



Phone 863.465.2571  
123 MAIN DRIVE ★ VENUS, FLORIDA 33960

To: Allen Moody, Romona Washington at Highlands News-Sun

From: Archbold Biological Station

Date: 8 August 2018

Author: Archbold Biological Station

Contact: Annamarie Grimes, Executive Assistant to Hilary Swain  
[execassistant@archbold-station.org](mailto:execassistant@archbold-station.org) | (863) 465-2571 x 251

### **Growing Scientists at Archbold**

“Once a door is open here, it doesn’t close,” states Alan Rivero, who is finishing up an internship and starting a seasonal research position at Archbold Biological Station. “Archbold has a direct impact on the community and this is reflected in the two of us,” continues Rivero, referring to himself and Lexi Siegle. The two both grew up in Highlands County and both worked this summer as environmental education interns for Archbold’s Ecology Summer Camp for seven to twelve year old children. The internships were part of their lifelong associations with Archbold, and their parallel development from childhood campers to professional biologists. Their stories are also an example of the positive role a biological field station can have on local students.

Education Coordinator, Dustin Angell, believes Archbold’s long-term commitment to education gives children the potential to turn their love of nature into science careers. He says, “Richard Archbold, our founder, was giving tours to students in the 1950’s and 60’s. Our camps and elementary school program started nearly thirty years ago. So local kids can have sustained exposure to science careers from elementary school through high school, college, and beyond. These opportunities are transformative for the students who take advantage of them. Alan Rivero and Lexi Siegle are perfect examples.”

Rivero agrees that he was one of those kids whose life was transformed. As a child who loved exploring nature and catching snakes, experiences at Archbold validated his interests and gave him direction. He explains, “It showed me that it could be more than just playing outside or a hobby. I could make it a career.” Rivero landed his first science job at Archbold as a teen, when in 2009 he was selected as one of only two Highlands County students for a High School

Research Assistantship, a position funded by the National Science Foundation. He spent that summer assisting the Plant Ecology Program in monitoring rare plants, developing his own research project, and being mentored by Archbold's biologists. Rivero is currently working on a biology degree from Florida Gulf Coast University, but takes time off to get real-world experience at Archbold as a research assistant for snake and tortoise surveys and wetland monitoring. Working at camp this summer was his first time as an environmental educator. "He picked up on everything very fast, was great with the kids, and was a hard worker" says Angell, who runs the camp. "And his lizard and snake catching abilities made him a bit of a rockstar, too." This week Rivero is finishing a presentation on camper attitudes toward the environment, based on survey data he collected, and he has just begun another season of fieldwork for the Restoration Ecology Program.

Siegle recently graduated from FGCU with a degree in Marine Sciences. She also credits Archbold with her career trajectory, saying, "I want to stay connected in some way forever." Her commitment was evident this summer when, despite having three other jobs, she returned as a part-time intern at camp two days a week. Siegle says that missing camp wasn't an option. "My mom has always told me that if something is important to you, you have to make time for it. I love Archbold so much and helping out with kids is really important to me." Each week, during introductions, she gives her camp credentials, "Hi, my name is Lexi. I live in Sebring and this is my fourteenth year at camp." Since attending for the first time at seven years old, she has been a camper, a camp volunteer, a camp intern, and a research intern. Angell states, "Our returning kids love her, and they expect to see her every year, even if she can only stop in for a day. For some of them, she is also their instructor at the karate dojo in Lake Placid." With camp over for this year, Lexi has now accepted her first paid post-college science job. On August 7th, she began working for Archbold's Plant Ecology Program.

Most of us don't grow up with a world-renowned biological field station just outside of town. Most of us have not spent each summer visiting rare habitats, encountering endangered species, and meeting the researchers who study them. But for Rivero and Siegle this was their childhood. When someone asks Siegle about her extraordinary experiences, she humbly shrugs it off, saying, "being at Archbold is so normal. This is just my life. It is what I grew up doing." Rivero and Lexi are no longer students at Archbold, but professionals giving back to the organization and the community. Rivero says, "It doesn't stop being exciting."

**Photo 1:** Environmental Education Interns Alan Rivero and Lexi Siegle in a seasonal pond at Archbold Biological Station

**Photo 2:** Intern Alan Rivero shows campers how to check fish traps at a seasonal pond at Archbold Biological Station

**Phot 3:** Intern Lexi Siegle with summer campers and a teen volunteer at Archbold Biological Station

