



the NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



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Welcome to the May 2025 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by members of The Florida Youth Council! For this issue of *The Noodle*, members of the FYC wrote about all things disability with our passions. We hope you enjoy learning about our experiences and our thoughts and opinions in this edition of *The Noodle*!

Current Members:

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Josue Tapia
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Christina Waldron
Serena Wetmore

From the Advisor's Desk

It's going to sound very cliché but my passion is changing the world for the Youth of Today. I do this by using all my skills. The skill I enjoy using the most is American Sign Language and signing. Communication is one of the largest barriers people with disabilities face. As someone who is fluent in many languages. My passion is to unlock the communication barrier. I love doing this for the Youth because they are prime with energy and hope. The youth believe that the world can still change and it can be done one human at a time.

- Shevie Barnes



Accommodating My World

by Serena Wetmore



Since we were given a free write this month, meaning picking what we want to write, I thought I might talk about my history with accommodations in schools.

When I was three, I went to Child Find for testing to see if I was ready for pre-school. They showed me a lot of images, one of which was a picture of a computer. I identified it as a “CRT,” and they laughed, saying the most any child so far had called it was a

“puter.” They said it was clear I was ready to start school. So off I went to an ESE pre-Classroom. From there I started getting accommodations, such as using my wheelchair, special seating in classrooms, bus transportation, and eventually a paraprofessional. At first, I shared one, and then I got my own.

As I got older, I was given extra time on tests, mainly the standardized tests, and often shortened assignments. Since I couldn’t use my hands very well, I obviously had someone writing for me too. That merged into having an official notetaker, which in middle and high school was my para.

When I stated going to Community College there were some changes. They were able to provide classroom access for my wheelchair, a notetaker, a scribe for testing in the testing center, and extended time on tests. Sometimes I got enlarged print if needed and printouts of power points which were helpful. I liked using online books, which could be set to read to me, but sometimes I had to buy a hardback copy and then the company could send me an online version for free. I also had a support services coordinator who was very helpful with making sure I got what I needed and checking in with professors to see how things were going.

I am starting college now at a larger university and have found that I have to start over again to request accommodations. I assume that I will be able to get the same accommodations, but I already know I have to provide documentation to the new school. So here we go again on the next chapter of my life. I’ll keep you posted!

Transportation Woes

by Derek Carraway

For this month's free-write, I decided to write about something I've touched on before that affects many people who have disabilities, including myself: public transportation options for those who can't drive due to their disability.

Every county in Florida has a transportation disadvantaged system, which I mainly utilize. Saying it's not the greatest is a major understatement some days. Although they have gotten some better the last couple of years, they still occasionally get me to work late or leave me waiting on them for 45 minutes to pick me up when I get off of work. That's the really annoying part.

They have messed up so many times I have their supervisor's phone number saved in my phone. They never cease to amaze me how they continually mess up and how some of the employees I talk to via their call center put off vibes that they could care less. I continually pray they do better, because sadly, economically speaking, they are my only option.





It Starts with Us!

by Josue Tapia



Times are changing and so is the world's point of view on disability. We are living during times where using a wheelchair isn't "disabled enough" to seem important. The world we live in now is forever expanding and it seems it's expanding at a pace that the disabled community can't keep up with.

How do we change the tides in our favor? How do we convince those with the loudest voices to scream for those without a voice? We do it by being the change ourselves!

We all have errands or a daily routine we follow. Why not make that a moment to network and share your voice? Either at the store or the doctor's office, there's never a late moment to share your story with someone. Sharing your story helps people get beyond what they see on the outside. It helps them imagine themselves in our shoes. Sometimes all it takes is to take a moment to paint a picture in which they see themselves in your shoes and they will listen!

We can scream and march to our legislators and Congressman all day till we don't have a voice anymore. But you do know what they remember? Josh with his black seeing eye cane because he loved Daredevil, or Susie the girl with the multi colored wheelchair with different color wheels. Her story made him smile because she loved green like his daughter.

Our story is ours and no one can change that, because we live it. Why not use that story to show others they're not alone, and to show the world we are not broken and that we will not be silent! We don't want things to change for us, we want to be part of the change! Everything's better with us than without us!





My Passion

by Jakel Baker

When it comes to disabilities, there are a bunch of things I'm really passionate about. One of the biggest is how some disabilities come with unique abilities. I love seeing how people with different conditions have talents that are totally their own. The way someone's brain works because of ADHD, autism, or something else might give them a different perspective, and that perspective can be powerful. It's always interesting seeing how those differences show up in creativity, problem solving, and how people express themselves.

I'm also super passionate about how far we've come with awareness and accommodations. Whether it's better accessibility in schools or more people using tech that helps others live their daily lives, it's all part of a bigger movement. And while there's still a long way to go, looking at the progress is always really cool.

Another thing that I find very cool and interesting is the feeling of connection. When you realize someone else understands what you go through. It's a very good feeling, especially when you feel like you're one in a million. It brings comfort, especially when you've spent so long feeling like you were just "weird" or different without knowing why. Learning more about disabilities, including my own, gave me a better understanding of myself.

That relief, as well as the shared experiences, and that feeling of having people to relate to: that's what drives my passion. Disabilities aren't just about struggles. They're about strength, growth, and being proud of who you are and the journey you have been on or are going through.





Sports is Important to Me

by Nigel Diaz

I belong to a track and field team that does many sports like table tennis and lifting weights in a wheelchair, basketball, and archery. Also, you just don't meet people with only cerebral palsy. You meet people with amputations.

You would be amazed to find out what happened to them or about different situations. like some of my friends. I met them while I was in child Head Start with disabilities, and then I found a sports group that I invited them to, and we hit it off from there. Also, we made friends along the way in the team that are wheelchair users, and they eventually ended up doing track and field also with wheelchair basketball. I enjoy doing sports.

I have a friend that is slightly autistic also. We have been friends and doing sports since we were little. He does track and field with me and does the same field events, and he has cerebral palsy as well. He is an amazing friend also.

With our track and field team we did fundraisers while they had the oil spill. We participated in an event about how we should keep the earth very clean of contamination. That was very eye-opening and interesting to know about environmental stuff and how we should keep the earth clean and safe for wildlife and the ecosystem.

***Special
Olympics***





THE 18th ANNUAL YOUTH SUMMIT AUGUST 8-9, 2025

**A CONFERENCE FOR YOUTH & EMERGING LEADERS WITH DISABILITIES
AT THE FLORIDA HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER IN ORLANDO**

As Summer
Comes To An
End, Join
**The Florida
Youth Council**
For One Big Last
Hurrah At
**The 18th Annual
Youth Summit**
On **August 8-9**
In Orlando!

The Annual Youth Summit is a place for young people with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 30 from communities across the state of Florida to come together to learn, share, and network. This two-day event is hosted by **The Florida Youth Council (FYC)**, a group of youth and emerging leaders with disabilities who have a passion for encouraging leadership and advocacy among their peers. The FYC is all about youth empowerment and youth involvement, and the entire **Annual Youth Summit** is planned by youth, for youth!

The 18th Annual Youth Summit will bring together over 200 youth and emerging leaders to attend engaging youth-only sessions on a wide variety of topics, including transition, workplace preparedness, and post-secondary schooling. We will have a great, youth-friendly keynote and fun activities at The Summit, including a dance party to cap off the festivities. There were plenty of opportunities for attendees to network, and share their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations.

The 18th Annual Youth Summit will be held at The Florida Hotel and Conference Center in Orlando **August 8-9, 2025**. Limited financial assistance is available. Attendees not requesting financial assistance should contact the reservation line at **800-588-4656** to make reservations and identify themselves as attendees of The Family Café for a special room rate of \$117 per night.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING
YOU IN ORLANDO IN AUGUST!**



FREE ONLINE REGISTRATION!
familycafe.net/register-for-the-annual-youth-summit/





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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