



The NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



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Welcome to the December 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 about their celebrations, what they are grateful for, and how they are affected over the holidays. 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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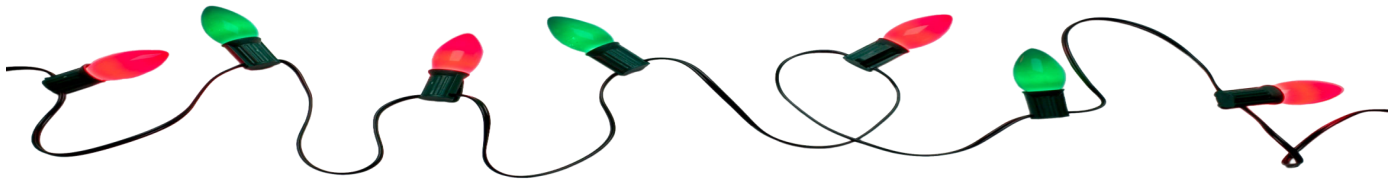
In this special edition of *The Noodle* we speak about the many different ways we choose to celebrate or share. The members speak of their perfect world, and in mine we would all be appreciative of one another. What am I grateful for? My family, my friends, and being a part of the FYC. I would not be here without these things in my own life. Finally, how does the holidays affect me? I am afraid of people in masks making the holidays a bit difficult because everyone dresses up! My family is respectful and work with me. How do you celebrate the holidays?



Holidays & Me

by Miles Stewart

I think my disability does change the way I celebrate the holidays, because I feel paranoid that only Christmas is getting all the holiday joy compared to the others. As a kid, I used to think each holiday holds a special part of our lives, but now, with more and more people putting up fewer Halloween decorations, and more Christmas decorations being put up at the time of Thanksgiving, I can't help but feel a bit irritated that Christmas is the only thing on peoples' mind. Maybe it's because of my view through videos or my disability, but I can't help but feel pity that other holidays are being ignored.



How Do I Celebrate the Holidays?

by Christina Waldron

Disabilities did not change the way my family celebrated the holidays. My family had multiple people with disabilities and we had to accommodate each person individually. The holidays were hard for me because I could not hear the holiday music. Celebrating the holidays with my family was crazy and fun. We used to go sledding and build snowmen and have snowball fights. We used sit around the fireplace and have hot cocoa and spend time as a family. We would go look at the Christmas lights and see the different parades.





3 Things I am Grateful for?

by Zeta Gil

First, I'm thankful for my family, who are my biggest support system. They've been there for me through every challenge, and I couldn't do what I do without them. This also includes my service dog, Blue, who not only helps with daily tasks but is also my constant companion, offering comfort when I need it most. Their support has been the foundation that allows me to keep pushing forward, both in my own life and in advocating for others.

I'm also grateful for the community I've found through disability advocacy and my kitten fostering. Working to help animals and people alongside those who share my values reminds me that we're stronger when we work together. It's a reminder that making a difference, even in small ways, matters. Lastly, I'm thankful for the little victories in life. Progress and improvement looks different for everyone. Every day is a step forward, it fuels me to keep going, knowing that change, no matter how , makes a real impact.

he Perfect Disability Awareness Month

by JJ Humphrey

In my dream world, there would be no reason for an awareness month because awareness wouldn't be needed. Everyone, every business, every person would be included and accepted. Unfortunately, we don't live in a dream world. So we need to be proactive and show why we need to be included and accepted.

Volunteering your time to your community would give people an opportunity to work with someone with disabilities. For example, I had a friend with disabilities who volunteered his time with the local fire department and police department. If they needed a community volunteer, he was one of the first to sign up. Unfortunately, he passed away. Many from those departments volunteered and attended for his funeral. Everyone commented on what a great volunteer and great guy he was. The word disability was never mentioned because they saw him as an equal. Don't be afraid to talk to and educate people about your disability. As people become more knowledgeable about disabilities, they'll also become more accepting. And as they become more accepting, the inclusion with follow.



What I am Thankful for?

by Sydney Lainer

We all have things in life that we should be thankful for, since most of them make us who we are today. There are many things I'm thankful for, but I want to share three of them. The first thing I am thankful for is my family. The reason why is because they do everything for me to make me have a great life and they would also comfort me during difficult times. I often return the favor by thanking them and giving them gifts on very special occasions. The second thing I'm thankful for is my friends, because they not only have things in common with me, but they also understand me as well. They would also check and comfort me whenever I go through some tough situations since they're my friends and they always want to be there for me, that way I won't be alone if I ever was on my own. I also thank them for their support as well since they do such nice things for me that make me feel good inside. Finally, the third thing I am thankful for is my gifts and talents, which in one, is my imagination. The reason why I'm thankful for my creativity is because it makes me feel unique. It makes me see things that lots of people don't see. So, I guess I can say it's like a special superpower I have. I view that the same way with my autism, since I see it as a super ability rather than a disability. And those are the top three things I am thankful for in my life.

*I've
So much to be*
THANKFUL
For



Three Things I am Grateful for

by Jakel Baker

grateful
THANKFUL
blessed ^{AND}

How often do we stop and appreciate the things we have? My name is Jakel Baker, and as a member of the Florida Youth Council (FYC), I've been reflecting on the things that have made a positive impact on my life. With my 19th birthday just around the corner, I want take a moment to share three things I'm truly grateful for.

One of the things I'm most grateful for is the growth I've experienced over the years. Being part of the FYC has allowed me to develop and mature, teaching me valuable lessons about leadership, kindness, and friendship. I wouldn't be who I am today without these experiences and so many more.

I've had the privilege of meeting so many incredible individuals through my involvement with the FYC and my day-to-day life. These relationships have been positive in my life, helping me see the world from different perspectives and bringing positive energy into my everyday experiences. I'm grateful for each person who has touched my life in a meaningful way, their love and gifts always being held close down to my soul.

Lastly, I'm deeply thankful for simply being able to wake up and experience life every day. It's something we often take for granted, but not everyone gets that chance. I'm glad I recognize how fortunate I am to be here, living and growing. It really is a gift to be alive every day learning and improving.

It's important to reflect on the things we're grateful for, whether it's personal growth, meaningful connections, or just the simple joy of life. Too often, we overlook the blessings we have, but taking the time to acknowledge them helps us appreciate our life and where we began.





My Disability and the Holiday Season

by Derek Carraway

Do any of my disabilities change the way I celebrate the holidays? I honestly don't think so. I've always felt I had a normal holiday season. Every Thanksgiving Day my family gathers and has a meal and spends the day visiting and being thankful for each other just like millions of others do. Then there is Christmas. I definitely feel like my disability doesn't interfere in partaking in all the normal Christmas traditions. I still go to Christmas parties, watch Christmas movies, ride around town and look at Christmas lights/decorations, give and receive gifts. All that stuff I'm able to do and enjoy and for that I feel blessed! So there you have it, that's my thoughts on if my disabilities changes how I enjoy the holiday season.

The Holidays and Me

by Nigel Diaz

The holidays for me have two sides to my disability. To me, I often see people in the common world can be rude during the holidays. But some only look on the outside, your appearances, and from this they seem to think you can't do anything. That's when I quickly get my doubt process in check and rethink of the good thoughts. I can achieve what I put my mind to and this is what counts to me. My family are a great group of individuals that always have my back and are with me when I need them most.

My family members are strong motivators, loving, and caring as well. My mom always stresses if I help out in the kitchen because of all the liquids plus the pots and pans especially during the holidays. After she has had her panic attacks, I just ask her to step back and watch. I am done with no problem and she is super proud. I keep my nose mostly out of the kitchen and so I can help keep it calm during the holidays!!





All I want for Christmas: Mobility Solutions!

by Serena Wetmore

I am not sure if my disability affects how I celebrate holidays, but it certainly can affect my ability to participate in many holiday activities out in public. For instance, neighborhood parties, while delicious, can be a bit difficult to navigate with my wheelchair, due to the crowded small space and the grassy area outside our pavilion. One of the things I liked when I was younger, but I have not been able to do so much recently, is going on the hayride in a wagon. They drive around the neighborhood, singing Christmas carols and looking at pretty lights. Lately it has been a difficult challenge to lift me up into the wagon.

Another thing that I find to be an annoyance is planning to go to any type of big event. Last year it was going to St. Augustine to ride the train and look at the lights around town. They sell tickets “by the bench” on the train, so you really must work that out with them through phone calls to several different people, because the regular customer service people never know the answers. Also, you must find the right line and go through the whole elevator/lift on and off the train. That and all the tiedowns and everything can be a slow process and everyone else gets impatient.

Speaking of big events, one year we were in New York City in December and went to see the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes do their Christmas performance. Sounds like a simple thing, but it took about 15-20 minutes trying to buy tickets which fit our schedule and accommodated wheelchair seating. We thought we had it all figured out and bought the tickets for our last day in NYC. Imagine our panic the day we went for the show, only to discover the ticket salesman had given us tickets for the day AFTER we were scheduled to leave town. Thankfully it all worked out and they found us tickets. Guess that was our Christmas miracle that year!

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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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