is putting athletics before the nature preserve.

"The fact of the matter is sports are able to bring in revenue for a university, while a nature preserve impacts the school financially in no way," said Coo. "Just look at the maintainance of the trail itself, the preserve is largely maintained by students and volunteers."

*Brett Shweky is a staff writer for Panther Press. His column, Brett's Breaks, is a commentary on the latest sports related issues at FIU.*

## University calls to action for Everglades restoration

### WEEKLY WHY



JULIETA RODRIGO

The Everglades is among the most fragile ecosystems in the world and nearly two centuries of attempts to restructure its water flow and impose mankind's demands upon it have left the Glades unrecognizable.

Many laws were passed over the last three decades to protect these wetlands, but they have been stymied under bureaucratic jargon and political standoffs.

The story of the Everglades is a complex back-and-forth struggle between the pursuit of paradise and the ideal of progress, and the attitudes which once inspired its ruin that now inspire its restoration.

To the outside observer, the Everglades seemed like a vast, empty, useless, mucky, and weird place. Nature lovers and ecologists, however, understood that there was always more to the Everglades than met the eye.

From virtually the moment when Americans began to visit the Everglades, they began dreaming of modernizing it, starting by draining its surplus water. For these optimistic people, the drainage of the swamp seemed inevitable.

The nutrient-rich wetlands were prematurely set aside in their minds for use in a future production of sugar, cotton, coffee, and other products.

Today, sugarcane fields dominate the northern Glades, suburbs control the eastern Glades, and reservoirs make up much of the central Glades. Over half of the original wetlands have been drained and replaced with urban areas and agriculture.

Maps provided by the Everglades Foundation show that FIU and the

University of Miami were built on the original greater Everglades ecosystem, as well as the current Marlins Park and Hard Rock Stadium. The Florida Panthers' Ice Den is located at the border of the Everglades Wildlife Management Area.

While I love FIU and our local sports scene, our university and communities should also be mindful of preserving our environment and encouraging students to do so, as well.

According to Saving Florida Water, more than one-third of Florida's population, approximately seven million people, depends on the Everglades as their primary source of drinking water.

Big Sugar's demands on the environment have taken a toll on the Everglades; droughts have intensified, water conservation areas have been polluted by their runoff, and the ecosystem's natural rhythms have run amok.

Phil Compton, a senior representative for National Sierra Club, lamented that "if we continue to grow the way we have, we will lose every reason why people come to Florida."

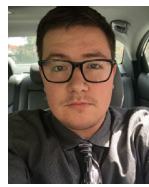
This is why the state of Florida must prioritize the Everglades restoration projects—the future of state industries, the health of its citizens, and the survival of important species depend on a timely response to this ecological emergency.

Students, if you haven't visited the Everglades yet, I highly encourage you to do so. It is a beautiful paradise within close proximity to our campuses, and I am sure that seeing it personally will motivate you to protect our natural wetlands.

*Julieta Rodrigo is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, Weekly Why, is a commentary on the latest issues in sports.*

## University makes some environmental changes to residential dorms

### SCORE NOW



STEVEN MELENDEZ

FIU prides itself on maintaining a drug free and healthy environment, so it's important that the students living on campus contribute to this as well.

It's not easy for many to stay consistent with healthy habits, but it is necessary to preserve the environment FIU has set up for everyone. The easiest way to make the most change in habits is by starting at the dorms, the home of many FIU students.

Everyone has to work together to make sure FIU stays as green as possible. Unfortunately, not many students take a big interest in the environment, but a few still find some time to get out and make a difference.

"I have been in a few community clubs that have done things like clean up the beaches," said Victoria Mital, majoring in communication arts. "It's been quite interesting to notice how important the environment is to the people who really care about it."

Students have taken it upon themselves to make sure their dorms are kept to a healthy

standard. Strategies that help with this include schedules for cleaning duties, money jar for whenever someone forgets to clean something, and making recycling sections.

"In my dorm, I keep a big bag and we put any boxes that can be recycled," said Kyna Pereira, majoring in education. These techniques help students pick up a routine that will only better the environment around them.

Keeping public areas clean is important too, and students agree.

"There should be more garbage cans marked for recycling inside and outside the dorms. Julieta Rodrigo is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, Weekly Why, is a commentary on the latest issues and sports.

I've seen a few around the university, but not here," said Ernesto Vilchez, majoring in international business.

It's good to see students interested in their environment. This is just the first step needed in order to build habits and keep the environment healthy for future alumni.

*Steven Melendez is a staff writer for Panther Press. His column, Score Now, is a commentary on the University sports topics.*

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