

2022

IMPACT

REPORT

Supporting people with
Down syndrome in
achieving their dreams
of higher education while
spreading awareness
of their capabilities and
general awesomeness!!



OUR MISSION

Supporting people with Down syndrome in achieving their dreams of higher education while spreading awareness of their capabilities and general awesomeness!!

OUR VISION

A world that celebrates people with Down syndrome and supports the pursuit of higher education, employment, acceptance and inclusion for people of all abilities.

OUR CORE VALUES

Community

We believe community is one of our most powerful assets and that the best things come from pulling together.

Education

We believe all people are lifelong learners and everyone deserves access to education.

Inclusion

We believe every person has worth and should be valued in their community.

Inspiration

We believe showing the world what's possible brings hope and creates opportunities.

Integrity

We believe in being truthful, decent human beings who consistently do the right thing. We honor the trust placed in our organization by our scholarship recipients, fundraisers, volunteers and donors, by handling their generous investments with care.

Kindness

We believe everyone in the world is deserving of love, respect and compassion, and we see kindness as the key to a brighter world for all.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Liz Plachta, Executive Director, President & Co-Founder

Kelle Hampton, Vice President

Tim Plachta, Co-Founder, Secretary & Board Member

Jon-Michael Rogers, Treasurer & Board Member

Catherine Morris, Administrative Director

Ross Clurman, Web Manager & Board Member


Marc Lippincott, Board Member

Sara Plachta-Elliott, Board Member

Stephanie Bomely, Board Member

Tyrell McElroy, Board Member



A large tiger mascot, representing Auburn University, stands on a paved path. The mascot is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with "AUBURN" and the Under Armour logo. A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a white tank top and bright green shorts, stands next to the mascot. In the background, there are trees and a paved walkway with other people.

The Ruby's Rainbow Scholarship means so much to me. College is very expensive, and my Ruby's Rainbow scholarship helps me go to Auburn. I love Auburn so much. I have so many friends there. I stay busy with my job and my classes that I am taking. I love being an AOPI sister, too. I love college so much!

Grace Davis

2020–2022 Rockin' Recipient
Auburn University – Advanced EAGLES

Since 2012...

 **599**
Scholarships
Awarded

 **\$2,045,000**
In Scholarship Funds

 **20+**
Awareness
Campaigns

In 2022...

 **119**

Ruby's Rainbow Scholarships
granted in 2022!

 **\$483,000**

in scholarship funds awarded!



Thanks to Ruby's Rainbow for
helping me live the life I've always
dreamed about.

Kelly Griffin

2019, 2020 & 2022 Rockin' Recipient
Judson University – RISE UP

College has made me more
independent. I fly by myself!

Raymond Tetschner

2021 & 2022 Rockin' Recipient
University of North Florida – OCT





YEAR IN REVIEW

A Note from Liz Plachta, Ruby's Rainbow Executive Director and Her Most Important Job – Mama to Ruby and Ella Mae

Looking back at what we accomplished together in 2022 makes me so proud, and I hope it gives you **a major burst of pride** to read through this report and learn about **all the good you did last year for Ruby's Rainbow!**

Yes, you! **YOU** were an essential part of everything we were able to do to support our **Rockin' Recipients and other individuals with Down syndrome**, and I truly could not be more grateful to all of you. You all keep showing up, again and again, in all the ways!! Your ongoing love and support in the form of "Likes" and comments on social media, participating in our events, making generous donations, cheering on our Rockin' Recipients, and spreading the word about Ruby's Rainbow—all of it shows our scholarship recipients that they matter—that they are worthy of higher education and support, and that you believe in them! That WE believe in them!! That, to me, is so far beyond priceless!

In March, we had **our biggest 3/21 Pledge fundraiser yet**, coming together to raise over \$480,000!! That seriously blew my mind, and it allowed us to award \$483,000 in scholarships to a brand-new crew of 119 Rockin' Recipients last summer—the most we have ever been able to award, and to the highest number of Rockin' Recipients EVER. You have no idea how happy that made my heart!! That amazing milestone meant we hit over \$2 MILLION in awards granted since those first few scholarships back in 2012. That seriously blows me away!!

I am also happy to report that the **Strategic Plan** we launched in 2021, to meet the needs and goals of this growing organization as we blaze into our second decade, is right on track! Every aspect of the Strategic Plan is aimed at granting more scholarships to support more college students with Down syndrome around the United States as we continue spreading

awareness and shouting their worth to the world. As you'll see as you look through this report, we are hitting our goals and developing new ones to keep growing our reach and our vision!

2022 marked a joyful return of my very favorite thing—joining together in person with our community. In July, we were so excited to finally, after three long years, gather with our peeps at the **11th annual Rockin' RainBOWL**—two RainBOWls, to be exact! The first of these family-fun bowling and fundraising events was held at a bowling alley here in Austin, and the second was in San Diego the following weekend. Both events were HUGE fun, with Rockin' Recipients in attendance along with hundreds of members of this amazing community of ours. Together we enjoyed live music, hot pizza, cold beer, amazing raffle prizes, and tons of laughter and hugs—and maybe just a few happy tears, as well. As in years past, Ruby rolled the first bowling ball at each event, and my mama heart swelled with pride and love for her and for our community!

In October, Ruby and Nella were together again, enjoying some fun and challenging adventures as we celebrated **Down Syndrome Awareness Month** all month long on social media. Our annual awareness campaign was all about conquering fears as you face and embrace new experiences. (Search #rubyandnellabucketlist on Facebook or Instagram, if you missed it! You can also visit the Down Syndrome Awareness Campaigns page on our website to see more!)

On the personal front, it was **a year of milestones here in the Plachta household** as well. Ruby started middle school, and she's been absolutely killing it! She plays trombone in the sixth-grade band, she's in dance and theatre, and she navigates all eight of her daily classes on her own. Ella Mae is in her last year of middle school, which is so bittersweet for this mama's heart! She's on the basketball team, and she's just growing into such a beautiful human being. We're all looking forward to high school next year!

I am continually blown away by our incredible Rockin' Recipients—by the way they are taking the lead in showing the world exactly what they are capable of, in college and beyond. I am also blown away, again and again, by each and every one of you—by your generosity and love, and your willingness to show up time and again for our organization and our Rockin' Recipients. THANK YOU so much for every single thing you do to support Ruby's Rainbow! As I always say, **we truly could not do what we do without YOU, and you have no idea how grateful I am!!**



With love and a grateful heart,

Liz Plachta, Ruby's Rainbow Co-founder & Executive Director, and most importantly, Mama to Ruby & Ella Mae



Adam DeBacker

2016 & 2018 Rockin' Recipient

Missouri State University

Graduated 2021

Ruby's Rainbow was super important to being able to complete my college degrees—first, an Associate's degree in General Studies at our local community college, and then my Bachelor of Science degree in Theatre. I am now working four jobs in my chosen career field, technical theatre, and still pursuing my education. I could not have finished steadily and without debt if it were not for Ruby's Rainbow. Other scholarships were dependent on taking full course loads each semester, and sometimes that was too much for me to handle. I took 10–11 hours each semester and finished in six years—thanks to Ruby's Rainbow and the idea that 'slow and steady' is the best way. I graduated with honors, too!



Kevin Davis

2019 & 2020 Rockin' Recipient
Clemson University – ClemsonLIFE

My Ruby's Rainbow scholarship opened the door for me to receive continued support and kindness from Ruby, Liz and their family. The scholarship helped my family financially. The encouragement and help for a business my mom and I started was priceless. I encourage everyone to just keep believing and trying.

Terri J. Penn

2022 Rockin' Recipient
University of South Alabama –
PASSAGE USA
Graduated 2022

Ruby's Rainbow gave me a chance to reach my goal and graduate from college like the rest of my sisters and brother.





FACTS & STATISTICS

How Your Support Makes a Difference in the Lives of Our Rockin' Recipients

Recently, we once again surveyed our Rockin' Recipients, past and present, to gain insight into the impact that post-secondary education and our scholarships are having on their lives. We conduct these surveys each year, and this year's findings were as inspiring as ever! The numbers are clear: Your support has improved these individuals' lives along with their skills, career prospects and more!

100% of our survey respondents are either currently enrolled in their post-secondary programs or have already graduated. Here is what we learned about them this year:

Employment and Independence



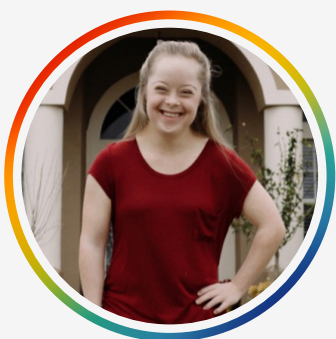
69%

of survey respondents who have graduated from their programs are **currently employed**, working full or part-time jobs!



28%

of those who are currently enrolled in school are also **working full or part-time jobs!**



76%

of survey respondents are **living independently**, either alone or with roommates, in college dorms, apartments or houses.

It's important to put these statistics into context to understand their importance. According to studies conducted by Special Olympics, people with intellectual disabilities (ID) are employed at far lower rates than the general population. Only 44 percent of people with ID have ever been employed, whether full- or part-time. Access to higher education increases career prospects and job readiness skills for people with Down syndrome. We are so proud of our Rockin' Recipients for working hard and contributing to their communities!

Volunteerism, Self-Advocacy and Community Impact

Community is one of our six core values at Ruby's Rainbow—specifically, working to make a positive impact on one's community through actions like volunteering and self-advocacy. Based on our survey results, it's clear that our Rockin' Recipients have a wonderfully strong sense of self-efficacy—their place and power in the world. This means it's working: Your donation dollars and support, our efforts to spread awareness—they are working! Our combined efforts are improving the lives and futures of individuals with Down syndrome, which makes me so incredibly proud and happy!!

70%

of survey respondents are interning, volunteering or both.



31%

of respondents consider themselves self-advocates who are making an impact on their communities through public speaking, working with other people with disabilities, lobbying on Capitol Hill, and sharing their stories to spread awareness and inclusion.



The Importance of Higher Education for Students with Down Syndrome

Access to education is essential for people with and without Down syndrome. Every year, our survey results reveal that, if it weren't for their Ruby's Rainbow scholarships, the vast majority of our Rockin' Recipients—90% of this year's survey respondents—would have had a much harder time attending post-secondary education due to financial limitations. In fact, nearly 20% of our respondents reported that their Ruby's Rainbow scholarships made all the difference: Without those funds, they would not have been able to attend their college programs.

The great need for these scholarships is clear—as is the incredible payoff for all when people with Down syndrome are able to access higher education.



98%

of survey respondents report they are glad they chose to pursue higher education

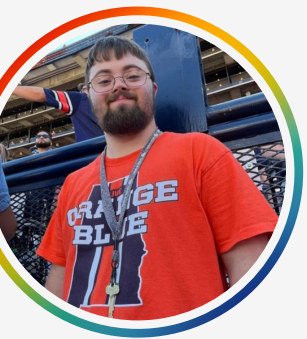
92%

report believing their higher-education program has helped them reach their goals



90%

say it would have been difficult or impossible to attend their programs without the help of their Ruby's Rainbow scholarship





Scott Conklin

2015 Rockin' Recipient

University of North Carolina–Greensboro – Beyond Academics
Graduated 2017

I work at a coffee shop called A Special Blend – Community in a Cup. The mission of A Special Blend is simple: to employ adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an interactive community setting to enhance their lives and the lives of the community. I am a Blended Barista, which means I make cold drinks. I love it. It is so much fun to work there. I am so happy to live by myself in a small house. My program helped me to live independently. Thank you, Ruby's Rainbow!



Ben Wilhelm

2022 Rockin' Recipient

University of Arkansas – EMPOWER

Thank you, Ruby's Rainbow! I love my college and making new friends. It's been my dream, and now it's come true.

Nina Koster

2022 Rockin' Recipient

Green Oaks Life Prep

I love Life Prep. It is helping me learn how to be more independent. I have great friends. College life is the best!





Lindsay Davis

2022 Rockin' Recipient
Auburn University – EAGLES

My favorite thing about college is seeing my sorority sisters and my old and new friends, and going to sorority events. I love going to the same college as my sister. I love going to all of the sporting events. I love winning the Golden Broom award when I get the highest score on my room check. Thank you, Ruby's Rainbow!

Lucy Haugland

2019 & 2020 Rockin' Recipient
Bethel University – BUILD
Graduated 2022

College has made me a strong, confident, independent person, and I am living my dream!





FUNDRAISERS, AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS AND EVENTS

The 3/21 Pledge

We were blown away by last year's 3/21 Pledge!! This is our biggest annual fundraiser, and it's extra important since it pretty much determines how much we'll be able to award in scholarship funds each year. The 3/21 Pledge always begins on March 7 and culminates on World Down Syndrome Day (3/21!).

But the 3/21 Pledge isn't just about raising scholarship funds. It's also about **raising awareness about individuals with Down syndrome**—about their capabilities and worth, about the importance of inclusion in education and in the broader community, and about the barriers that students with Down syndrome face in trying to access higher education. During last year's Pledge, we focused on the importance of loving yourself as you are and being confident in your own skin. We spotlighted several of our Rockin' Recipients who are shining examples of being their authentic selves and celebrating exactly who they are!

We also set a big fundraising goal during last year's Pledge: We wanted to raise \$321,000 with our community. But by the end of the Pledge, our amazing community had come together with so much love, hope and support that we blew that goal right out of the water!! **Together, we raised \$467,000** by the end of the day on 3/21, and more trickled in for days after—totaling more than **\$480,000 raised**. That enabled us to grant **\$483,000 in scholarships** last summer to our biggest crew yet of Rockin' Recipients—119 of them, to be exact! You'd better believe that made my heart so incredibly happy!! THANK YOU again for believing and dreaming BIG with us!!!

3021
PLEDGE
rubysrainbow.org

Ruby's Rockin' RainBOWL!

We got to host TWO Rockin' RainBOWL family fun bowling events in summer 2022—the first in Austin and the second in San Diego. Best of all, we got to do them in person once again, after three long years!! **Joining together with our community is my absolute favorite thing**, so I was so grateful to get to see my peeps and hug their necks as we enjoyed some bowling and live music together, and raised more funds to support students rockin' that extra chromosome in making their dreams of higher education and independence come true!



Down Syndrome Awareness Month

In October, we celebrated Down Syndrome Awareness Month all month long on Facebook and Instagram, spreading the word about our Rockin' Recipients and our other loved ones who are rockin' that extra chromosome—about their **worth and capabilities**, and about **how much richer they make life for everyone, just by being themselves**. We also followed Ruby and Nella's latest adventures as they faced and conquered their fears and embraced new experiences! (Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram and search #rubyandnellabucketlist, if you missed any of our posts! You can also visit the Down Syndrome Awareness Campaigns page on our website to see more!)





2022

FINANCIALS

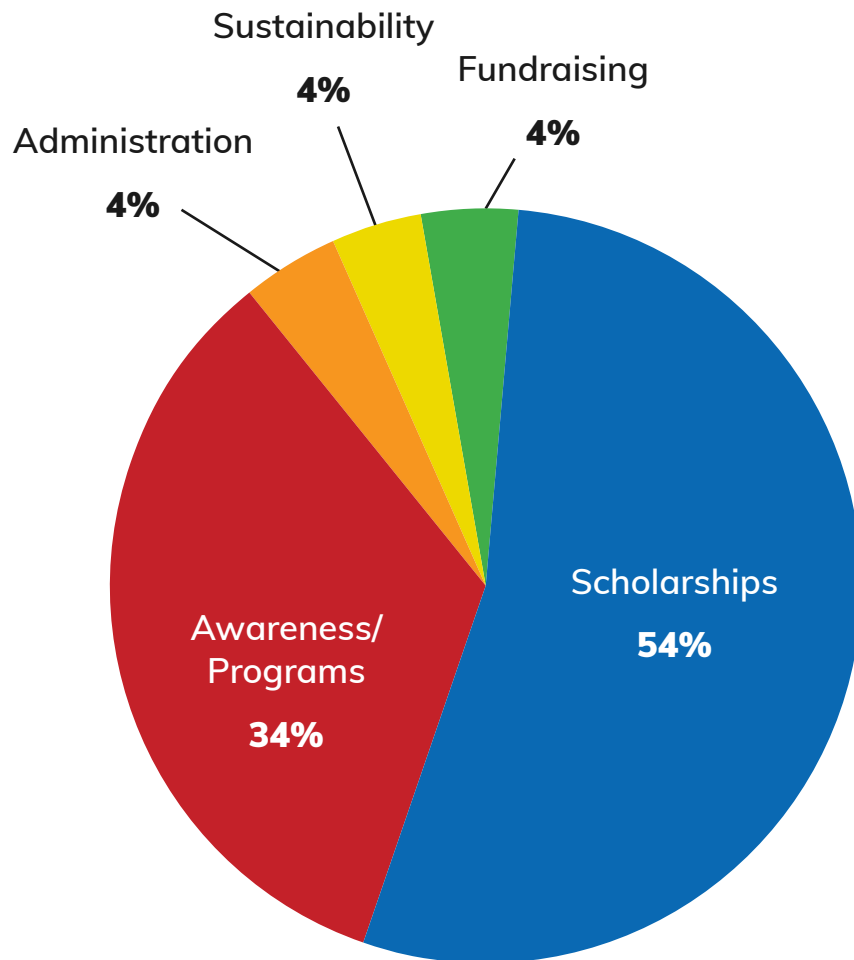
In 2022, we continued implementing the three-year Strategic Plan we first developed in 2021 to ensure Ruby's Rainbow is working steadily toward our key long-term goals as an organization. We saw incredible growth and progress last year, in large part thanks to the incredible support and generosity of our donors!

We are proud to report that last year, our annual administrative and fundraising costs together took up only 8% percent of our total budget. Fully 88% percent of the funds we spent as an organization last year directly supported our mission of providing scholarships for students with Down syndrome to pursue post-secondary education while spreading awareness about their amazing capabilities.

We are very proud of those percentages, and we hope you are too! We are so grateful for everything our donors and supporters do to improve the lives of our Rockin' Recipients and everyone in their communities!!



2022 Financials



- Scholarships 436,792 (54%)
- Awareness/Programs 272,182 (34%)
- Administration 34,022 (4%)
- Fundraising 34,022 (4%)
- Sustainability 34,793 (4%)

[2022 tax return](#)



Connor Mirt

2015 Rockin' Recipient

Lipscomb University – IDEAL

My participation in my post-secondary program helped me gain new mentors and friends. It also opened doors for employment opportunities. I currently work in a fitness facility as part of the operations team and at a local coffee shop, so I meet and get to know lots of people I never would have had the opportunity to know, if not for my post-secondary experience. For fun, I hang out with the basketball team and staff at Lipscomb University, and I'm involved there during the school season, too.



Taylor Freeman

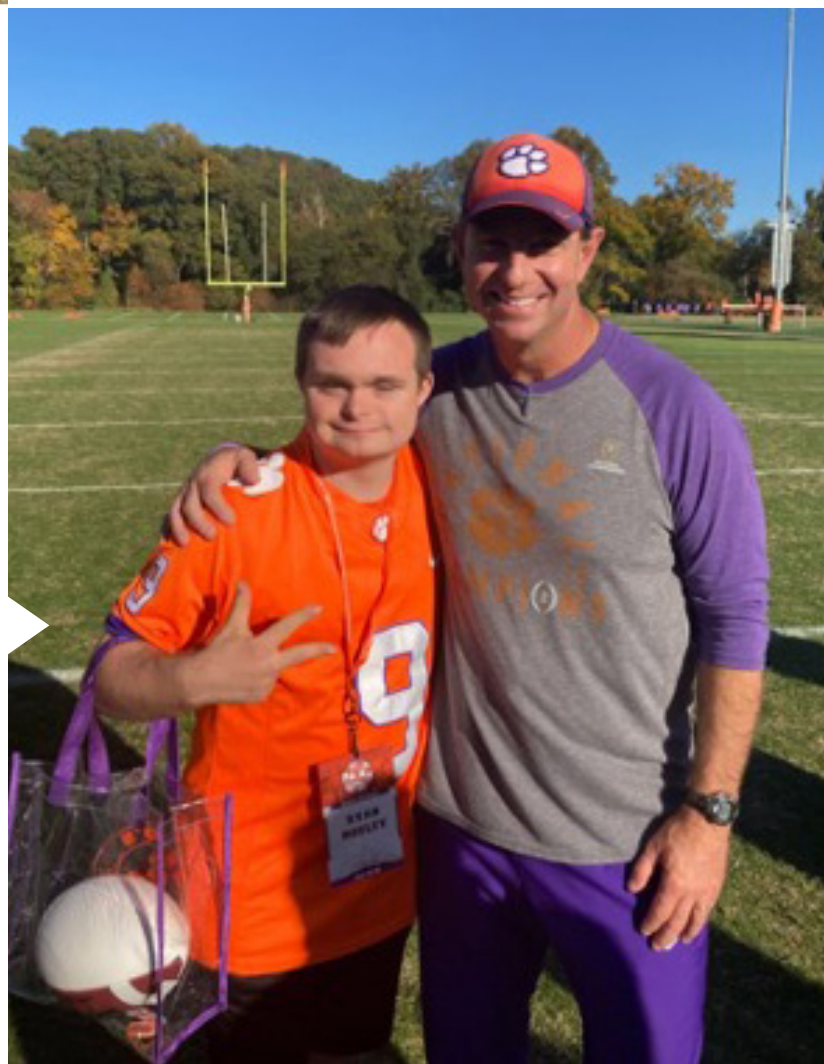
2021 & 2022 Rockin' Recipient
Clemson University – ClemsonLIFE

Ruby's Rainbow is an absolute blessing! I am so thankful and grateful to be a part of something so special! Thank you, Ruby's Rainbow, for believing in people like me!

Ryan Mosley

2020–22 Rockin' Recipient
Clemson University – ClemsonLIFE

I continue to live my best life as a ClemsonLIFE junior at Clemson University. I continue to work hard toward my independent living skills and my job skills. I love everything about Clemson, and I am grateful to Ruby's Rainbow for supporting me in this opportunity!



From Kevin's mom: "The Ruby's Rainbow scholarship has given Kevin the opportunity to continue learning more independent living skills and living off-campus with three other students. He also is working at his first paid job as a food runner! These two big steps would not be possible without the skills he has learned at Clemson-LIFE. Thanks, Ruby's Rainbow, for believing in him! His future is bright!"

Kevin Mackey

2021 & 2022 Rockin' Recipient
Clemson University – ClemsonLIFE






LOOKING AHEAD

Thank you again, so very much, for all your love and support! It truly means so much and makes such a huge difference in the lives of our Rockin' Recipients—and I believe in the lives of everyone around them, too!! I hope you take pride in seeing their amazing faces, reading their inspiring quotes, and taking in the impact Ruby's Rainbow is having on their lives... because we could not do it without YOU!!

With SO MUCH love and gratitude,
Liz, Tim, Ella Mae, Ruby Doobs and the RR Crew!

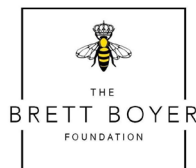
rubysrainbow.org | (512) 879-7801

 @RubysRainbow

 @rubysrainbow

 @RubysRainboworg

We Love and Appreciate Our Sponsors



2022

SPONSOR

SPOTLIGHTS!!

Brett Boyer Foundation

Created in honor and loving memory of Sadie Brett Boyer, the Brett Boyer Foundation's mission is to raise awareness about Congenital Heart Disease and to fund research to advance treatment options. It is also the organization's mission to spread the same love and awareness that Brett filled her parents with to all the wonderful, capable people in the world who are living with Down syndrome.



Capitol Chevrolet

Founded in 1938, Capitol Chevrolet is a locally owned and family-run Austin Chevy dealership that works hard to help keep the community moving forward. Unmatched service and a diverse inventory of Chevrolet vehicles set Capitol Chevrolet apart as the preferred dealer in the Austin-metro area!



**CAPITOL
CHEVROLET**

"The ♥ of Austin"