



## Mission & Goals

At Ruby's Rainbow, we grant scholarships to adults with Down syndrome in the U.S. who are seeking post-secondary education, enrichment or vocational classes.

Our mission is to support these inspiring individuals in achieving their dreams of higher education while spreading awareness of their capabilities and general awesomeness!

Today, there are more college and university programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities than ever before. Students with Down syndrome are helping to change the educational landscape, and Ruby's Rainbow is committed to keeping pace with these ever-increasing educational opportunities.



We are passionate about supporting students with Down syndrome as they pursue their college dreams!

## Eligibility Criteria

Ruby's Rainbow scholarship applicants must meet the following criteria:

- This grant is for individuals with Down syndrome, living in the United States, who are 18 years of age or older.
- Applicants must have the desire and intent to enroll or continue enrollment in a class or program that will enhance their lives through employment, independent living or life skills, or interests in any other areas.
- Applicants must provide a high school diploma, transcript or equivalent. A college transcript or letter from program is also acceptable.
- Individuals who have previously been awarded a Ruby's Rainbow scholarship may now apply again the following year by filling out our Re-Apply Application.

### About Ruby's Rainbow scholarships:

- Ruby's Rainbow Scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per awarded individual, subject to availability of funds.
- Scholarship funds must be used within one year.
- This grant must be used to pay for tuition for a post-secondary program at a college, educational institution, or employment training program. A portion may also be used to pay for books, supplies or other related expenses, but the majority of the grant must be used for tuition.

Visit [RubysRainbow.org](http://RubysRainbow.org) and click on Apply to get started!



## Fun Facts



After being entirely volunteer-run for its first four years, Ruby's Rainbow took on its first full-time Executive Director — Liz Plachta, co-founder and mom to Ruby — in 2016 to meet the demands

of this rapidly expanding organization. Three years later, the organization took on a part-time administrative employee for further help in fulfilling its mission.

Still largely volunteer-run, Ruby's Rainbow is made up of parents, family members and friends of people who happen to be rockin' that extra chromosome. Everyone involved with Ruby's Rainbow is passionate about spreading the word about these amazing and capable individuals.

In its first 12 years, Ruby's Rainbow has granted 741 scholarships totaling over \$2,675,000. We look forward to continuing our mission for many years to come, and helping more individuals with Down syndrome achieve their dreams of higher education and independence.

Ruby's Rainbow is based in Austin, Texas, yet our Rockin' Recipients come from all over the United States, and attend courses and educational programs at colleges and universities across the country.



## Rockin' Recipients

### Colton Vazquez

2018–2021 Rockin' Recipient **Colton Vazquez** is a 2023 graduate of the Compass program at Duquesne University, where he majored in Theatre Arts and Performance. He continues to be very active in theatre and filmmaking, and is moving on to be an Advocate Trainee in a post-graduate paid fellowship with the LEND Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Colton also fundraises for Ruby's Rainbow to provide scholarships for future Rockin' Recipients!



### Pilar Rivera

2023 Rockin' Recipient **Pilar Rivera** is a sophomore in the ELEVAR program at the University of North Texas. In high school, Pilar was active in cheerleading and gymnastics, winning several awards in both. She is a member of the UNT Emeralds Dance team and has been a Special Olympics athlete for 13 years. She competed at the Special Olympics National Games in 2018 and 2022, and continues to compete in swimming and gymnastics.



### Taylor Freeman

2021–2023 Rockin' Recipient **Taylor Freeman** is a junior in the ClemsonLIFE program at Clemson University, where she is active in the Equine program and manages the Clemson band. In 2021, Taylor received the Self-Advocate Everyday Hero award from National Down Syndrome Congress, and the Self-Advocate Under 21 award from the Down Syndrome Association of Atlanta. Her favorite hobbies include salsa dancing, bowling and attending Clemson football games.



## How It All Started

In December 2010, a little girl named Ruby Plachta was born in Austin, Texas — a month early, and rockin' a surprise extra 21st chromosome. Liz and Tim, her parents, realized their hopes and expectations for Ruby were just the same as for their older daughter: They envisioned both their children becoming lifelong learners and making meaningful contributions to society.

The Plachtas knew they wanted to do something extraordinary to help this community of inspiring people. But while post-secondary educational opportunities were expanding for individuals with Down syndrome, Liz and Tim learned that educational funding for these students was nearly non-existent.

Founded in 2012, Ruby's Rainbow grew out of the Plachtas' belief that everyone is a lifelong learner, and that learning does not — and should not — stop after high school.



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rainbow  
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