



The NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!

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Florida Youth Council

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The Florida Youth Council is a program of The Family Café

Welcome To The Noodle!

Welcome to the July 2015 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by The Florida Youth Council! In this issue of *The Noodle*, members of the Council were asked to write about our July 4th memories. This topic allowed members to share their thoughts on what this special holiday means to

them. We wrote about watching fireworks, spending quality time with family, and how this holiday lets us reflect on our independence. We hope you will take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to learn about our experiences and enjoy our thoughts and opinions in this July 2015 edition of *The Noodle*!

Baby, You're a Firework

By Megan Atkinson

All throughout our lives and school, we are taught about the Declaration of Independence. However, many people celebrate the Fourth of July without thinking about why we celebrate this holiday known for its fireworks. The Declaration of Independence was said to be put into action on July 4th 1776. Because of this document America is independent and its own nation. It is why we have our own flag and national anthem. It is the reason we are given the 3 rights that all Americans are given at birth: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Without these rights we would not be free to live the life we choose. We would not be able to act the way we want to. And, last but not least, if we did not have the right to pursue happiness Americans would not be able to feel one of the best feelings in the world, known as true happiness. All in all the Fourth of



July is a celebration of freedom. And that is exactly what it means to me. It means I can live the way I want, and act the way I want, all while doing the things that make me truly happy in life. We celebrate with fireworks and cookouts and sparklers and grilled hamburgers and hotdogs. So while celebrating this year, remember to think about the freedom that was given to us so long ago by our founding fathers.

What the 4th of July Means to Me

By *Serena Wetmore*

The first thing that most of us think of when we hear “4th of July” is patriotism. The 4th of July was traditionally considered as the day the Declaration of Independence was signed. I think of history classes and things we talked about when we came to the chapter on the American Revolution. I think about the day when King George was sent the Declaration of Independence. His response was to send more troops to America. I don’t think he thought that the colonists could win a war. I’m sure he never would have thought that our country would last this long.

One of the most popular ways to celebrate the 4th of July is with fireworks. Most people like fireworks with all the beautiful colors exploding into the sky. I agree that they are beautiful, but I prefer to watch them on TV. This is because I have a condition called hyperacusis. It is a big word, but what it means is that I am very sensitive to sound. The noise outside is very hard for me. It is like a bomb going off in my brain. I feel like other people must have noise-cancelling headphones built into their ears. Everyone else acts like it is completely normal and don’t jump the way I do. And what is even worse is that the noise from firecrackers can go on for days before and after the 4th. I know people are patriotic and very excited about the holiday, but I’m always happy when it’s over!

We usually spend time around the 4th with family or friends. Sometimes my aunt and uncle host a family reunion with my dad’s side of the family. It is fun because I don’t see them very often, especially my cousins and their kids. They all live outside of Florida and traveling is kind of a challenge. Sometimes we spend the 4th with my friends who I call my “Cuban family.” They talk

about Cuba and how there is no freedom of speech and how you can go to jail for speaking out against the government. It makes me grateful that they got out of Cuba and grateful that we have freedom in the United States!



July: A Month to Remember

By *Whitney Harris*

The month of July is probably my favorite month out of the entire year! In my opinion, it is filled with holidays!

The month starts out with a celebration of our country’s freedom. Independence Day always reminds me of fireworks and the beach. Though I don’t usually go to the beach to watch the fireworks, most of the firework shows I see tend to be over a body of water. My favorite memories are going to my grandparents’ small town of Defuniak Springs to watch their firework show over their lake. The whole community comes out and, truthfully, there isn’t a bad seat anywhere!

The next event of the month is my sister’s birthday! This year she will be turning 18! She recently graduated from high school and is already taking summer classes at the local junior college. I’m hoping we will get to go away on a weekend trip to celebrate this milestone birthday!

After that, my Mom’s birthday is less than two weeks later, which gives us another reason to celebrate! Then, only two days later is my birthday! This year I will turn 25! I can’t wait for another birthday and another new chapter of my life.

It’s so nice that so many wonderful things happen within one short month. And it seems only right to kick off the birthday fun with America’s birthday! So Happy Birthday America! I hope it’s a good one!

What Independence Day Means To Me

By Christopher Regan

I've always had an awesome time throughout my life whenever July 4 rolls around. It means fireworks, cookouts, parties, and opportunities to celebrate our country's independence. All of this is fun, without a doubt. However, as I've gotten older, I've realized that Independence Day is not solely applicable to our country as a whole. Rather, it's also about my own independence, and how I can work to improve it every day of my life.

Having just recently graduated from the University of North Florida and received my Bachelor's degree, I feel like I am now at a crucial milestone in my life. Despite my limitations and disadvantages, I have managed to still achieve success and overcome numerous obstacles that were in my way. Independence Day is a time for reflection on just how far I've come as a person. Everyone knows that the American Dream is all about owning your own house and having a successful job, and that is exactly what I desire to accomplish one day.

I have developed a specialized plan that details the steps and objectives that will aide me in my journey of independence. First, I must pass the Graduate Readiness Exam so that I am eligible to be officially accepted into the Graduate Program at the University of North Florida. Second, I hope to get an actual job in the field of my major, which will allow me to gain practical real-world experience. Finally, I desire to achieve my MBA degree, which will provide me with an additional wealth of knowledge and credentials that will help me to stand out among the endless fields of hopeful job applicants. It will be a long road ahead of me, but I have the confidence that I can achieve anything that I set my mind to.



The 4th of July

By Josue Tapia Ortiz

Independence Day means a lot to the people of America. To some it's a day to feel entitled to something their ancestors fought for. To some it's a celebration of the life we live in this country. To me, it's a little of both, and more.

I wasn't born in the mainland U.S. like my sisters were. I was born in Puerto Rico. I came to America for the first time when I was 2. We came to seek treatment for my asthma. I loved how colorful and loud everything was. There were a lot of tall buildings and I got to ride a train with my mom. It was great, but it was short lived. I missed everything about it when we came back to Puerto Rico. I was a little jealous of the "English kids," as I used to think of them, as I grew older.

We finally moved to New York when I was five and I got to go to public school! Yeah, you might sit there and think, "Hmmm public school is the first exciting thing you can think of?" Yes! It is! Imagine going to a school during your elementary years in the Caribbean where in the middle of coloring a rooster walks in the classroom and just stares at you all. He just walks around like he would run the place and then just leaves! See, these are things I never had to go through in New York. Hence why I loved school so much.

I know that's just a small reason, but to me it was a big one. I say this because to me, the 4th of July is a celebration for my family in which we are grateful for the privileges and access to a better future here. Hope everyone has a safe and fun 4th of July!

The 4th of July is About Family

By Alex Brown

As the 4th of July comes around, most people either think of backyard barbecues or fireworks or Uncle Sam. These things come to my mind as well, but I also think about family a lot when it comes to the 4th of July. I remember doing family reunion on 4th of July weekend every other year as a kid. I remember swimming in the afternoon with my grandpa in his pool, until he had to get out to make hamburgers. I remember walking as a family, nearly 20 of us, to the nearby field to watch the city's fireworks display. I remember spending my second day as a married man with my wife, enjoying a new kind of family. These are all good memories, but the 4th of July holiday has bad memories as well.

I remember moving from Maryland to Florida on the 4th of July weekend. The evening of the 4th as I watched fireworks go off, I remember wondering what my dad and grandfather were doing right then. Little did I know, I would never get to spend another 4th of July with my grandfather. As I look back, I see how much his presence was linked with the 4th of July holiday for me.

With all that said, as I look forward to 4th of July this year, I realize that for me the 4th is about both family and friends. While I can't celebrate with all of my family, I will be able to share the holiday with those here in town, and also my church family. I look forward to playing games in the pool until we have to stop to grill hamburger and hotdogs. Then we won't have to walk to a field to watch fireworks because in Florida we just set off our own fireworks.



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!