



the NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



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Welcome to the April 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 favorite movies starring or depicting a story of a person with a disability. 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*!

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Grab some popcorn! In this edition of the noodle The FYC shares their favorite movies showing stories of people with disabilities. Movies like this inspire, empower and most of all teach us about the advocates that came before us!

I am Speechless for this Show

by Serena Wetmore

When I think about television shows which have had people with disabilities, there is one that stands out most for me. That show is *Speechless*. It is about a boy with cerebral palsy who is unable to speak. It is a comedy, so of course some of it is exaggerated for comedic effect, but there is a lot of truth in it, too. I think that sometimes the true things were more important to the story than the comedy, but clearly most people would have watched it for the comedy.

There were quite a few important truths which I remember from watching the show. One was that not everyone with a wheelchair is necessarily a nice person, they are just like everyone else. Also, fighting to get the resources you need is a universal problem for people with disabilities. When you date a person with a disability, they want to be treated just like everyone else. Another thing that the show highlighted was the daily struggles of the whole family coping with the disability situation. Issues like getting out the door and to school on time, and what to do when you run into stairs but there is no ramp were particularly funny because they were very familiar to me.

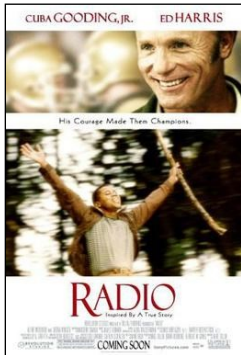
If you have a disability and you are reading this, I would strongly recommend this show. Not only because of its hard truths, through the lens of comedy, but because it hired people with disabilities to be part of the show. Micah Fowler, who played the main character, does have cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, though he can speak. They also hired renowned disabled comedian, Zack Anner, as a writer for this show. I was very excited to meet both of them when they were guest speakers at The Family Café.





Radio

by Derek Carraway



There are countless shows and movies to choose from in this day and age, but not a lot of them seem to portray a main character with a disability. A movie that does come to mind though that I enjoyed was one called *Radio*. It focused on a mentally challenged young man who was noticed continually walking by a local high school football practice field until the head coach befriended him and helped him break out of his shell, and thus forming a lifelong bond. At the start everyone wasn't on board with him being around other students and some of the boys on the football team bullied him and tricked him into doing things he shouldn't do but didn't know any better. In the end though, everyone came around and the coach even stepped down so he could commit even more time to helping the young man succeed. It's very heartwarming and was actually based on a true story. There should be more movies and shows that have these kinds of stories to help break disability stigma in our communities.

Atypical

by Alex Gonzalez



Since April is Autism Acceptance Month, I wanted to discuss a show that revolves around a character with Autism. *Atypical* is a series that is currently available for streaming on Netflix. The show follows the life of a young student named Sam, who falls under the Autism Spectrum. Sam grew up with his sister, Casey, and his parents, Elsa and Doug. In order to start dating and hopefully find love, Sam needs to become more independent, which also sets his mother on her own path of self-discovery. Throughout his journey from high school to college, Sam deals with the struggles many individuals with autism face, including how to express emotions, communicate with others, and fall in love. While some members of the autism community may find the show's representation of an autistic person inadequate, I disagree. Like Sam, I have experienced many of the same struggles portrayed in the series. While the show-runners may have initially followed the stereotypical behavior of an autistic person in Season 1, each subsequent season has shown improvement. I thoroughly enjoyed all five seasons of the show and highly recommend it to anyone.



My Hero in Diversity

by Josue Tapia



There's lots of media in 2024 that shows diversity in the community. From shows like *Modern Family*, *This Is Us*, and even *Cocomelon*. They show that we are all the same at the end of the day and that our differences can bring us together. Then there are those shows that truly opened my eyes. Shows that did it when I when diversity was a whisper. That show for me was the animated series *X-Men* in the 90s

Man oh man, I loved that show as a kid. From the different powered mutants to the cool way the characters were drawn for TV, I was so hyped every Saturday morning to watch that show. My two favorite characters that taught me the most were the teacher/professor Charles Xavier and his best friend/brother/archenemy Magneto. Both of

these characters cared about the well being of their fellow mutants but the way they went about it was completely different.

Charles Xavier was in a wheelchair and is one of the most powerful telepaths in all of comic history. He was in a wheelchair because as kids him and his brother magneto were running away from prosecution for being mutants themselves and in a fit of rage Magneto, whose powers are the control of metals through telekinesis, picked a fence up and fought back, but by accident Xavier got shot in his spine, never to walk again. This set them in different paths. I share to say our disabilities can either break us or mold us to be a catalyst of change. Either we're Professor Charles Xavier or Magneto. I know who I am. Which are you?

Champions

by Morgan Griffin

I picked the movie *Champions* as my favorite movie starring people with disabilities because it shows how to be different. The movie involves creating a basketball team of people with many different skills. Beyond the belief of the community, and the viewpoints of the world, the team is extremely successful. It happens to be the very thing that makes them unstoppable, proving to the world and anyone watching different can be a wonderful thing.

The Miracle Worker

by Shevie Barnes

The movie that is my favorite movie showcasing someone with a disability is, *The Miracle Worker: the Story of Helen Keller*. I saw this movie for the first time when I was around 13 years old. The movie had me in a trance from start to finish. Immediately, I felt like I was right in the movie with both of the stars. I was hoping when she was hoping and troubled when she was struggling.



As an adult I look at my life and realize a few things were foreshadowed about my life by this simple movie. The first is my love of teaching. I saw teacher Ann and her dedication to Helen and I knew this was the kind of teacher I wanted to be. I wanted to never give up on my students and to unlock the world to them as she did. She was unconventional and unsupported at first but as time went on she was respected. Helen became a strong advocate for people with disabilities because of her teacher Ms. Ann.

The second thing I realized while remembering this movie is my lifelong love for sign language. I have always loved sign language and watching how clearly it opened life up and the world for Helen made me know I wanted to continue learning this beautiful language.

Finally, this movie made me realize how much I could relate to young Helen Keller. She was born in to a well off family who loved her. They just did not understand how to help her be successful. This is how I feel I started off in my own family. However, like Helen I think as time has gone on they have learned and I have learned how to show them what I need. Now, I dare say I am an integral part of my family.

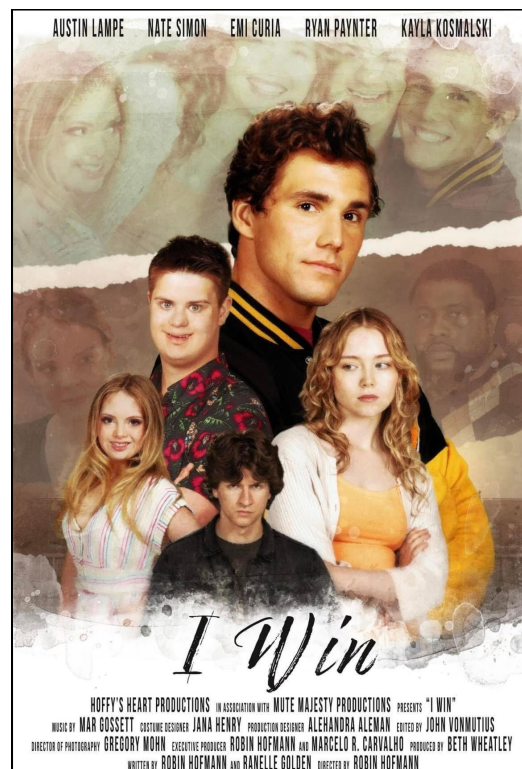
I Win

by JJ Humphrey

Inclusion in the media is so important because it makes us feel connected to the show and characters. Representation is also a good way for people to learn and become educated about disabilities. Recently, I was an extra on set for *I Win*. *I Win* is a feature film in which “A grieving teen forms unexpected bonds with a peer with Down Syndrome & a local girl, but everything is threatened by the girl’s violent ex-boyfriend.”

The representation in this film was amazing. Many of the cast and crew had disabilities of some sort. Everyone was friendly and we were all excited to be a part of it. Robin Hoffman was the director and she’s quite a visionary. Her focus on inclusion and acceptance made the experience fun and enjoyable. Interesting fact: between takes I was talking with some extras and found out we had common experiences. Several of us knew sign language and we had some fun learning signs from one another.

The instructions for filming were easily understood and well explained to us. There were attention breaks. They fed us. Speaking about being fed. For a movie, it is called craft service. The food was gluten free. I actually tried some new foods. Some I liked, some I didn’t. It was a great experience. I love working with Robin Hoffman from Hoffs’s Heart. If you have a dream to become an actor, writer, director, or anything else related to filming, find the people near you. Reach out to them. And find ways to help and get involved.





Julia

Viv Banks

Media representation is an important part of society. Many people overlook the value of having representation, but eliminating it causes repercussions. Specifically, disability representation is more significant since those with disabilities tend to be misunderstood by others. A perfect example of disability representation is the character Julia from *Sesame Street*. For context, *Sesame Street* is a children's show that has been around since 1969. Over the years, the show has educated kids on several matters, even with difficult topics such as grief. In 2017, an Autistic character, named Julia, was introduced to the show in the clip 'Meet Julia.' Throughout the episode, there were multiple instances of Julia demonstrating different behaviors seen in those with Autism, however, there was one part that stood out to me. At the end of the episode, Elmo and Abby find Big Bird sitting by himself. When asked by Elmo if something is wrong, Big Bird says, "Oh, I am just thinking about Julia. You know she's not like any friend I've ever had before." Elmo explains that, "Well none of us are exactly the same." Abby agrees and brings up that everybody is unique in their own ways. In depth, this addresses the stigma of those with disabilities being labeled as different. By having Julia in *Sesame Street*, not only did it help to promote inclusivity of those with Autism, but with those with disabilities in general. Therefore, it is important to have disability representation in the media.





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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