



# the NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



Volume 19, Issue 2

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Welcome to the September 2026 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by members of The Florida Youth Council! In this issue, members take on AI and the future of inclusion in film, kick off football season, find growth through art and a backyard cherry blossom, celebrate what Stitch teaches us about being misunderstood, reflect on loving a family member through dementia, and check in on the continuing saga of a beloved pink wheelchair. We hope you enjoy learning about our experiences, our thoughts and opinions in this edition of *The Noodle*!

## Current Members:

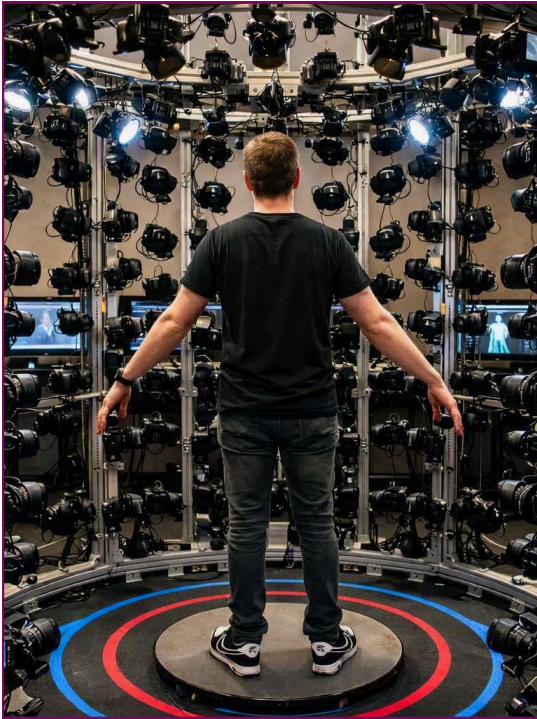
*Jakel Baker*  
*Shevie Barnes*  
*Nigel Diaz*  
*Zeta Gil*  
*Leah Gorman*  
*JJ Humphrey*  
*James Kuhlman*  
*Anthony LaCava*  
*Sydney Lanier*  
*Vanessa Muniz-Pellicer*  
*Michelle Sandiford*  
*Miles Stewart*  
*Josue Tapia*  
*Lilibeth Carrion Vega*  
*Serena Wetmore*



**September** is a month of growth, new opportunities, and continuing to move forward for youth with disabilities. As a new season begins, it's a chance to build on the goals we've started, discover new strengths, gain confidence, and continue pursuing our dreams. With the support of families, educators, friends, and our community, every young person has the opportunity to learn, grow, overcome challenges, and make their voice heard. This month, we celebrate the progress, accomplishments, and potential of youth with disabilities.

## AI and the Future of Inclusion in Film

*JJ Humphrey*



Artificial intelligence is beginning to change the way movies and television are made. New technology can create digital versions of performers, alter appearances, and generate performances that were previously difficult or expensive to produce. Companies and studios are already experimenting with AI-generated and digital performers, while organizations such as SAG-AFTRA are creating rules around consent, compensation, and the use of actors' digital replicas.

This technology could create an interesting possibility for performers with disabilities. Imagine an actor with a visible or physical disability being digitally transformed to play a character who does not have a disability, while the actor still provides the performance. This could

allow performers to take on a wider variety of roles without changing who they are. It could potentially open doors that might previously have been closed to them.

However, there is another side to the conversation. If one actor can be digitally transformed into hundreds of different characters, could studios eventually need fewer actors? AI could make productions cheaper and faster, but that could also mean fewer opportunities for performers, background actors, stunt performers, and other entertainment workers. Recent reporting has already documented concerns about AI replacing creative jobs.

The question becomes: Would AI create greater equality in Hollywood, or could it unintentionally take away opportunities from the very performers the industry is trying to include?

**What do you think about this?**

## The Beauty of the Cherry Blossom

*Serena Wetmore*

When I look out into my yard, my eyes land upon my cherry blossom tree. I always wanted one, as it represents me and who I am as a person. It typically grows in Japan, where it is a national symbol. It is often written about by poets and historians. I want to talk a little about what it means to me.

In high school, or early college, I looked into a lot of nature pictures from around the world to “visit” different cultures. I stumbled across the cherry blossom tree. It stood out so vibrantly from its surroundings but also blended in with harmony and grace. I immediately wanted one in my front yard, even though I was constantly being told that it wouldn’t survive. But I was determined to see if it could happen, so I persisted. I have convinced my dad to try some more, and he has purchased more of them to plant.

Cherry blossoms bloom at different locations in the spring, and therefore, it is frequently used symbolically. One of my favorite things about my tree is that it shows its vitality by growing in an area not typical for its climate. This is not the first one I’ve tried to grow; hopefully, this one will grow to full size. Through the adversity of Florida weather and our help, it has survived, like those with disabilities can thrive with the help of others. As with our own adversities, hobbies and friends can help us grow and overcome. Looking upon my tree, I am reminded to keep pushing through my hardships.

Trees remind me of the passage of time: the literal fruit of your work. The cherry blossom adds a beautiful tradition to that. It has vibrant green leaves, which lead to astoundingly gorgeous flowers. The bloom is short-lived, but the tree stays strong.



## Captain's Log, Stardate 2608.21

*Zeta Gil*

It has now been 41 days since my perfect pink wheelchair was rendered out of commission. Despite initial hopes for a swift repair, she remains docked indefinitely. There was, briefly, a promising development. The repair company contacted me to report that the necessary part had arrived. I was told they would call again once they were prepared to dispatch someone to install it.

No further transmission has been received.



Nevertheless, the mission continues. During this period, my travels took me across the country to Los Angeles for a housing advocacy forum. The irony of traveling to advocate for systems that allow people to live independently—while navigating the trip without the mobility device that grants me much of my own independence—was not lost on me. The journey was completed with an assortment of alternative mobility aids, improvisation, and considerably more effort than would have been required with my chair. While in Los Angeles, I also made an excursion to Universal Studios. The mission was successful. Fun was had. There is a particular comfort in moving through the world using equipment built for you, something that fits your body, your needs, and the way you navigate your surroundings. I can borrow equipment. I can find alternatives. I can rearrange plans, accept help, problem-solve, and power through. I have become exceptionally good at adapting. But adaptation is not the same thing as access. For now, I continue onward with the mobility aids available to me. There are places to go, things to see, work to do, and no time to wait around for the wheelchair repair company to get its act together.

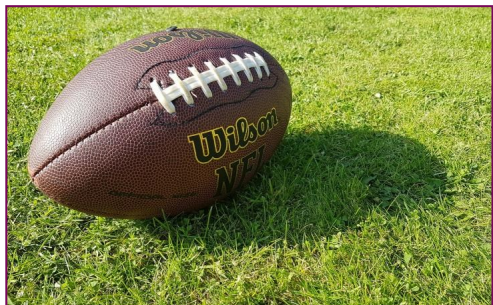
Status of the pink wheelchair: out of commission. Necessary replacement part: reportedly acquired. Repair crew: whereabouts unknown. Captain: mildly inconvenienced and continuing the mission.

I will report again next month.

Signing off, Zeta.

## Are You Ready for It?

*Josue Tapia*

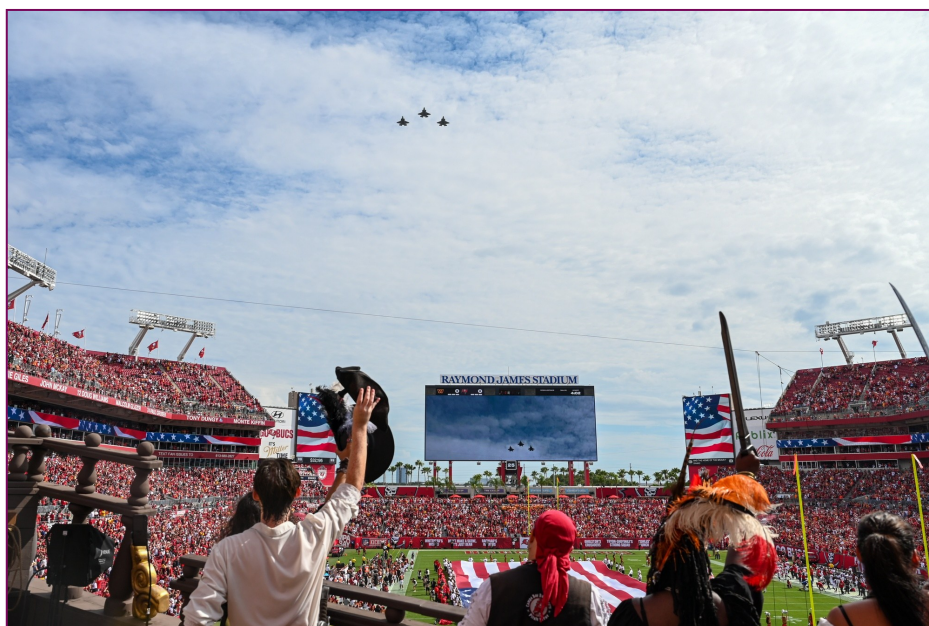


It's football season! Oh, how I love this time of year. From new players on new teams to new coaches and new schemes — I love the sport of football. And it doesn't stop with the NFL either. The NCAA football season kicks off shortly before the NFL season begins, bringing its own excitement and surprises.

Football means the world to me. I love the play-calling and the chess-like battle between defense and offense—how coaches position players like pieces on a board. These pieces are talking, breathing people with incredible skills, and it takes a full team effort to beat the other side. My favorite teams are the Eagles, Ravens, Dolphins, Buccaneers, and Browns. One of my favorite teams has won the Super Bowl twice in five years, while another hasn't made the playoffs in almost ten. It's a grind, but I love it!

NCAA football is another story entirely. College football carries an energy of school pride and fierce competitiveness. The passion displayed by college players on game day is unmatched—from the bands battling during team intros and halftime to players striving to make a name for themselves and earn glory in the NFL. There are so many colleges to watch and so much pride on display throughout the season. I love every moment.

I love me some football — year after year. It never fails to surprise me in its own way, and I can't wait to see what happens this season!



## Living with a Loved One Who Has Dementia

*Nigel Diaz*

Living with someone who has dementia is a journey filled with both challenges and moments of grace. As a person with cerebral palsy, you grow up seeing your family members as strong, courageous, and full of the knowledge you rely on. When the day comes that a doctor delivers difficult news, it can be hard to process. Understanding the condition takes time, and witnessing its effects can be painful—especially when your loved one experiences an episode and doesn't realize it.

That's why talking about it matters. It helps you understand, cope, and find meaning in the experience. There are tough days, but there can also be funny, lighthearted moments that remind you of the love and connection that remains. Family becomes your guide through it all.

Yes, dementia will progress to more difficult stages, but in the midst of it, you can still create joy. You can laugh, share stories, and make memories that will last—reminders of the bond you share and the strength that carries you both forward. Cherish those moments. They are the heart of what it means to live with, love, and care for someone with dementia.



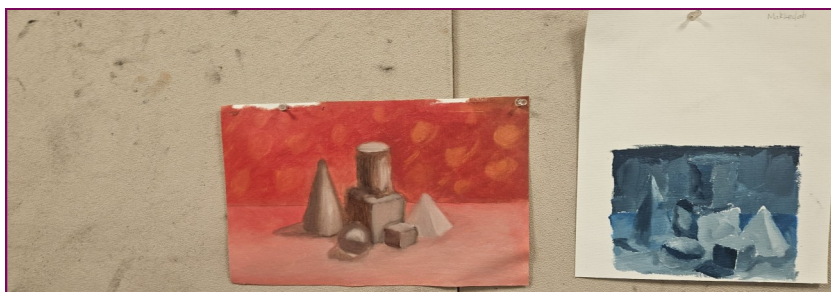
## Why I Enjoy Art

*Jakel Baker*

Have you ever found something you genuinely enjoy doing in your free time? I have always liked art, but I was introduced to it more seriously by my late principal in high school. Now that I am in college, I expected to enjoy taking an art class. Since I have ADD and autism, it can sometimes be difficult for me to stay focused, but art gives me something I genuinely enjoy focusing on.

One reason I enjoy art is because it takes my mind off worldly things. I like being able to sit down and draw or paint whatever I want. I can take an idea from my head and put it on paper. It does not always come out the way I want at first, but that is part of the process. I enjoy watching an idea change and become something better with time.

Another reason I like art is because it gives me something fun to do. I can get bored pretty easily, so it is nice to have something that keeps my attention. Instead of always playing video games or being on my phone, I can listen to music and work on my art. It gives me a way to relax, focus, and possibly even make money from something I enjoy one day.



Most importantly, I enjoy art because I can improve at it. I am still learning how to draw and paint, and I know I will get better with practice. I enjoy seeing my progress and knowing that I created something myself.

Growing up, I often thought I would never be good at anything. I saw everyone else as different and special while thinking of myself as a bland person. It is a blessing that I was introduced to art because it has shown me that I can be good at something, even if I am still learning.

Overall, art has been a fun and life-changing experience for me. It gives me something I enjoy, helps me improve, and gives me a way to express myself. I definitely want to continue making art after this class is over and keep working on all the unfinished projects I have.



## Why I Love Stitch

*Shevie Barnes*



Stitch is known as the bad little alien. Stitch has always been more than just a cute Disney character to me. I connect with him personally because he is misunderstood, he loves his family deeply, and some of his differences remind me of living with a disability.

One thing I understand about Stitch is what it feels like when people see what is different about you before they get to know you.

Stitch is judged because of how he looks and acts, but underneath everything, he just wants to belong and be accepted.

Stitch is a great example of a misunderstood character, since he looks simple on the outside, but turns out to be much more complex. He makes choices that end up affecting a lot of people. In the movie *Lilo & Stitch*, Stitch's friend almost drowns trying to save him. Stitch does his best to save her. Although, at the moment everyone felt he was being bad, he was able to see things they were not. Sometimes, I feel this is me. I have instincts that I sometimes cannot explain. If people trust just like with Stitch. I always have the best at heart.

I also love how important family becomes to him. His "ohana" is everything, and I feel the same way about the people I consider family. I love hard, and I am very protective of the people I care about.

Finally, Stitch reminds me that having challenges or being different does not stop you from having a big heart. That is why Stitch will always be special to me.

*PS—To me he is adorable!*





# 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 who 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 our website at [floridayouthcouncil.org/join](http://floridayouthcouncil.org/join). The program is open to application year-round.

We hope to hear from you soon!



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[floridayouthcouncil.org](http://floridayouthcouncil.org)