



# the NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!

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## Florida Youth Council

Megan Germain  
Shevie Barnes  
Derek Carraway  
Nick Grabowski  
Whitney Harris  
Christopher Regan  
Dakota Smoot  
Josue Tapia Ortiz  
Christina Waldron  
Serena Wetmore



The Florida Youth Council is a program of The Family Café

Welcome to the April 2016 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by the Florida Youth Council! For this issue of *The Noodle*, members of the Council were asked to write about “Volunteering in their community today.” This topic allowed members to share their thoughts

about volunteering. We wrote about how it makes us feel to help in our community when we volunteer. 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 April 2016 edition of *The Noodle*!

## What is Volunteering?

by Nick Grabowski

I believe volunteering isn't something you have to necessarily sign up to do. It's just when you do something for the good of your community that isn't required of you. When you help an older person carry something, you're volunteering. If you freely offer your abilities to others, you can volunteer at all times.

While I volunteer in numerous ways, I bring this up as a way to pay homage to those that don't always have the time and ability to volunteer on a greater scale. I say this because it's becoming more



common for people to look down on people who don't volunteer. That's wrong in two ways. One, people shouldn't be volunteering out of pressure. Second, we shouldn't look down on those who are too busy to volunteer their time. Volunteering doesn't make you a better person, but it should make you feel like a better person.

## What I Do to Volunteer

by Serena Wetmore

Volunteering is often difficult for me, due to my disability and physical limitations, but I still find ways to be active in my community.

One of the organizations that I like to help is Florida Service Dogs. They are a nonprofit organization that provides service dogs and training to people with disabilities. Over the years, I have tried to help raise money for them. Some of the ways I've volunteered are by helping out at a flea market, collecting my own change, asking for donations to them instead of birthday gifts, and by being on the poster for one of their fundraisers. I've also helped with demonstrations at times, and even brought them to my elementary school when I was younger. This was fun and informative for the kids and teachers as well.

Some other things I've done are walks and runs for fundraisers like Relay for Life, Breast Cancer, and Downs Syndrome Association. I've raised some money for the special needs kids at my elementary school, and donated a lot of my old toys to my elementary school for the kids' prize boxes. I've also done things through my church like volunteering at Vacation Bible School, both at my own church and at another one. One of my favorite events is participating in our church "Trunk or Treat" where my family and I entertain with a "magical" Harry Potter display every year.

I really like volunteering, because it makes me feel like I am making an impact on the world. It helps me realize that despite my physical disability, I can still make the world a better place. Remember, even the smallest action you do can impact the world!



## The Best Hobby of All: Volunteering

by Whitney Harris

People often ask me what I do in my spare time or what my favorite hobby is. Though I enjoy making things, my most enjoyable pastime is to volunteer. Right out of high school I began volunteering with my high school's marching band. That's also the year that I joined The Florida Youth Council and started to volunteer at Florida's Youth Leadership Forum. Needless to say, I became hooked right away!

When I moved away to college, I was only taking one class my first semester, which meant I had plenty of time on my hands and needed something more productive to do than sewing dresses. So I signed myself up to volunteer at a few events with Easter Seals. It was so much fun! I also found time to start getting more involved with local Girl Scout councils. Throughout the years, I've volunteered with three different Girl Scout councils and I've enjoyed learning the ins and out of each one.

I have found that there are certain interest groups that I have a preference for volunteering with. If the group is associated with leadership, disability and/or youth, I am all in! Quite a few of my volunteer roles actually involve all three!

Giving back to the community is a very rewarding side of volunteering, but I also enjoy the opportunity to learn new skills and discover tasks that I enjoy (or dislike) doing outside of my everyday job duties. It's a way to grow as an individual and help out at the same time. If you aren't already volunteering in some small way, I highly recommend it!



## What I Do To Volunteer for My Community

by Shevie Barnes

As I have gotten older and the need to make money to survive has become more of a necessity than a choice, the option to volunteer has become slim to none. My daily life, however, is what I like to think of as volunteering. This is because by profession I am a teacher, and it is said that this job is the toughest and most rewarding at the same time.

Most of my own time goes to making sure my students are successful, and reflecting on what I can do to make sure their lives are impacted better than my own. When I first began teaching this year, many of my students were below grade level in a scary manner. I worried for their future and prayed for guidance so that they would be the shining stars I knew they would become. What I decided to do is the definition of volunteering: I believe!

After a long day's work each and every day I take four of my students and I tutor them. I create activities just for each student to strengthen their skills. At first it was hard and I sometimes felt hopeless as my students would struggle with the simple task of reading a sentence. Many days I thought I should give up, and I had long nights.

I am proud to say that we now have 60 more days left of school and 98% of my class is at or above grade level and our tutoring sessions are coveted by other students. We all know the great achievements we have made, and when I see the smiles on my students' faces I know that they are happy. Even though I do not get the privilege of traditionally volunteering I am so grateful to lend an extra helping hand to my students. I know that there is a reason I am placed where I am.

# GET

# INVOLVED

**Be a volunteer and reap the rewards**



## A Whole Lot of Volunteering

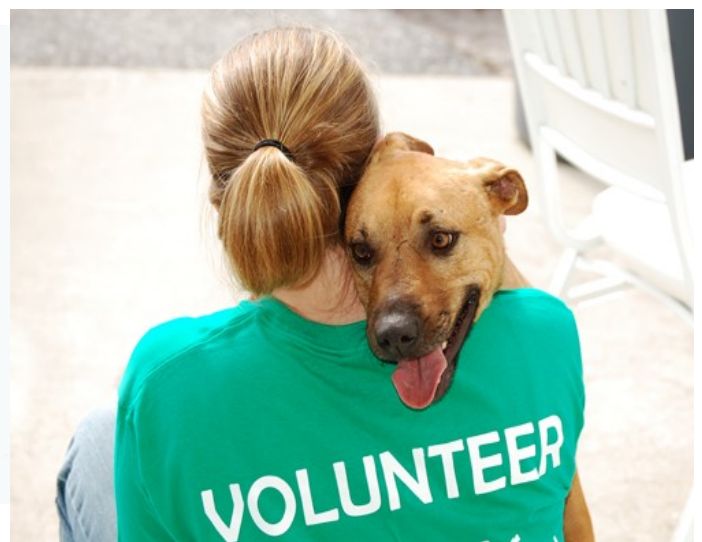
by Derek Carraway

Over the last few years, I've been volunteering and giving back within the community. When I first started out, I was in high school and volunteered at the local library and with Habitat for Humanity for a brief stint. To be honest though, these weren't my favorite way to spend time, and I mainly did it to fulfill the volunteer hours required for a couple of scholarships I was trying to get.

Since those experiences though, I've gotten involved in a couple of other things that I enjoy and find very meaningful. I started volunteering in the media department at my church. I help record our services and other special events and live stream them over the internet. At times, I also have monitored website stats on our videos we have uploaded and created and displayed graphics while recordings were in progress.

The other thing I've done is serve as the head volunteer/Commander in charge of the scout group out of my church called Royal Rangers for a little over a year now. I am in charge of planning lessons and activities for our weekly meetings and for other special trips and outings we might plan for the scouts. This is something that is very close to me, as I actually was a part of this great program growing up, and my goal is that the group of boys we have now enjoy it and get as much out of it as I did.

Then, lastly, I obviously volunteer my time as a member here on the Florida Youth Council. As a person with multiple disabilities, I feel strongly what we do as a council is a good way to give back to our community and stay abreast of the important issues that effect the lives of youth and all people with disabilities. So, needless to say, I do a lot of volunteering and giving back to the community that keeps me busy, but I enjoy every minute of it.





## 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!