



The NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



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Welcome to the August 2023 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by members of The Florida Youth Council! For this special issue of *The Noodle*, members of the FYC wrote about how The FYC and the Annual Youth Summit have impacted their lives. This allowed members to ponder, share, express, and explore their personal insights, experiences, and memories. We hope you enjoy learning about our experiences and our thoughts and opinions in this edition of *The Noodle*!

Current Members:

Catalina Andonie
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The Youth Summit's Impact

Considering I've been to so many, (this year makes 14 for me—13 of those on the council and one as an attendee), the FYC's Annual Youth Summit has impacted me in a positive way. Whether it be from listening to the keynote or something I gleaned from one of the sessions while helping room monitor it, I always come away with something. I feel the Youth Summit is so invaluable and that's why we keep putting it on year after year.

So, who is the FYC? We are a group of youth and emerging leaders with disabilities who come together for a common purpose – to advocate and spread disability history and awareness to all and put on a kick-butt Summit every year for Florida's youth and emerging leaders that hale from across the state!

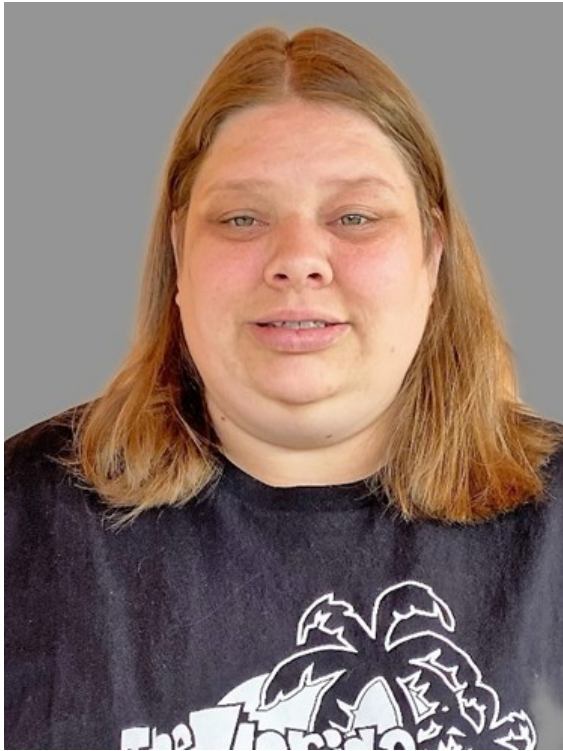
Some of my favorite activities from different Summits over the years have been the keynotes. One that really stands out was the year that we had a wheelchair basketball team come and speak and show off their moves. It was so fun to watch. Another favorite of mine is the movie night at the Summit. There were many that I really enjoyed. Over the years we viewed *Oz*, *the Great & Powerful*, *The Greatest Showman*, and *Back to the Future*. Those were some of my favorites, although every year they were enjoyable. Every year The Youth Summit has great sessions. We've done a great job of picking out engaging topics and finding good people to lead them for us. Eating lunch together and the dance party gives us a great opportunity to get to know our attendees better. It's all of it together that makes every year memorable, my favorite and looking forward to the next!



By Derek Carraway



The FYC and How The Annual Youth Summit has Impacted Me



The Florida Youth Council is a group of youth between the ages of 15 and 30. We get together every month and discuss a variety of topics such as how we can help our communities grow together to make it a safer place for not just them but also their fellow disabled citizens. We also plan events for youth such as The Annual Youth Summit!

There are many in our community that don't know how to speak up about their struggles. The FYC is here to help everyone, especially youth, become better advocates for themselves and those around them.

The Youth Summit has impacted me in many ways. It has helped me be a better advocate for my community and myself to be able to express what I need and what my community needs. Over the years I have watched a lot of people struggle with what they need, from accessibility issues to needing mobility aids or other accommodations. I have been able to become an advocate for all individuals with disabilities thanks to the skills I have gained as a member of The Florida Youth Council and as an attendee of The Florida Youth Summit.

By Morgan Griffin





The Greatest Group in the World

I am proud to be a member of the Florida Youth Council (FYC), a group of young people who have disabilities and who advocate for people who are disabled. For me, it is the greatest group in the world.

Each FYC member has different challenges that include blindness, autism, cerebral palsy, brain injuries, and many more. It is a diverse group. We may all be different, but we have one thing in common. We all want to be treated equally.

Every year, the FYC puts on the Annual Youth Summit in Orlando. The Youth Summit is a great way to communicate with others, meet new friends, and learn important lifelong lessons from our guest speakers.

The Youth Summit is exclusively for youth, ages 15 to 30. Parents go to one introduction session, but then the young people are on their own. We all have a lot of fun just being together.

During the Summit, I help other FYC members during educational sessions and keynotes to make sure the speakers and the audience are comfortable. If someone has a mobility issue, we assist. If someone needs something, we get it for them. We try to talk to as many people as possible and answer their questions about the FYC.

The best part of the summit is the Saturday night dance party where everyone shows their best dance moves. A DJ plays lots of music – country, rock ‘n roll, pop, and all kinds of dance music. It is a great way to wrap up the weekend. Dancing is my thing because I love music, I like to dance, and I enjoy getting together with others. I’ve always loved music and I have played the piano for many years. Listening to it relaxes me and I listen to music all the time, even when I drive. Whether it is rock and roll or the blues or even classical, I love it! The Beatles, the Bleachers, and Bruce Springsteen are my favorites right now. Their songs are good to dance to. Dancing is fun and keeps me moving. Exercise is good for you and, as physical therapists say, “Motion is lotion!” The more you



move, the more lubricated your joints are and the better your muscles and bones are. I like the fast dances the best; they really keep me in shape. The Saturday night dances are a great place to see everyone and meet new people. I see my fellow FYC members and the other attendees. It is fun to hang out with old and new friends. We can dance, sing, and talk about how the Summit is going.

The whole event gives me opportunities to see people, learn new things, and have fun. I hope all of you come to the summit and enjoy yourselves.

By John Howard Baldino



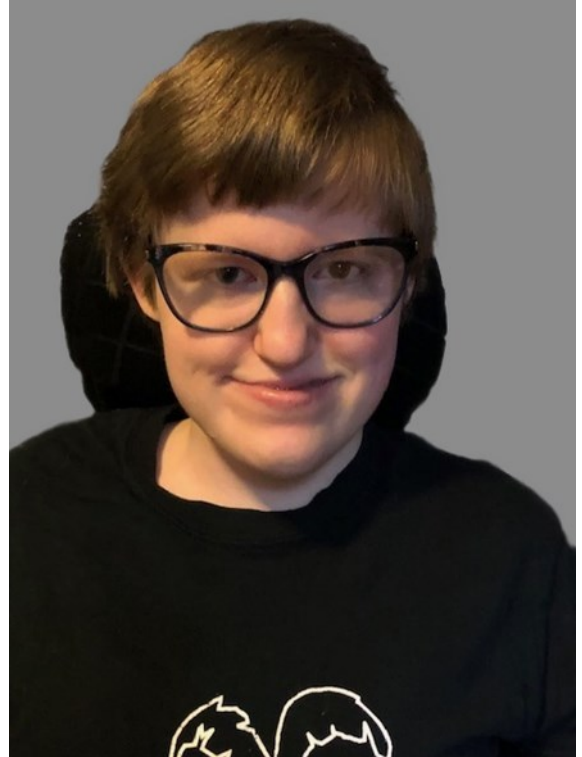
My Life, Inside and Outside of the FYC

My name is Serena and I have cerebral palsy. I do not let that keep me down though. I am very busy. Something I really love is working with young people with autism, so I am going to college and hope to get a degree in psychology which will help me reach that goal. Another thing that I have been busy with is volunteering as a mentor at a thrift shop and tearoom that teaches and trains young people with autism and other disabilities that impact their social and organizational skills. This year we started a Junior Board and I volunteered to co-chair that board so that keeps me even busier.

Other things I do in my free time are playing Dungeons & Dragons (weekly if possible!), and this year I plan to do my second year of running an FYC/Family Café booth at my city's disability expo. I had a lot of fun last year because I made new friends and brought my message of advocacy to many people. This is one reason I love the Youth Summit. Be-

cause I joined the Florida Youth Council right after I turned fifteen, I never actually participated in the Youth Summit as an attendee, so I have never experienced that side of the event. However, I truly enjoy the opportunity to use my knowledge and skills as a leader, a mentor, and a friend when I help with putting on the Youth Summit. It's great to spend time with all the wonderful young people (like me) who attend the Summit. Every year I look forward to seeing all my friends who attend!

By Serena Wetmore



The FYC and What It All Means to Me

This year will be my 16th year attending The Florida Youth Summit. 16 years of events and sessions. 16 years of end of event dance parties and bad hotel pizza. (You laughed). But while attending all these years I've been an FYC member as well. These events molded me into the person that I am to today. I'll share a bit to explain.

Being an FYC member has taught me a lot. From working under pressure, listening to other people's needs, understanding other disabilities that are nothing like mine, being patient with people whether they deserve it or not, to even something as simple as keeping good friends. Working as a team with fellow disabled members taught me how to slow down the world around me a bit. It helped me learn that it's not just me. Others need help too.

The Youth Summit is one of the few environments I can see we all as FYC member can be a catalyst for change. It's one of the few events we get to be one-on-one with like-minded individuals like us. We can share our stories and experience and help guide them to a better place. We can teach them that if we are here learning then together, we grow.

All of us in this community need a helping hand from time to time. But it's great that I'm part of something that I do need help with. I know I have the support. Thank you FYC and thank you Family Café!

By Josue Tapia





What The FYC has Done for Me

The FYC stands for the Florida Youth Council. We are a group of 15–30-year-olds who learn to be leaders and advocate for the things we want in our community.

The Youth Summit has helped me learn how to be a leader to others that are shy just like me. It has also inspired me not to be so afraid of other young adults my age.

I think that if you are afraid to make friends like me and struggle with learning that you should join the group of people who are outgoing you don't even have to talk. Just join in, and they will teach you how to be brave.

By Michelle Sandiford



Who is The FYC and How has The Youth Summit Impacted Me?

The FYC is known as the Florida Youth Council because we are empowering youth to stand up and say NO to people who are trying to get in their way because of their disabilities. The Summit impacted me because it showed because I meet so many people on the sessions and it helped with meeting and seeing what people who have disabilities and what can be done or helped with.

I don't have a specific event that stands out as being my all-time favorite as I have enjoyed every Youth Summit event I have been to. My all-time favorite thing about the Youth Summit event is that I get to meet a lot of youth with disabilities between the ages are 15-30. When we are at the event, we get to do multiple



breakout sessions and Keynote sessions, the sessions are always informative, and the keynotes are a lot of fun.

We get to have lunch as a group in between the sessions. I love getting an opportunity to eat with new and old friends and to make new connections with all the youth. We also have a movie night, and we get to relax and be nice to everyone while enjoying lots of fun movie snacks.

To finish off the event we have a dance party. This is a great time to have fun with everyone and party. After we are done with the dance, we say goodbye to our new and old friends. After the dance we say "We can't wait to see you again!" and "You can even come to The Family Café and Youth Summit next year!"

Often as I'm leaving the hotel, I have people coming to me saying they had so much fun, and they can't wait for next year! It is such a fantastic event. We love hosting everyone and hope they all have as much fun as we do!

By Leah Gorman

The FYC and how the Youth Summit Impacted my Life

The Florida Youth Council (FYC) is an amazing group of disability advocates who have become my friends and family over the years. I joined the FYC in 2020 because I wanted to help people, make a difference, and encourage inclusivity and acceptance.



I had no idea that this group of council members would become so important to me. They are my friends and like a second family. The alumni are mentors and share their wisdom with us. We can communicate with each other unlike any other group of friends. We are non-judgmental. Like a family, we accept everyone for who they are. We might disagree at times, but we communicate effectively and are given a chance to express ourselves.

All the Youth Summits that I've attended have been from the perspective of an FYC member. From that point of view, it has impacted my life. It's a great

place to network and make friends. I have done that a lot over the years. It's also where we recruit members for the FYC, which gives the FYC the opportunity to mentor our new members.



I enjoy planning for the Summit. It's great to see everything come together from planning to the actual Summit.

My favorite memory from a Youth Summit is going to lunch with Mickey Rowe. We ended up getting Auntie Anne's pretzels. It was his first time having one and he liked it so much that when he was at the airport going home, he texted that he stopped at an Auntie Anne's Pretzel stand and shared the photo.

I look forward to making new memories this year. And I'll see everyone on the dance floor!

By JJ Humphrey





How Do I Become Part of The Florida Youth Council?

The Florida Youth Council is a group of youth (between the ages of 15 and 17) and emerging leaders (between the ages of 18 and 30) with disabilities or special health care needs that live in Florida.

The Florida Youth Council is all about getting youth and emerging leaders involved in self-advocacy, peer mentoring and other activities that will improve the quality of life for youth and emerging leaders with disabilities in Florida. The program empowers youth and emerging leaders to decide what issues are important to their generation, to discuss those issues in their state and local communities, and to develop strategies to address them.

We are seeking a group of enthusiastic, motivated youth and emerging leaders to participate. If you would like to take a leadership role in advocating for youth and emerging leaders in Florida, please visit The Florida Youth Council website at www.floridayouthcouncil.com. The program is open to application year round.

We hope to hear from you soon!



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