



the NOODLE

Open up and say AHHHH!!!



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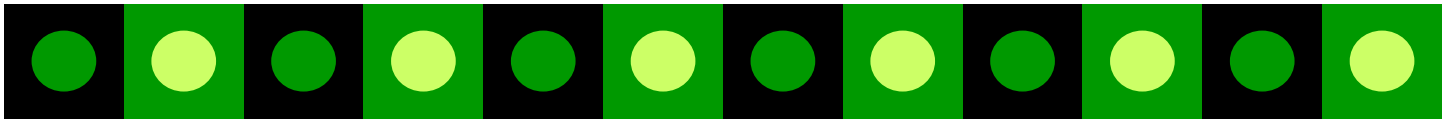
Welcome to the October 2017 edition of *The Noodle*, written and published by the Florida Youth Council!!! For this issue of *The Noodle*, members of the FYC were asked to write about Disability History Awareness. This topic allow

members to share their thoughts about Disability History Awareness. 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 October 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





Disability Awareness

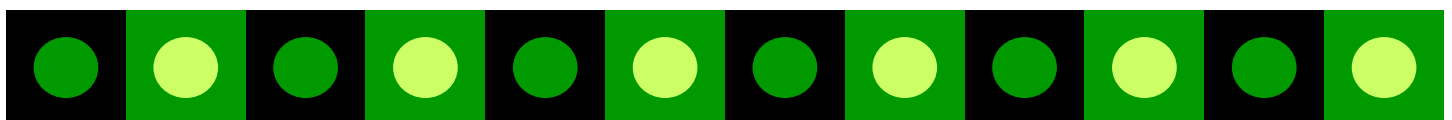
Boy Scouts of America is inclusive. At the local level, people with disabilities can join scouting. Most of the time scouting is good. I have always had a lot of fun in scouting, but the leaders of my local Venturing Crew said I couldn't join at first. They said I wouldn't be able keep up. My dad convinced them that I could do crew activities.

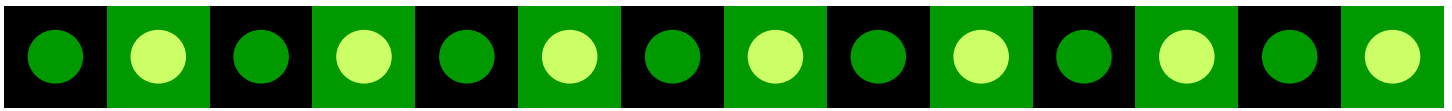
I know my limits. I'm not going to sign up for things that are too hard. Dad will go to the activities with me so he can help me if I need help. Most parents don't go along. It's an accommodation for me. I'm in crew now. I am going to chair a project.

People should talk to me. They should ask me question about me. Like what grade I'm in. They shouldn't ask my parents. I dislike it when they do that when I'm standing right there.

If more people knew about accommodations for people with disabilities, their attitude toward us would be better. The world would be better.

By Ian Horowitz

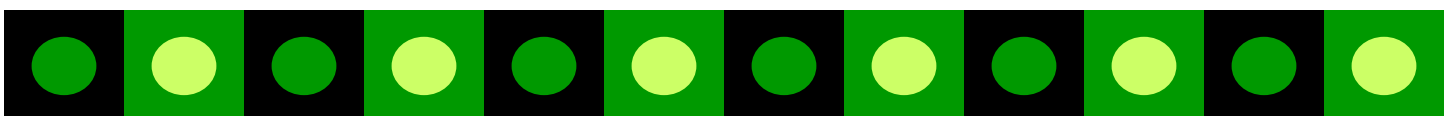




My Inspiration

When I was in 5th grade, I was in a school that had a special needs department. That department had wonderful teachers, but the equipment, not so much. I remember looking out onto the playground wondering why I couldn't go on the special swings designed for people with wheelchairs. I think that year I got on the swing exactly twice. The reason I could not get on was because there was mulch on the ground that my wheelchair could not get through. Someone would have had to carry me there, and I was no longer a little kid who was easy to carry. This disability "unawareness" was apparent to me, but not so obvious to the school. It seemed pretty strange to me that a playground that was designed for special needs children was inaccessible to me. So being who I am, I had to do something about it. (But that's another story!) That summer was when my family and I started going to The Family Café. I was fascinated by this group called the Florida Youth Council, even though I was too young to join. Finally, I found a place where people understood me. I loved the idea that just because we might have different impairments does not mean that our goals can't be similar. I also learned from them that what I do is not just for people with cerebral palsy. The more we draw attention to our own needs, the more we have the potential to help other people with their needs. That, to me, is what disability awareness is all about: seeing what others need and opening doors for them, so they don't have to go through the same challenges as you.

By Serena Wetmore



Disability Awareness

A quote by Zach Anner, a well-known comedian, actor, and writer with cerebral palsy, states that “People tend to treat people with disabilities sort of like they're aliens from another planet. It doesn't come from a bad place; it comes from a place of, 'I have no idea what this disability entails, and I don't want to offend anyone or make them feel awful.’” As an individual with an obvious physical disability, I completely agree with this statement. I can recall a number of occasions throughout my life in which individuals in my community would stare, point, and approach me in fear due to my disability. When I say “fear,” I don’t mean that they were afraid of me, but that they were afraid that they would offend and/or upset me by their words or actions. I truly believe that this fear I see comes from a lack of knowledge pertaining to individuals with disabilities. As individuals with disabilities, it is our duty and right to promote disability awareness in our society. There are a number of ways to go about and educate others in your society about disability awareness. For example, if you attend a school, you can ask your principal to participate in Disability Awareness Month and actively promote this event to your friends and peers. Additionally, you can promote disability awareness by being active in your community activities. By doing this you will show others in your community that you are not different from anyone else, and despite your disability, you are active in your community. Finally, I believe the best way to bring about disability awareness is during your everyday face-to-face encounters with individuals in your community. This means that the next time someone stares, points, or approaches you in fear, you should not be angry or offended by their actions. Instead take time and inform the individual of who you truly are, and bring awareness to your disability.

By Rocky Castro



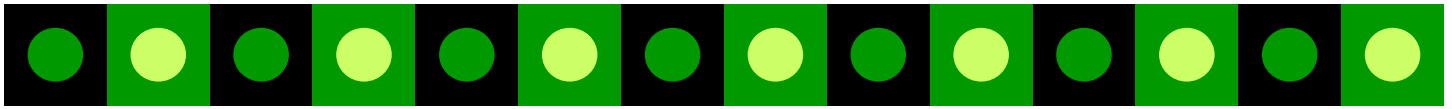


Education is Key!

Happy Disability History and Awareness Weeks! The first two weeks of October mark nine years of observing Disability History and Awareness in Florida's K-12 public school systems. In this month's *Noodle*, I will be discussing the social side of Disability History and Awareness. You see, if schools continue talking about disability when they are recommended to, it will ultimately help young people begin to understand that being different, like having a disability, isn't a bad thing. Education and compassion will end bullying of people with disability. Bullies bully because they don't understand. Very rarely is it because they are mean. Lack of education is the key here. If we educate our children at a young age, they will be well-rounded, understanding citizens. So I strongly encourage you to try to get your local schools to teach Disability History and Awareness.

By Megan Germain





My History and Our History

It's been almost 10 years since I joined the Florida Youth Council. As a young adult, I was very shy and didn't come out of my comfort zone too much.

Through the years I learned how to speak in front of crowds and fight for what I believe in, to represent a cause and to stick to my beliefs with a passion.

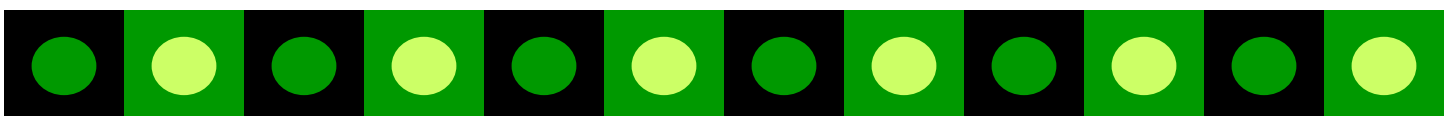
When I first came to the U.S full time I was a 10th grader who spoke Spanish as his first language and had just regained his vision after not having it for 7 years. I came to America from Puerto Rico where disability awareness isn't that great.

They put us all in a school based on our disabilities from kindergarten to 9th grade and taught us the basic skills needed to survive the real world with a disability. For the rest of high school you had to fend for yourself. There's no Division of Blind Services, no Vocational Rehabilitation, no government service that helps you at all. I say this not because it's a problem, but because it was something that molded me to where I'm at today.

My history with my disability started when I was 6 and it continues today. I've worked hard to change myself from being a shy blind kid to a well-spoken adult who is willing to fight for his beliefs and the beliefs of others. I fight for my rights as a disabled citizen in the U.S., and those of others who can and can't. I can sit here and explain to you what the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) is or what braille means to me, but I won't. I don't want to talk about yesterday. We should talk about today. What have I done to lay a path for those behind me born with the same shortcomings as me? What message have I spread to make people aware that the disabled community has a voice?

These first two weeks of October are Disability History and Awareness Weeks, which were passed into law thanks to the many minds of the Florida Youth Council. Through our experiences and drive to change the future, we wanted to make a road that those behind us could follow, and be proud of their history, and be proud to talk to someone who has no idea what they're going through. When I look back I'm proud of who I've become, because without those before me, I wouldn't be here typing so passionately. Be proud of your history and never be afraid to tell your story, because you never know who's listening or watching.

By Josh Tapia



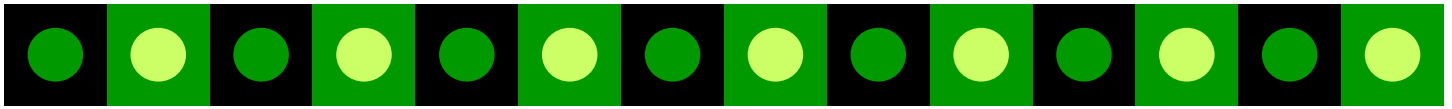


My Disabilities

My disabilities are a congenital heart defect, being hard of hearing, and astigmatism. My disabilities have caused people to make fun of me. When I was growing up, kids called me a lot of different names. One of the names that kids would call me is the "r" word. When they called me those names, I would ask them to please stop calling me those names because they would hurt my feelings. Another name that they would call me is "scab girl," because of the sores on my arms and legs. I would get nervous and make myself bleed. I would ask them to stop calling me that. As the years went by, I began to make friends among my classmates, and was actually voted Prom Queen. I still advocate for disabled people and will continue to do so. My intention is to spread the word that while we are all different, we are all alike. We are all God's children.

By Christina Waldron

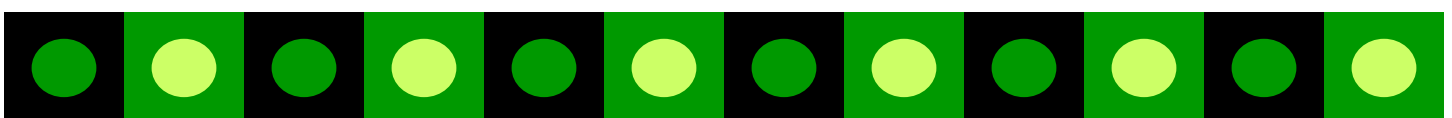


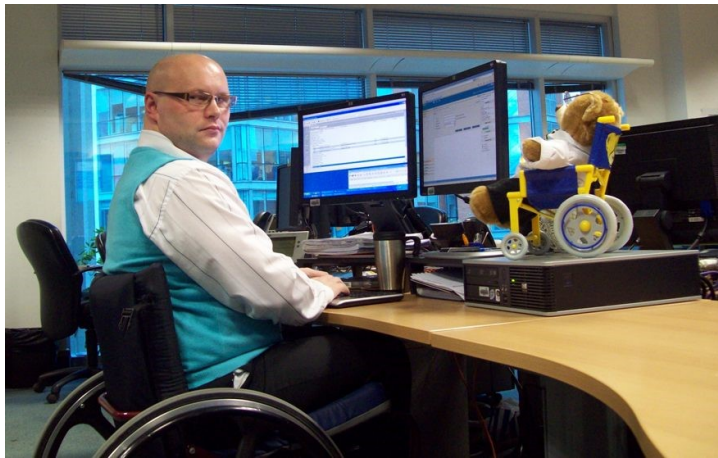


“Born Different”

Recently, I was hooked on a show called “Born Different” through YouTube. This show was about people who were “different,” whether it was because they were extraordinarily tall, or because they were 36 lbs at 8 months (true story). While I was watching this show, I heard a common trend. Many of the people who were on the show talked about their positive and negative experiences being “different.” Many spoke of times where they were bullied or ridiculed for things they could not help. It allowed me the chance to reflect on my own experiences and any discrimination I have faced. As we celebrate disability awareness this month, it brings the question, “Do the youth of today still face discrimination?” The short answer is yes, but I am happy to say I can count how many times I have. I have always been blunt, almost to the point that it hurt, about what I am and how much I did not care what others thought. However, there were a few people who were the same as me and sometimes hurt my feelings in the process. When I was in 10th grade, a boy I thought was my friend called me the black sheep of my family, and he said God had made a BIG mistake with me. I can remember exactly what I was doing that day and what my reaction was, because it really hurt my feelings. Even as an adult, I experience discrimination, especially in the workplace, mostly when looking for new jobs. People always think I am extraordinary, or they decide I am less than after they see me walk through the door. I am proud to say that this is why I feel Disability Awareness Month is so important, because we fear what we don’t know. This means if I am brave enough to educate people about those with disabilities, perhaps we will not have to experience discrimination any more.

By Shevie Barnes





Academic and Career Discrimination

When I was in elementary school, I was denied assistance that I needed because I had a disability. I was in a private catholic school at the time and previously had no exposure to the public school system. It was kind of degrading because since the work was harder, the quality of my grades suffered as a result. I was eventually pulled out of that school by my parents and homeschooled for the rest of the year. I feel like it was then that I realized just how bad everything was. Since the school was a private catholic school, they did not have to follow the statutes and guidelines with regards to disability legislation. This meant that they were uninterested in providing extra help and assistance to anyone who couldn't keep up with the progress of all the other students. It was an incredibly toxic environment and I'm glad that I was able to get out of it.

Later, when I was looking for a "real" job, it became clear to me that countless employers were probably choosing not to hire me because I had a disability. It didn't matter that I specified exactly what I had; they thought that I would be too severe to be able to perform the job that they wanted me to do. Even with the support of other organizations like the Independent Living Resource Center, I still couldn't manage to make any other connections with any other companies. It was only after I finally came across a job ad on Indeed specifically for a person with a disability did I finally receive a job offer.

By Chris Regan



Disability History & Awareness

As you probably already know, the first two weeks of October are Disability History & Awareness Weeks. Every October we dedicate this edition of the FYC newsletter to writing something related to it. This go-around we are focusing on a time when we felt we have faced disability discrimination. I had to think about this for a moment, and then it hit me. Sometimes, I feel I might be up against this in my current job hunt. I say this because though I do currently have a part-time job, I have yet to land a full-time job. In the last three years since graduating, I've been on countless interviews, and never get a call back. I've done all the right things, so it makes me wonder if my disability has something to do with it. It shouldn't. All of these job ads I find and apply for always have that disclaimer statement "We do not discriminate based on race, age, disability..." but sometimes it truly makes me wonder. What do you think?

By Derek Carraway

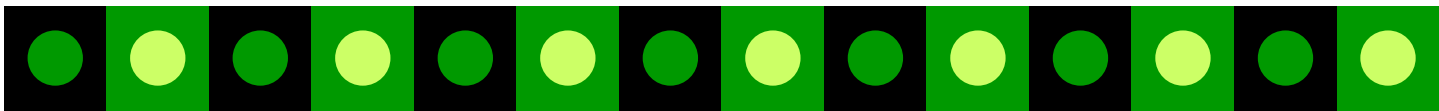




Anyone Can Do Nothing

Often we see formidable situations where changes need to be made to make life easier or better for people dealing with difficult situations in their lives. Change is not always easy. It involves effort — sometimes a great deal of effort. Standing up for friends, and even for those we may not know or like, can be hard at times, but no one deserves to be bullied. All people should be treated with dignity and respect, no matter what. As a part of the disabled community, I know what it feels like to be bullied. We get sad, anxious, depressed, and sometimes angry when our feelings have been hurt and others tease or talk down to us. Even though we have been bullied, we often don't help those needing help. Instead we, too, will tease them or watch as others pick on them. When do we speak up and say enough! We need to stop fearing what others might think of us and take a stand for what is right. I struggle with this as well. Ruben Gonzalez, an inspirational speaker and author, urges us to make our lives an adventure! "Anyone can do nothing." It takes a brave courageous person, one not afraid of what others might think of him, to be willing to take a stand.

By Dakota Smoot



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. The program is open to application year round. We hope to hear from you soon!



820 East Park Avenue,
Suite F-100 Tallahassee, FL 32301

