



The NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



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Welcome to the July 2024 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 a word that describes them. 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:

Jakel Baker

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Serena Wetmore

words make
everything better

From The Advisors' Desk

Words can be powerful. They can make you sad, happy, and mostly empower! A quote that sticks out to me is "Words are but pictures of our thoughts" - John Dryden. As the advisor of the Youth Council, choosing my words has become what I consider my most powerful weapon. This year my own word for the year is "authentically!" Living in real life! Being who I am and speaking up without fear of what others may think.

Caring Is Who I Am

by Serena Wetmore

Being asked to describe myself in one word is a bit of a challenge, but I decided to settle on the word “CARING.” Most people who know me realize that I am extremely complicated, but I like the word “caring” because I feel that I often care more about other people than myself. I am one of those people who just cannot help being concerned about the well-being of others. Unfortunately, my ability to help is relatively limited, though I always do what I can.

I think that one of the ways I can help to care for others is through my advocacy. I know that solving the world’s problems is not really my responsibility, but I think this is often the best, and maybe the only way I can express my drive to help people. How do I care for people through my advocacy? I often find people being frustrated by situations that they are in, and I try to help them find the information or connections which they need to help make their lives better. I have a volunteer job which sometimes includes mentoring others with disabilities. Helping them to learn job skills is fulfilling, and in addition, it is a lot of fun. I care about them learning skills that will help them be successful in their future endeavors. In addition to what I do on the job, sometimes I host parties at my house for these friends to allow them to have fun social experiences. The amazing thing about caring for others is that it makes me feel good about myself, too!





Joyful

by JJ Humphrey



One word that describes me: “joyful!!” END OF NOODLE. Just joking! Seriously though, the word “joyful” does describe me. Joy doesn’t depend on circumstances. If it did, it wouldn’t describe me. Happiness depends on circumstances. Things have to be going your way to be happy. But joy is independent of circumstance. I’ve always been joyful. People know me by my smile and upbeat demeanor.

It’s who I am, it’s not fake. I can find joy, even in the darkest of circumstances. When I was a child, there was a lot going on with me. At one point, I was having seizures and severe motor tics. The seizures were in my sleep, so I didn’t know I was having them. But the motor tics were while I was awake. If I suppressed one, the next one would be bigger or stronger. The medication I was given to help control the motor tics made me stop sweating. I had to wear a cooling vest and sometimes I had to use a wheelchair when outdoors. Even as a child, that didn’t stop me. In fact, it made the good days so much better. I found joy in the smallest of things.

I found joy in listening to music, listening to birds, watching lizards scurry, building Legos, etc. This was when I became deeply interested in *Star Wars*. *Star Wars* movies, Legos, really anything related to *Star Wars* brought me joy. Also my faith grew by leaps and bounds, which also brought me joy. Now that I am much older and can look back on my childhood, I think those tough times really humbled me and taught me to appreciate everything about my life so much more. It brings me joy to think of my beginnings in acting. My first main stage shows were *Shrek* and *Cinderella*. I wore my cooling vest under my costume. At intermission, the stage manager helped me change ice packs. I was having the time of my life onstage. Now that I’m older, thankfully, I do not have those issues anymore. And hopefully, they won’t ever come back. I still find joy in the little things. And looking back at the hard times helps me to remember that I can get through things when they get tough. Having a joyful disposition helps me get through things easier.





Motivated

by Viv Banks

Words are an important part of our society. In fact, we use them to describe everyday things. Personally, I would define myself as being “motivated.” In fact, I was born to be motivated. Since I was young, I always completed my assignments before their deadlines. As a result, I was very successful in high school. Moreover, I graduated with Cum Laude honors and The Silver Seal of Biliteracy. Both marks were difficult to achieve, especially for my Biliteracy Seal.

In my opinion, finishing an assignment is like completing a painting. Generally, creating a piece of art takes several days. As a result, one must work on the painting during separate intervals. Eventually, the painting becomes more beautiful as it nears to completion. However, when art is rushed, it doesn’t turn out as nice. This is the same outcome for a project that’s completed at the last minute. Some argue that it doesn’t matter when a project is started; just as long as it’s finished before the deadline. Regardless, I don’t have the same viewpoint. For instance, would you rather be able to take your time on a project, or be frantic and wing it? Hopefully, you would rather take your own time. Doing things at the eleventh hour creates unnecessary stress. By having work done in advance, it can be a buffer for last minute emergencies. In the end, I see myself as a motivated individual. I always have a tendency to get things done on time and correctly. By doing this, I can be the best version of myself.





Tall is the Word

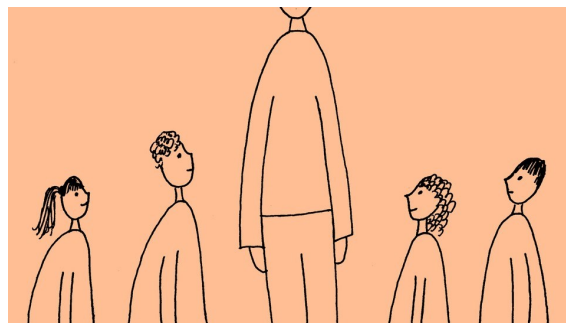
by John Howard Baldino



When people meet me the first thing they ask is, “How tall are you?”

Yes, I’m tall. I’m 6’7” and I have a size 17 shoe. My nickname could be Skyscraper. “Tall” is the word that best describes me. I live a life at a higher elevation than most. But, it’s not all about size, it’s about who I am and what I want to do with my life. I want to see the world with tall aspirations, lofty goals. I want to stand tall no matter what happens. I want to be confident and never give up. If I cannot do something, I do not give up. When I was young, I could not move my fingers across the piano keys. Some did not think I could ever play music. Now, after practicing and practicing, I am playing Beethoven, Bach, and Lennon. When I was a teenager, many friends thought I would not drive a car. After many miles of learning, I passed my driving test and now I am on my fourth car, driving hundreds of miles every week. When I first went to ski school, my hypotonia kept me on the green runs. After years of ski lessons, I can now ski black diamond

runs for experts. I just want to keep reaching new heights. As Eminem says at the end of his rap: “Til I Collapse” – “I will not fall, I will stand tall.”





I'm Blessed

by Derek Carraway

One word that describes me as an individual is “blessed.” Starting from when I was born, I was blessed to have the parents I was given. They love me unconditionally and fought like crazy to get me the help and services I needed to be successful. While growing up going through school, I was blessed to have an IEP that allowed me accommodations that would better help me be successful in school which led to me graduating with honors and earning scholarships for college. Again, I felt blessed because in the end college wound up not costing me one penny out of pocket. Now that I’m in the working world, I again feel blessed to have my position and the benefits that come with it, such as earning vacation and sick leave. I’m also blessed to have met my now wife who loves me unconditionally and feel extremely blessed by our baby girl. Blessed, blessed, and blessed. These are some reasons I feel that word best describes me as an individual.

Enduring

by Kel Baker

The word I have chosen to describe myself today is "enduring."

1). Enduring means continuing or long-lasting. With everything I’ve been through, I believe this word fits me perfectly. I’ve faced numerous trials and tribulations throughout my early years, but I have always been taught to keep moving forward. Many people in my life have taught me this.

2). Endurance is about pushing through the tough times and finding strength in adversity. We all encounter challenges in our daily lives, and enduring these challenges helps us grow and become stronger individuals. Having people to talk to and relate to has been crucial for me in my journey.

3). Endurance is not just important for personal growth but also for those who love and support us. By enduring, we inspire others and show them that it is possible to overcome difficulties. This strength leads to a happier and better life.

In conclusion, being able to endure the challenges in life is essential not only for our day to day lives but also for those who care about us.



Failure

by Alexander Gonzalez

Failure! Yes, you read that right! “Failure” is what best describes me. Now, I know what you’re thinking, and it may sound like I’m being gratuitous. So why did I pick failure? Because if it weren’t for my failures, then I wouldn’t have succeeded in life. Here is what I mean: When I first started college, everything went well until I failed my first college research paper. Then, I got into a car accident during my second semester and then failed a few of my classes that same year. I’ve lost all confidence in myself, and I didn’t take care of my mental health. After a couple of years, I finally regained my motivation to finish what I had started. However, I spent almost the last seven years on the Council and never thought I would be in a new role in the FYC. I’m learning a lot from this position, and I made some mistakes along the way, but it helped me improve. It came to me that just because you’ve failed at some point in your life doesn’t make you a disappointment or letdown; as a matter of fact, it could be the greatest thing that can happen to you. Just remember, many scientists conduct tests before putting rockets into space. Many film directors have made flops. Some artists didn’t receive the commercial success they achieved. That’s okay because without failure, what is your success anyway? I remember a quote from Yoda in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. He said: “Failure, the greatest teacher is.” Failure teaches us an important lesson and can be poignant in the proper context. But it’s a young person’s lesson, typically learned in adolescence or early adulthood. Experiencing failure and learning to grow from it is an essential rite of passage into adulthood—at least, that’s how I see it.





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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