

# Project Learning Tree's FAMILY TREE IS Growing

BY MARY  
FREDERICK



Mark Oliver, educator and PLT school coordinator at Dorothy Thomas Exceptional School in Tampa, receives the PLT School plaque with other teachers at the school's PLT School ceremony held on Earth Day.

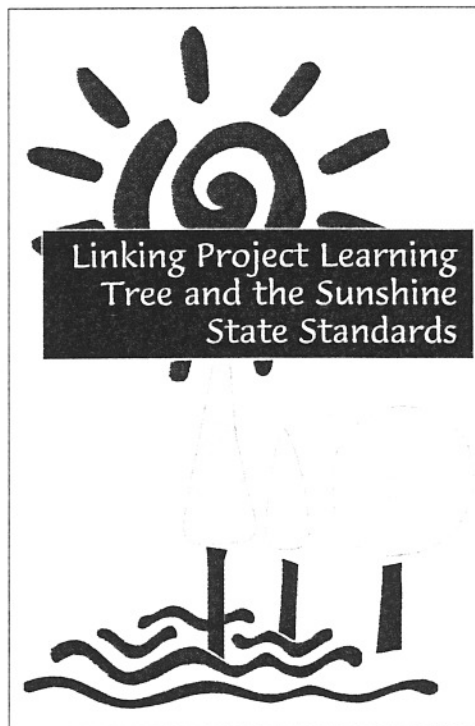
I'll admit it up front: I'm relatively new to Project Learning Tree (PLT). Sure, as a staff member of the Florida Forestry Association I was familiar with its basic tenet of environmental education that teaches kids how to think, not what to think. But I didn't really know what to think when I was first introduced to PLT at my first workshop. I do know this: I was a bit apprehensive about attending a three-day workshop at the Withlacoochee State Forest training center for my PLT indoctrination.

The workshop, designed especially to teach the facilitators who organize and deliver the PLT training, was held on a beautiful chilly weekend in January. Pulling into the

parking lot, I wondered how I was going to unload all the workshop materials that were jammed in my car. I had barely gotten my car door open when a PLTer was offering to help me unload.

The weekend spent at the Withlacoochee State Forest was a blast: I not only learned about PLT and how to present it to teachers but learned a great deal about organizing workshops, forestry, ecology, and even a crash course in astronomy. All participants shared ideas and knowledge readily—that made a novice like me feel comfortable and more willing to be part of the PLT team.

I left that workshop with a better understanding of Project Learning Tree and an energy to promote and help PLT grow throughout the state. PLT shows educa-



**Linking Project Learning Tree and the Sunshine State Standards:**

This booklet shows the correlation of PLT activities to the newly implemented Sunshine State Standards. A diagram is included that teaches you how to make your own activities correlate as well. A must-have for teachers!

1. "Introductory Handbook for the Secondary Modules" This book serves as a companion to the secondary modules. It gives some background on PLT and introduces the themes and teaching tools used throughout. Several supplemental activities are included.

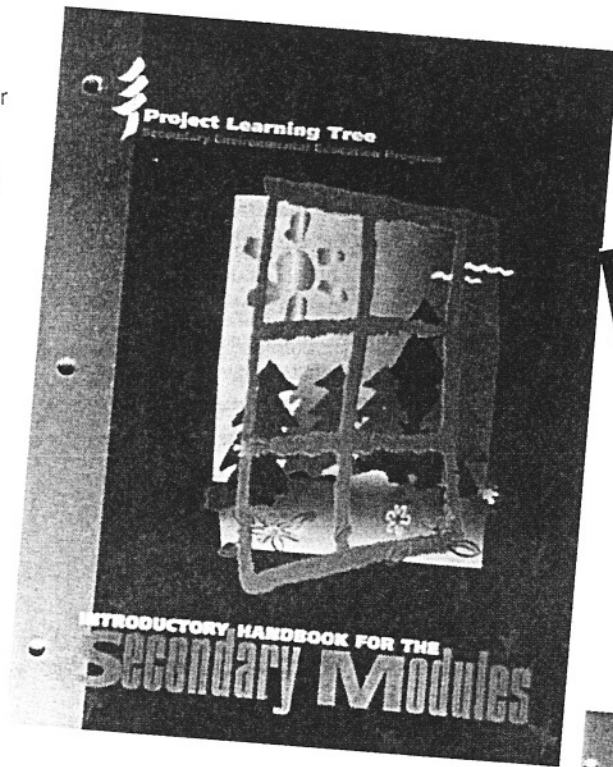
tors the many benefits of managed forests in a fun and balanced way. These teachers then take what they've learned back to the classroom. Jeff Doran, executive vice president of the Florida Forestry Association, sings the praises of PLT. "We can't put enough emphasis on how important it is to reach Generation Next. PLT provides fun, hands-on, stimulating exercises that put today's kids in touch with the forest and all aspects of the environment from land and habitat to air, water, and energy."

I met many of the PLT Steering Committee members at the workshop and they were more than willing to share their aspirations for PLT for the future. And that's what we've been working on for the past seven months.

What amazes me day in and day out is that the PLT contributors are what assures its success: without the volunteers that organize and lead the workshops and our Florida Forestry Foundation partners who donate funds, supplies, and employees' time, the Steering Committee's job of promoting PLT would be next to impossible.

### Florida PLT: A History

When Florida PLT was first getting off the ground in the early '90s, its growth was phenomenal in the northern part of the state where we have a strong forestry family presence. One of Florida PLT's current goals is to nurture its success in the central and southern parts of the state as well. To do this, we've formed partnerships with some south Florida folks who will help us broadcast the PLT message. PLT facilitators held a successful workshop in the southern half of the state for Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other park and recreation employees.



Other attendees included south Florida Division of Forestry employees who were aware of PLT but hadn't received any training. Another workshop was specially held for Society of American Foresters (SAF). We've even made it easy for SAFers to attain continuing education credits via PLT workshops.

PLT workshops are conducted every semester for college-level students in

**HIGH SCHOOL LESSON PLAN BOOKS:**

2. "Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests" This book gives students the opportunity to explore and receive a better understanding of complex environmental issues. Its main focus is enhancing critical thinking skills and using the forest as a "window" to the world.
3. "The Changing Forest: Forest Ecology" Our most popular book of the high school materials, the activities are designed to encourage students to explore and learn about forest ecosystems through hands on discovery and experimentation.
4. Spanish Version: Translation of the student pages and glossary of the PLT Activity Guide. This version is easy to use and understand. Perfect for ESOL teachers and students!

**Project Learning Tree** *continued from page 17*

education and forestry/wildlife majors. These participants enjoy learning about PLT and understand forestry's benefits even before they get out in their professional careers.

Attending PLT teacher workshops is great and it's the first step. Florida PLT now has the mission of training these enthusiastic folks as PLT facilitators; in other words, train these people to conduct their own PLT workshops. Facilitator training workshops are planned for this fall.

National PLT has made marketing PLT to these areas easier by recently publishing a student guide in Spanish and three high school lesson plan materials. The high school materials increase PLT's influence with older kids and secondary teachers. These materials, developed by over 300 scientists, resource managers, educators, and technical specialists, increase environmental knowledge and effect positive attitudinal growth. These materials are distributed at the workshops and available for ordering at our web site.

**Florida PLT:  
Planning for the Future**

Florida PLT is going through an organizational restructure as well to deal with our goal of increasing our central and south Florida presence. Originally, we had Florida split into five separate geographic regions. In recent years, because of PLT's

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growth, those five regions were too large to deal effectively with PLT's growing numbers. We have since broken down Florida into 21 areas with volunteer team members tending smaller, more manageable areas.

Our PLT intern, Noelle Bee, has been instrumental in the reorganization of PLT. She has been busily entering information into our growing database that not only tracks workshop participants, but also tracks workshop planning and implementation, potential workshop participants, facilitators, and the new area team structure. Noelle is a junior early childhood education major at Florida A&M University.

Our PLT web page is going through a redesign as well. Incorporating PLT's web page as part of the Forests Forever site, we are adding some fun interactive activities to whet an on-line user's appetite to PLT. Come visit the new site at [www.fl-ag.com/forest](http://www.fl-ag.com/forest).

Have you heard of the Department of Education's Sunshine State Standards? Well, some public school teachers haven't either. These standards are new state-designed guidelines that define knowledge and skills and set achievement goals for

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different subject areas. Some of PLT's supporters have been forward-thinking in providing PLT links to these standards and have published the results in the guide "Linking Project Learning Tree and the Sunshine State Standards." Eight of PLT's 96 activities have correlations clearly outlined in the guide as well as the tools need-

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ed to create your own correlations with other PLT activities. Teachers love this guide as it provides a good explanation of the standards and makes their job easier. It's a great way to incorporate PLT into the classroom lessons—and link them with the Sunshine State Standards! This guide is available at workshops, with the PLT CD-ROM, and on the web.

The PLT School designation is an innovative way to recognize the schools that use PLT on a regular basis. A school must meet certain specifications to attain this honored milestone. At least 50 percent of the school's teachers must be trained in PLT, a week must be recognized as a "PLT Week" when teachers implement PLT activities into their daily lesson plans, and a PLT school coordinator is appointed from the faculty. And what does a school receive in return? Florida PLT presents the school with a Tree Trunk chocked full of environmental educational teaching aids: a PLT School flag, plaque, and stamp; a polo shirt for the school coordinator; and press releases to area newspapers.

Eight schools in Florida have attained this prestigious award:

- Merritt Brown Middle School, Panama City
  - Dorothy Thomas Exceptional School, Tampa
  - Oakland Terrace Elementary, Panama City
  - St. John Catholic School, Panama City
  - Suwannee Middle School, Live Oak
  - Garden City Elementary, Jacksonville
  - Five Points Elementary, Lake City
  - Cottondale Elementary, Cottondale
- We hear from our PLT field volunteers that there are more in the works.

One of the ways we are looking to promote Florida PLT to the world is at the upcoming International PLT Conference in May, 1998. Each year the PLT movers and shakers convene at a different host state—next year it's Florida's turn at the beautiful 100-year-old Belleview Biltmore in Clearwater. Participants learn about new trends in education, new PLT ideas in other states and countries, and what National PLT has in store for the future. And it's a fitting site for our convention: it's reputed to be

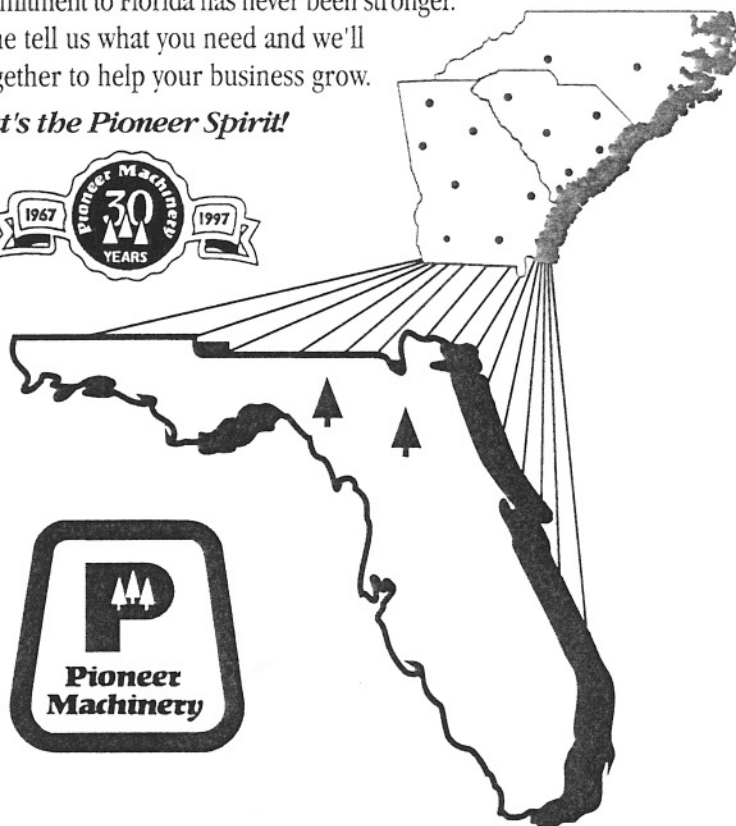
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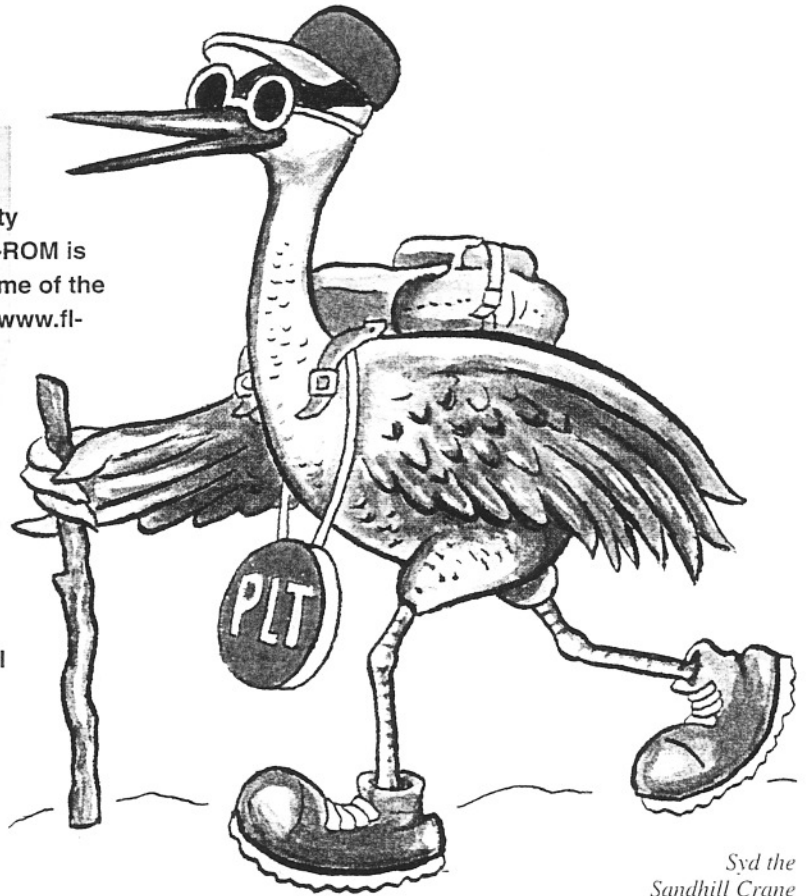
## Project Learning Tree

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The PLT CD-ROM is hot off the presses and available for ordering! Join PLT's mascot Syd the Sandhill Crane for a hike through a virtual forest, complete with Florida native species in sight and sound. Users can also click on the five PLT activity themes to explore popular PLT activities. The CD-ROM is available in Macintosh format. You can look at some of the components of the CD-ROM on our PLT website, [www.fl-ag.com/forest](http://www.fl-ag.com/forest).

As an added bonus, when you purchase the PLT CD-ROM, we include a copy of "Linking Project Learning Tree and the Sunshine State Standards," that correlates eight of PLT's 96 activities to the Sunshine State Standards, the state-designed guidelines that define knowledge and skills and set achievement goals for different subject areas. The Sunshine State Standards are clearly outlined in the guide as well as the tools needed to create your own correlations with other PLT activities.

To order the PLT CD-ROM and Sunshine State Standard links, please send \$16.05 to Florida PLT Central, P.O. Box 10078, Tallahassee, FL 32302-0078. Please allow four weeks for delivery.



*Syd the Sandhill Crane*

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### We Salute PLT's Tireless Contributors

Florida PLT annually recognizes the outstanding contributors that assure its success. This year we salute Nancy Johnson, a Pasco County elementary teacher, as Educator of the Year. Nancy has developed a CD-ROM and an outdoor classroom area at her school—a perfect atmosphere for teaching students PLT activities. She also reached over 100 teachers at PLT workshops. What's even more exciting is that now Nancy gets her name put into the hat for the national PLT Educator of the Year award. A past award winner from Florida, Rodney Ivey, was honored with this prestigious award and met with Senator Bob Graham and other government officials in Washington to discuss PLT and its benefits. Matt Bonham nabs the respected Facilitator of the Year award. Matt is a forester who enthusiastically reached over 500 teachers through 20 workshops and countless others with

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## Measuring Success

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- Forestry for the purchase of fire fighting equipment
- Contributed over \$20,000 to state legislative races from donations made to TREEPAC, our Association's political action committee
- Monitored the activities of the Constitutional Revision Commission
- Lobbied the Governor's office to promote qualified individuals to serve on various boards and commissions
- Provided input to the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) in the development of a new Rules of the Road handbook
- Continued to meet with DOT officials in district meetings to discuss and resolve industry transportation issues
- Recognized Representative Earl Ziebarth as the Legislator of the Year

### Public Lands

- Developed the Association's response to Florida's National Forest Management Plan
- Successfully lobbied the Legislature on the passage of a public land management bill which addresses some of the public land use deficiencies, promotes a stewardship ethic, encourages multiple use management, and promotes more private involvement in the planning and management processes
- Continued dialogue with Florida DOF about forest management practices on State Forests

### Staff

Keeping this ship on the right course requires a tremendous amount of organizational skill and wise management. Our staff of seven provides the necessary support to get the job done in so many ways.

By any way you want to measure the last 12 months for the Association, it was a success. These successes don't mean that we got it all done or that we got all that we wanted or needed.

Operating challenges continue to grow along with our trees. We never seem to get to the end of things, as one fire is put out in the regulatory arena there's always a new agenda to tackle. All the more reason to stay unified and supportive of the Florida Forestry Association. ■

## Project Learning Tree

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impromptu PLT lessons. Tenneco Packaging receives the important Business Partner of the Year award for continuing a strong commitment to PLT. Tenneco also received an award from the Florida Department of Education for their PLT efforts. These PLT awards are presented to contributors who have gone above and beyond in getting the PLT message out to Florida's education system.

PLT's network of contributors is always looking for more members to join

our family. If you'd be interested in joining the best environmental education program in the U.S. (yes, it's been recognized as such by the North American Association for Environmental Education), please call 850-222-5646. If you know of a school or teacher who's interested in PLT training, please call too! ■

*Mary Frederick is the communications director of the Florida Forestry Association and the statewide coordinator of Project Learning Tree.*



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