



# The NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!

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## Welcome To The Noodle!

This is the December 2014 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by The Florida Youth Council (FYC). In this issue of *The Noodle*, members of The Council were asked to write about how they enjoy winter and the holidays in Florida. This topic let members share their personal experiences with a warmer winter. Members

wrote about anything from pajama parties and palm trees to sandmen and a tan Santa. 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 December 2014 edition of *The Noodle*. Happy Holidays!

### Florida Youth Council

Megan Atkinson  
Shevie Barnes  
Alex Brown  
Derek Carraway  
Nick Grabowski  
Whitney Harris  
Christopher Regan  
Dakota Smoot  
Josue Tapia Ortiz  
Christina Waldron

## Christmas in the South

By Alex Brown

I lived in Maryland until I was 8 years old when I moved to Florida. Things were very different up there when it came to Christmas. Outside of the obvious, like it is never snowing on Christmas day in Florida (heck I normally don't even have to wear a jacket on Christmas day down here), there are other less obvious differences. One of these difference is that some people decorate a palm tree for Christmas instead of the traditional Christmas tree. This tends to be further south than even Tallahassee, like Key West area, but I was shocked when I first saw that done.

Another big difference is that in the south people either go to Lowe's or some other home improvement store to get a tree or use an artificial tree. When I was growing up in Maryland we would go to a tree farm and pick out a Christmas tree from thousands of trees and people would come along and cut it down right before our eyes. It was a tradition. Down here in Florida



I don't even know where the closest place you could go and pick your tree out like that is. This isn't a bad thing. I have been converted to the artificial tree. It makes the process of setting up Christmas decorations easier.

In the south there is also the idea that Santa Claus needs to be in a beach setting. Every store that sells Christmas ornaments has one with Santa Claus in a swimming suit. That was definitely not the case up north. I understand it. Why would Santa not be in a bathing suit in Florida? I just think it is a little weird. You definitely won't find a Santa Claus in a bathing suit ornament on my tree.

These are just a few ways that I have seen that Christmas is different down in Florida. These differences don't even include how pink flamingos fit in with holiday decorations.



The Florida Youth Council is a program of The Family Café

## Enjoying a Warm Winter

*By Christopher Regan*

People love to joke about the winter season in Florida, mostly about the fact that it never looks like winter. It's never cold enough to snow, there's only a tiny handful of ice-skating rinks around the entire state, and Miami pretty much stays the same temperature throughout the whole year. I actually was born in Massachusetts, but moved down here when I was only 3, so you could say I was never fully acclimated to the cold. A typical winter day in Florida is usually gray, overcast, cold, windy, and rainy. It's what places like Scotland and Seattle are like pretty much every day of the year!

Sadly, since I don't have any snow to play in for the winter, I have to find other ways of entertaining myself while trying to keep warm. Usually, I make a fire in the fireplace, or I snuggle real close with my dog under the covers. My family and I sometimes roast marshmallows and make s'mores while watching a movie together. When Christmas is drawing near, we dig out the big Christmas tree from our attic and decorate it. Then, we make milk and cookies for Santa and carrots for the Reindeer. It's all mysteriously gone by the time I wake up!

For me, winter in Florida is a little more restrictive and irritating. There's no tall, forested mountains to hike through, and there's no snow to play in or go sledding, skiing, and snowboarding. Nobody in their right mind would dare go to the beach when it's below 50 degrees outside. I just make the best with what I have, and always think to myself that it could be much worse than this.

## Winter Holidays in Florida

*By Derek Carraway*

Well, it's that time of year again. We just finished Thanksgiving and now it's on to Christmas and New Year's. With that in mind, I thought I'd share my perspective on winter in our great state of Florida. We all know it's a little different here than in other parts of the country. Let's start with the weather itself. The state itself geographically sits more south than any other of the lower 48. Because of that, it doesn't get that cold generally speaking. We do get cold fronts that might make it cold for a day or two, but then it warms right back up. It varies on what part of the state you are in, but take Tallahassee for example. I'd say 98% of our winter consists of it being cold for a couple of hours overnight and then it warms up nicely during the day. It being 30 degrees at 6 am and 70 by noon can be a normal winter weather pattern in this town. I personally love it because in general I hate the cold weather. Needless to say, we don't get a "White Christmas" too often. In fact, the last time Tallahassee got any measurable snowfall that actually stuck to the ground for a couple of days, the year was 1989. Despite our state never having a true winter holiday, we still do and have things that make this time of year a time to have fun and celebrate. Tallahassee always has a winter parade, even if it doesn't feel like winter when it is held. Around the same time, they always create a man-made ice-rink to try to create some sense of winter. Then there are other little things that also go on and this is my perspective of the winter holidays in Florida.







## My Winter Traditions

*By Josue Tapia*

My family is a very traditional family when it comes to traditions and family gatherings. I've done the same thing during the winter every year for 26 years and I wouldn't change it for anything. My family is very big on being together for the holidays and we always try our best to do so. From pajamas all Christmas eve and Christmas day, to opening presents on midnight Christmas day. Like I said I've been doing this for years but I will break it down a bit.

Pajama days is a tradition we've done since before I was born. My mom use to tell me that her and my aunts would get together with the cousins and spend all Christmas eve and Christmas in their pajamas watching TV, playing, and just spending time with each other with out leaving. They would wear different themed ones and say the reasons to why they were wearing that specific one. This year I got walking dead pajamas and I already know we are going to have a blast talking about it.

Then there's the Christmas food my family cooks only these two days out of the whole year. Pork freaking tenderloin. This is my favorite type of meat to eat and for the life of me I can't cook it as good as the family does so I have to wait a year to eat it and it's amazing!!! Plus it's always enough to last those days too. I love it. My mom cooks her famous Mexican dip that is delicious too and my grandma makes some rice and beans that will make you question your diet. Just amazing.

These are just some of the traditions that my family partakes in during the winter. I hope you have your little interesting traditions that you do and will continue to do as time goes on. Me, I'm counting down the days for that tenderloin but I hope you have your own reasons to look forward to your winter holidays. Happy holidays!!!

## Palm Trees

*By Nick Grabowski*

My favorite thing about winter holidays in Florida, is the palm trees. Now let me explain: I've always been a fan of palm trees. I thought it was neat when in south Florida they would nearly always be on any 'important' bridge. But something special happens around winter. They get decorated: it's awesome. They are usually decorated with Christmas lights spiraling up the base of the tree, then the top varies dramatically. Sometimes it'll have some large scale bulbs that kind of look like colorful coconuts. Other times just a star on top. Either way I love it. Living in Tallahassee now makes me miss the way they did it with the palm trees in south Florida. But fear not! I shall always keep the memory of it.



# A Sandy Christmas

By Megan Atkinson

Holidays in Florida can be unique. I have lived in Florida my entire life. So, I have never seen snow. Therefore, white Christmases are not even on my mind. What Northerners define as cold and what Floridians defined as cold are two completely different things. Honestly, if I had to build an actual snowman at Christmas time I feel like I would freeze to death. That is why I love my Florida Christmases. The only snowmen around here are sandmen. Every year around this time, my family and I go to the beach to build sandmen. It is our Christmas tradition. We use seashells for the buttons and eyes and sticks for the nose

and arms. Building Sandmen in Florida is not as taboo as people in the northern states think it is. I have plenty of people that follow this tradition other than my family. Another thing you will find in Florida around Christmas time is decorated palm trees. Growing up in Florida I thought this was completely normal and that everyone does it, but apparently, it is just a Florida thing. One year, our Christmas tree was a decorated palm tree. As a child, I thought this was the coolest thing ever. I will continue to build a Sandman and decorated palm trees with my future children so they can experience a Florida Christmas.



## 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](http://www.floridayouthcouncil.com). The program is open to application year round. We hope to hear from you soon!