



# the NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



Volume 10, Issue 05

June 2017

Welcome to the June 2017 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by the Florida Youth Council!!! For this issue of *The Noodle*, members of the FYC were asked to write about what The Family Café and The Florida Youth Council Means to them. This topic al-

lowed members to share their thoughts about The Family Café and The FYC. 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 June 2017 edition of *The Noodle*!

## Current Members:

Shevie Barnes  
Derek Carraway  
Rocky Castro  
Megan Germain  
Ian Horowitz  
Josh Tapia  
Christopher Regan  
Dakota Smoot  
Christina Waldron  
Serena Wetmore



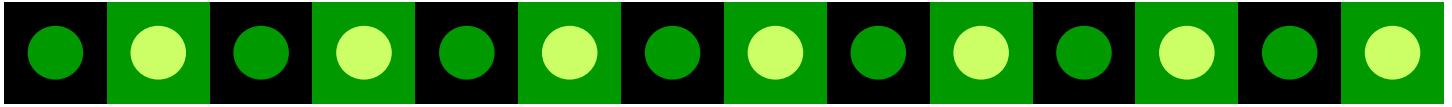


## What the FYC and Family Café Mean To Me

*By Chris Regan*

The Florida Youth Council and The Family Café have done a whole lot to change my life and make me the person I am today. I first started when I was only fourteen years old, just starting high school, and now I have graduated from college and am part of the Graduate School at the University of North Florida. I couldn't have done it without the support and education that these amazing organizations have given me in order to become self-empowered. Recently, I took a graduate class that was centered on leadership in learning organizations. It got me thinking about brand new methods that could be used to improve the effectiveness of both The Florida Youth Council and The Family Café. My final paper in that class was divided into three sections. The first section was about creating a vision for what you wanted the organization to look like in the future. The second section was about examining the current state of the organization and how it differed from your vision. The third and final section was about developing an action plan that could be used to transform the organization from what was outlined in your vision into a reality. The most valuable aspect of these wonderful organizations is the people. I have met so many dedicated, smart, and innovative folks who have persevered despite their setbacks and limitations. They have inspired me even more than I normally would have been, and deserve to reap all the rewards that come with living an independent, self-empowered life. I plan to explain the ideas that I have put forth in my final paper, so that they can eventually be used to provide positive changes that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these organizations. I can't possibly be thankful enough for everything that they have done for me!

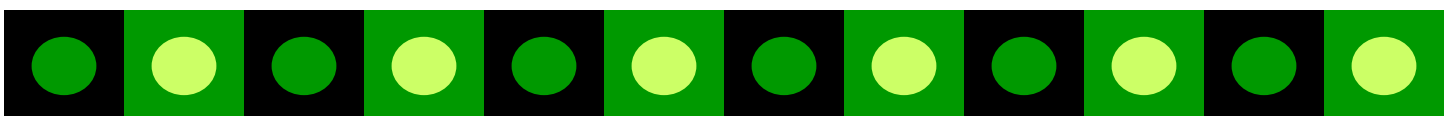




## Everything Happens for a Reason

*By Megan Germain*

The Florida Youth Council (FYC) and The Family Cafe mean more to me than I can put into words, because both organizations have impacted mine and my family's lives greatly over the past few years. Let me start from the beginning, I joined the FYC 8 years ago when I was 15. At that time, I was like any other rebellious teenager. I was going through a rough patch. My life had changed dramatically. I was taken from one home situation and thrown into a completely different home situation. And I, for one, don't handle change very well. So it was nice to have my new friends to fall back on. Fast forward a few years, to when I was 18 years old. The FYC and Family Café stood by me when I decided to come out of the closet. That could have gone a completely different direction if it had been a different group of individuals. I am thankful for their love and support though that time in my life. Last, and probably the most relevant reason why the FYC and Family Café mean so much to me, is because without them my wife and I wouldn't be where we are today. The Family Cafe gave my wife a job as Youth Advisor, which relocated us to Tallahassee and moved us out of the RV we were living in. That opportunity kick started our future. Furthermore, upon moving to Tallahassee, we stayed with a former FYC member until we were able to get on our feet. I was also able to get an internship in Tallahassee with the help a former FYC member, all of which would not have happened if I didn't join the FYC 8 years ago.





## More Than Words Can Describe!

*By Derek Carraway*

What does the FYC and Family Café mean to me? Well, let's just say it is a very big part of my life. The FYC and Family Café are all about advocating and doing things that will better the lives of people with disabilities. Considering I've had a disability since the day I was born, this has obviously always been an important issue to me. Even before I got around to joining the Council, I started attending The Annual Family Café and going to different sessions, wanting to learn and be a better advocate for myself. In fact, as of right now, I can say I have been to every Annual Family Café and Annual Youth Summit held to this point except for two, and I learn something new every year I go back.

Since joining the council, I have been able to grow my leadership skills, among other things, and become a better advocate for myself and for others with disabilities. I have also attended different functions with our Youth Advisor (both past & present) and other staff from The Family Café office from time to time that I didn't have to attend, but wanted to, because it meant that much to me. It truly is more to me than just being a member on the Council. It's being a part of an organization that is truly making a difference in people's lives by showcasing the menu of services and resources available to Floridians with disabilities that will help them better their lives. I could probably come up with a few more pages worth of examples, stories and reasons this organization means so much to me, but I'll leave it at that. Even after I am no longer on the Council (when the dreaded time comes that I age out), I can see myself still attending The Annual Family Café and staying involved in some capacity with this great organization. It just means that much to me. In closing, I'd just like to give a BIG shout-out and thank you to our fearless leader Lori Fahey, who started it all from scratch and keeps it going seamlessly year after year.





## A Step Back

*By: Serena Wetmore*

In order to truly understand how my life has been affected by The Family Cafe, you must go back to when I was just a participant. As far back as I can remember, we have been going to The Annual Family Café. It was great! There were lots of fun games and face painting opportunities and I felt like part of a special family. When I was eleven, everything changed. I started going to Florida Youth Council presentations and soon found out that there was more to The Family Cafe than meets the eye. I loved the way the FYC members talked to me, and treated me like a regular kid. They understood me and taught me so much about myself that year that I decided I was going to join the group when I turned fifteen. Fast forward to my fifteenth birthday. The very first thing I decided to do was apply to the FYC. Yep, you heard me! It was literally the first thing I did. It was scary at first to think I might not have been quite mature enough. (Sometimes I wonder if I am now). When I first started, I didn't know how to do anything, but fortunately the people at The Family Cafe were patient with me. I have found out that everyone on the Council is an individual with strengths and weaknesses just like me. The special thing about this relationship is that it is not only a working community, but it is a family as well. There are people from the Council that have aged out, but I still keep in contact with them to this day. It has always been a trust-based environment which I knew I could depend on. The Florida Youth Council gives me confidence on a day to day basis, and has taught me to respect other people's opinion while still respecting my own.



## How The Family Café and F.Y.C. Has Changed My Life!

*By: Ian Horowit*

I started going to The Annual Family Café when I was really young. Actually, my mom went to the conference and me and my dad played in the pool and went to the Expo. We did the entertaining things at The Annual Family Café. The first time I heard about the Florida Youth Council (FYC for short) I thought it sounded really cool, but I was too young. By the time I was old enough, I was too busy. I had too many things to do and my parents wouldn't let me join.

The Family Cafe helps my family. For the last two years I sold the puzzles and magnets that I make with my dad at The Family Cafe. I'm grateful because Family Cafe lets me sell my artwork at a booth. I bought a heat press with the money I earned. I use it to make the process of the puzzles and magnets go easier. The FYC does the youth sessions at The Annual Family Cafe so I attend those sessions. I always learn a lot. This year I will be volunteer staff at the The Annual Family Café.

The FYC has the Annual Youth Summit. I went to the Annual Youth Summit two times before I joined FYC. It's where youth can go to their own conference without their parents – no parents allowed. I love that! They have movie night. I took classes during the day. They were about important things like the real world, the workforce, and taking care of yourself. The FYC helps you be independent. Lunch was provided so I got to eat with my peers instead of just my parents. But dinner is a different story – I had eat with my parents. But I got to go back for the dance. It was fun!

I told the members I wanted to join and they were nice. They told me to apply. I had to fill out an application. I had to get letters of recommendation. I had to have a phone interview with the members. My mom stayed out of the room so I would have to answer everything just myself with no help. I got on the Council! I was so excited. I tell everyone because it helps people. It teaches self-advocacy skills. I feel good and happy being on the Florida Youth Council. This year will be my first time on staff at The Annual Family Café. It will be my first time helping with the youth sessions. I am excited.



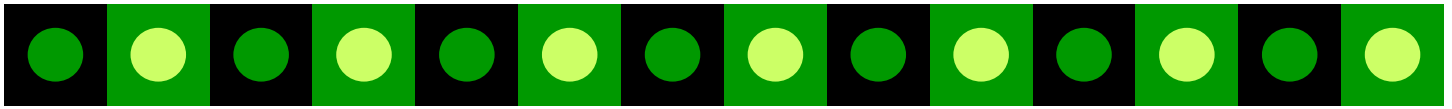


## **The Opportunity to be Part of The F.Y.C. and The Family Café!!!**

*By: Dakota Smoot*

The Florida Youth Council is like family to me. We watch out for each other, even though we are different in many ways, with all our unique personalities. I have learned a lot from other people in the community, but there are copious amounts of ideas, culture, and support for adults and children with disabilities. This is phenomenal and the best thing ever invented.

Anybody else can tell you different from what I believe, but it doesn't matter what others think about me. You don't give up on your dreams and goals, for if you don't they might come true and doors will open up. All I need to be is thankful that I can be part of an awesome organization in Florida, and I love it and would not trade it for anything else.

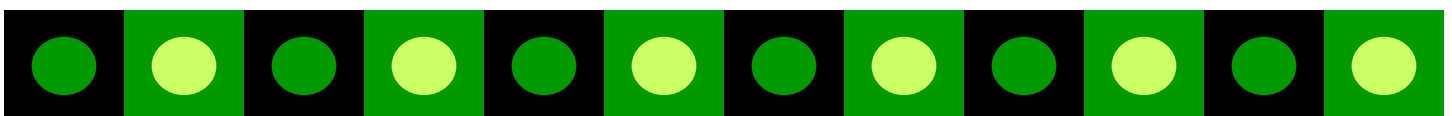


## Remembering To Shine!!

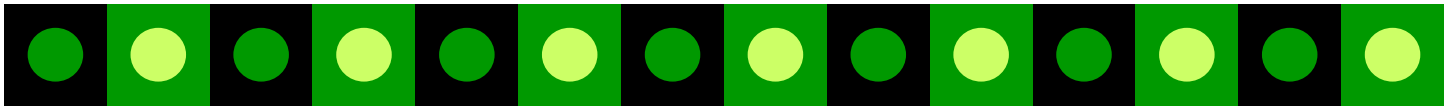
By: Chevy Barnes

This month's *Noodle* is about what The Family Cafe and FYC mean to me. I began attending The Annual Family Café as an opportunity to present. I have a secret passion for wanting to be a public speaker. The Annual Family Café offered a judgement-free zone where I could share what I was passionate about as well. It was an amazing experience. I made new friends, I learned so much from others, and I even brought my family members the next year as well.

The Florida Youth Council for me was seriously nerve racking business. I remember having the interview and thinking, I just was not good enough. Two years later I guess I made it. My years on the Council, though I often do not share, have been needed. This is because even though I have always had a disability, as I grew I began to feel more disabled. I was closed and unresponsive, other than to say what I know people needed to hear to make themselves feel good. It was hard, but every time I have ever gotten down somehow, The Florida Youth Council has reminded me how awesome it is to be me, how much worse it could be, and why I need to remember to shine.



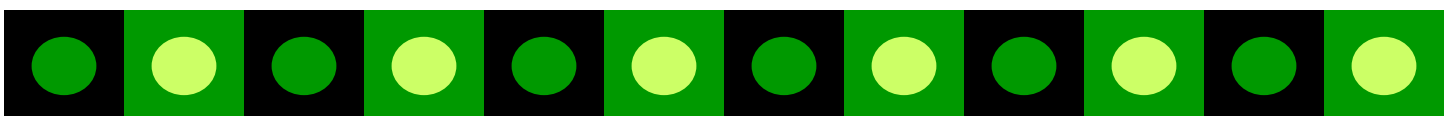




## The Family Café And The FYC Making A Difference!!

By: Christina Waldron

The Annual Family Café means a lot to me because I get to meet new people. The FYC's Annual Youth Summit means a lot to me because I get to meet new people and make new friends. The Annual Family Café is a cool experience every year because I get to learn about new things and laws that affect people with disabilities every year, and how they impact us. The FYC is so much fun to be on. We do really cool things like *The Noodle* and we put on our own conference every year in August.





## Inspiration for an Advocate

*By Rocky Castro*

A quote by the world renowned genius Mr. Stephen Hawking states “My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn't prevent you doing well, and don't regret the things it interferes with. Don't be disabled in spirit as well as physically.”

As an individual with a disability it is my goal to live my life to the fullest, to focus on my strengths and not my weaknesses, and most of all to be an advocate for others with disabilities. Being a part of the Florida Youth Council (FYC) and attending The Family Café for the past several years has bolstered my drive . . . my desire . . . and my passion to be an advocate for others with disabilities. The Florida Youth Council, throughout its years in disability advocacy, has had a substantial impact on bringing awareness to our society.

One great accomplishment of the Florida Youth Council is the Florida Statute passed in 2008, which designated the first two weeks in October as Disability History and Awareness Weeks in all public schools. I am honored to be a part of the FYC and I hope that I can utilize my strengths and knowledge to further expand the FYC in order to advocate and bring awareness for all disabled individuals.

In regards to The Family Café, it is the one event I look forward to attending each year. I see this event as a time and place in which all individuals in the disability community can come together and share knowledge, network, and work together as a whole. Additionally, The Family Café gives the families of those individuals with a disability the opportunity to come together and see that they are not alone in this venture, but that there are a number of others who are here to help and support them.

In conclusion, The Florida Youth Council and The Family Café have had a substantial impact on my life and most of all has afforded me opportunity to form great friendships with others in the disability society.





## Ever since I became visually impaired!!

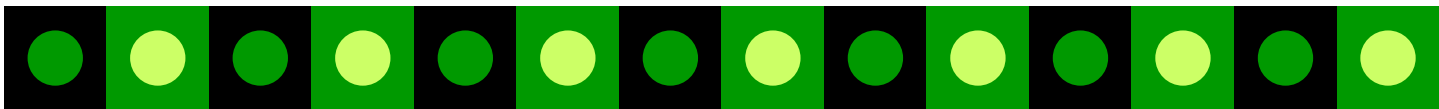
*By Josue Tapia*

Ever since I became visually impaired, I always walked around with a mindset that it was me versus the world, and that no one understood my disability. One day I was invited to The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Youth Summit, and it was my first experience around people with disabilities other than visual impairment. I then when to The Annual Family Café, and it changed my life as well.

The first Summit I attended was mind blowing. Here I was, for years living with a “me versus the world” mindset, and then I meet all these awesome people. I got to hear their stories of success, and their failures, and their stories of recovering from those defeats, and it changed me. It made me feel like I wasn't the only one. That yeah, it's hard, and sometimes it can be exhausting, but there are other people fighting the good fight just like me. Then there was The Annual Family Café.

What can I say about The Annual Family Café? It's one of the best events I attend every year. Going to Café has changed my life in big ways. I've gotten to meet multiple governors, I've met countless politicians, and I've met thousands of amazing people and heard all their stories. The Café in itself is one of the best events to be a part of if you are a disabled person of any age. I look forward to it every year, and this year isn't any different.

Talking about this has gotten me very excited for this summer, and I hope to see you all and learn and hear from you like I do every year!



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



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