



The NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!

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Florida Youth Council

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Welcome To The Noodle!

This is a special edition of *The Noodle Newsletter*, written and published by The Florida Youth Council (FYC). In this issue of *The Noodle*, members of The Council were asked to write about Disability History and Awareness Weeks in Florida. In 2008 Governor Charlie Crist signed a bill designating the first two weeks in October as Disability History and Awareness Weeks. It is meant to expand students' knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities and the

disability rights movement. The articles in this edition focus on equality for people with disabilities, as well as personal stories from our authors. One member wrote about how he has used one company as a resource to help him find a job. The FYC members truly hope you will take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to read their articles and celebrate their accomplishments and life changes in this special edition of the October 2014 *Noodle Newsletter*.



Let's Make Them Aware

By Josue Tapia Ortiz



The Florida Youth Council is a program of The Family Café

Having a disability in this world could be a hard thing. The obstacles we overcome daily can be a hassle, but the worst situation to overcome when having a disability is how much people are unaware of how to work with or assist a person with a physical limitation.

The first two weeks of October are Disability History and Awareness Weeks. Through these days we try as a community and group to help bring awareness to the population few even

know about. As a council we've done our best to make anyone we encounter aware of our history and about all we've accomplished together. These weeks were put in place for us together to spread the knowledge and awareness to who we are and what we are worth.

Disability history and awareness isn't just for us to talk about. We as a community have to take it to those people who don't know, who don't care, who don't understand. Together we make them aware.

Why are Disability History and Awareness Weeks Important?

By Alex Brown

Every October since 2008 Florida K-12 schools have celebrated Disability History and Awareness Weeks. During these important weeks, students are given a basic understanding and awareness of the role that persons with disabilities have played throughout history. They learn about important people who had disabilities such as Albert Einstein, Christopher Reeve and Justin Dart. They see important inventions designed for persons with disabilities that provide modern day conveniences enjoyed by all, such as elevators and automatic doors. They are shown how to treat person with a disability in a way that is both respectful and normal.



These weeks in October are important because they show students that people with disabilities are a part of history and everyday life. They provide students with a greater perception of all humans. It helps to eliminate the stigma associated with having a disability. It also helps students with disabilities. It shows them their own history. It shows them that people with disabilities are successful. Hopefully it also helps to prevent them from being bullied as much.

In the end, Disability History and Awareness weeks are important because they help to shape the minds and actions of students growing across the state of Florida.

Awareness at School

By Megan Atkinson



In honor of Disability History and Awareness Weeks, I contacted the local schools in my county to talk about disabilities to the students. I have learned it is much easier to get elementary schools to agree to allow me to host and speak at a Disability History and Awareness assembly than it is to get a middle or high school to agree to an assembly. Let's face it, younger children are easier to talk to about disabilities because they have not learned what society's norms are and are more likely to want to learn about what they don't understand.

Having a Disability History and Awareness assembly at a middle or high school is an entirely different ball game. Speaking at a high school takes guts because teenagers are already molded by society and are more likely to block out what you are trying to speak to them about because they think it does not apply to them.

I believe every public school should have a Disability History and Awareness assembly starting in elementary school, continuing into middle and high school.



Transformational Learning

By Christopher Regan



To celebrate the annual Disability History & Awareness Weeks, I fostered a collaborative effort at the University of North Florida, between the Taylor Leadership Institute where I currently am an intern, and the Disability Resource Center. Together, we developed an event that would also coincide with our Leadership Speakers Bureau series, and centered it on teaching leadership skills to empower people with disabilities. It was hard work, but it was totally worth it.



The attendance for the event was somewhere between 120 and 150 people in total. We arranged for guest speakers to speak on a special group panel from the Disability Resource Center, as well as influential community leaders with disabilities in the Jacksonville area. They all talked about how people

with disabilities could utilize leadership within themselves to advocate for ways to improve their quality of life. Everyone was listening intently to what was being said. At the end, there was a delicious reception catered by Jason's Deli.

I feel that the event truly embodied the "Transformational Learning" initiative of UNF. It provides valuable information that everyone, including those with disabilities, can employ in order to make their lives better. I am so incredibly honored to have played a valuable part in this event, and I look forward to positively impacting more lives in the future.



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Disability (Employment) Awareness

By Derek Carraway



As many of you know or may not know, the first two weeks of October are designated as Disability History & Awareness Weeks in the state of Florida. During these two weeks, there are several special ceremonies, events and other initiatives that take place. I thought I'd share about one such initiative that's actually on the national level, that not only runs through our two weeks here in Florida, but through the whole month: Disability Employment Awareness Month.

It promotes and encourages employers to hire people with disabilities. This has been a long-time challenge, as the percentages of people with disabilities who are successfully employed traditionally have been on the low side. Although this initiative is only for one month every year, there are countless resources that are available year-round

that can help people with disabilities gain and keep meaningful employment.

One such resource here in Florida that helps many in this area is Vocational Rehabilitation, commonly known as VR. I myself am currently utilizing services from VR, as I recently graduated from college and am looking for work. This is an aspect of disability awareness that is important and that people need to be aware of.



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 express those issues in their state and local communities, and to develop strategies to solve 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!