



2024 Impact Report

*Granting higher-education
scholarships to students with Down
syndrome & spreading awareness
about their 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



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.



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, donors, and volunteers by handling their generous investments with care.



Education

We believe all people are lifelong learners and everyone deserves access to education. We are committed to bringing awareness of these core beliefs to the broader community.



Community

We believe community is one of our most powerful assets and that the best things come from pulling together. The power of community can collapse barriers and change the world.



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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

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

Rachel Bhatia, Special Projects Manager

Rachel Heinz, Communications Manager

Ross Clurman, Web Manager & Board Member

Marc Lippincott, Board Member

Sara Plachta-Elliott, Board Member

Stephanie Bomely, Board Member

Tyrell McElroy, Board Member

Since 2012...



883

Scholarships
Awarded



\$3,276,000

In Scholarship Funds



24+

Awareness
Campaigns

In 2024...



142

Ruby's Rainbow
Scholarships granted!



\$600,000

in scholarship funds awarded!



Alex Bolden

2018–2019 Rockin' Recipient

George Mason University – Mason LIFE

"My Ruby's Rainbow Scholarship was great because **it meant someone outside my family and close circle believed in me.** They picked me and my application and **thought I was a good bet.** That really meant a lot. Having the Ruby's Rainbow team behind me still means so much to me. It's a great family to be part of because I know they are **proud of me and are still cheering me on.**"

Year in Review



Looking back at last year, 2024 stands out to me as an incredible year of growth and impact for Ruby's Rainbow, and **one that checked off several major bucket-list items**—not just for the organization, but for Ruby and Ella Mae as well! **Ella turned 16 and started driving**, which has been awesome for her and for our family. And **Ruby got to realize a dream** involving her number-one music artist of all time!

More on that in a second—but first, a highlight from early in the year: **Ruby's Rainbow was invited to attend a banquet hosted by PCSI**, one of our generous longtime sponsors. This event was extra special since **2014 Rockin' Recipient Mark Hublar was in attendance to make a speech!** Mark is an incredible self-advocate and motivational speaker, and one of my favorite humans on the planet. He's made a pretty big impact with his "I Have a Dream of Inclusion" speech—be sure to check it out on YouTube! At the PCSI banquet, **Mark spoke to a crowd of 200**, which I'm sure was no big deal to him, but it seemed **incredible** to me. I am so proud of him and all he's accomplished, and I hope you are too!

And now, to one of **Ruby's and my BIGGEST highlights of 2024**: being invited to appear on the **Kelly Clarkson Show!** If you've been following Ruby's Rainbow for any length of time at all, you probably know Kelly Clarkson has been Ruby's **favorite** since forever. It was a real treat to get to **chat with Kelly on her talk show**, and an even bigger treat when, during the segment, **Kelly gifted her number-one fan with tickets to her Atlantic City concert!**

That was all amazing enough, but it got even better: After the segment filmed, Ruby happened to mention another dream of hers—**to sing on stage with Kelly...and Kelly invited her to do just that!** We flew to Atlantic City for a whirlwind weekend, where **Ruby joined Kelly on stage to sing her “Heartbeat” song.** That was a HUGE moment that this proud mama will never forget!!

The main thing that comes to mind when I look back at 2024 is the **incredible** impact we were able to make with your help, belief and support. We realized a longtime dream of mine by hosting **THREE RainBOWL events last summer**, including our very first one in Medina, OH—more on that below! This amazing community also helped us raise enough funds during the 3/21 Pledge to grant **\$600,000 last summer to 142** incredible, inspiring students with Down syndrome to pursue their dreams of higher education and independence!

Truly, we could not have done any of that without **YOU**. I always say that every little bit helps—every “Like” on social media, every share, every dollar donated...every little bit of it comes together to create something **BIG!** It’s all thanks to you that we’ve been able to continue our mission of supporting individuals with Down syndrome and increasing opportunities for them to chase their biggest dreams. **And I am so grateful!!**



With big love and a grateful heart,

Liz

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



Jessica Giddens

2021–23 Rockin' Recipient

Clemson University – ClemsonLIFE

"I enjoy the experience of **becoming responsible and independent**. I really enjoy **making friendships** and learning new information and communication. It's an **honor** for the support of Ruby's Rainbow to get me through where I am today to be strong, smart, independent and working hard at my job."

Leah Langer

2020 Rockin' Recipient
Centralia College

"Rubys Rainbow helped me take classes at Centralia College so that I can earn my **Associate's degree in American Sign Language**. I would like to be able to study in the medical field and technology in the near future, and I can do it all in my secondary education. It helps me to stay confident and do the work without being asked because **I am more independent in life.**"



Taryn Stinson

2016–18 Rockin' Recipient
The University of North Carolina at
Greensboro – Beyond Academics

"Ruby's Rainbow helped me a whole lot when I was in college, and **it made a big difference in my life**. I learned how to take the next step of my life, and **now I'm doing great with my job at my college and living with my roommate.**"



Facts & Statistics



Your Support Changes Lives!

There are many reasons why we are so passionate about our mission here at Ruby's Rainbow, and why we see our work as not just meaningful, but **essential**. One reason is that we have **direct evidence** of what a **positive impact** our scholarships make on the lives of our Rockin' Recipients.



While **83% of adults without disabilities in the U.S.** who are 21–64 years old **have full- or part-time jobs**, that percentage is **significantly lower for adults in the same age range who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)**. According to research commissioned and conducted by Special Olympics, **only 34% of adults with IDD are in the labor force**. The Arc of the United States has also published research showing that **only 20% of adults with IDD live independently**, while **80% live with caregivers** (who are usually family members).

These statistics shine light on the real-world impact of access to higher education on the lives of students with Down syndrome. Fortunately, things are changing for the better! **There are well over 300 college and university programs for students with IDD across 49 states**, and counting. And the data we gather through annual surveys of our Rockin' Recipients gives us insight that fill us with pride and hope. We hope it does the same for you—since we could not do what we do without you!

In the five years we have been gathering information from our Rockin' Recipients, these are the trends we've found:



97%

have reported they are **glad they attended higher education** and that their programs helped them achieve their goals.



77%

have reported that it would have been **difficult or impossible for them to attend their higher-education programs** without the support of their Ruby's Rainbow scholarships



71%

of our Rockin' Recipients **live independently** (alone or with housemates), in college and after graduation



71%

of our **scholarship recipients who have graduated are employed.**

The data is clear: **Higher education makes all the difference for individuals with Down syndrome** in developing employment and independent living skills, accessing important networking and career opportunities, and leading lives of meaning and self-efficacy.

We hope you feel proud of your contributions to our Rockin' Recipients' lives and education. **You are truly making a difference!**





Matilda Gillard

2022–2024 Rockin' Recipient

Shepherds College

"Receiving Ruby's Rainbow scholarships **makes me so proud of my accomplishments.** Going to college has always been one of my goals, and I can't believe this is my third and last year of the program. **I am looking forward to bringing all my skills to the community after I graduate!**"

John Rorro

2022–24 Rockin' Recipient
Syracuse University – InclusiveU

"I am on the **executive board** of the Syracuse U special Olympics club. I **participated in the Polar Plunge to raise money for Special Olympics**. I was the top fundraiser from the SU team! **It was sooooo cold!** Last year I forgot a change of clothes—but I was prepared this year! This is a picture from the **2024 Lake Oneida Polar Plunge**."



Sarah Parrack

2021–22 Rockin' Recipient
Northeastern State University –
RiverHawks Scholar Program

"I loved college, and now I love working. I get to work on a college campus, so **going to college was so important to me.**"

Fundraisers, Awareness Campaigns and Events



The 3/21 Pledge

Everyone's love and support **blew me away**, as always, during last year's 3/21 Pledge. The Pledge is our **annual awareness campaign and fundraiser** that closely determines the amount of scholarship funds we're able to grant each summer. Our Pledge theme last year was **"There Is More"**—because, as I have realized again and again throughout this journey of being Ruby's mama, providing scholarships for students with Down syndrome, and raising awareness about their worth and capabilities, **there is always more. SO much more! More big dreams to come; more challenges to conquer; more surprises and opportunities waiting around every corner.** Remembering that "There Is More" reminds us to **meet challenges with resilience**, to embrace change with optimism, and to trust that **each transition will open doors to new opportunities and experiences.**

Together, during the two weeks of the 3/21 Pledge, we managed to **raise \$600,000!** Donations from all 50 states and countries across the globe enabled Ruby's Rainbow to grant **142 scholarships totaling \$600,000 to a brand-new crew of Rockin' Recipients** last summer. **THANK YOU again for dreaming so big with us** and embracing the fact that There Is More!!



**\$600,000 raised in
two weeks. Y'all
showed up in a
BIG way!**

***There is MORE—and
YOU helped prove it!***



Ruby's Rockin' RainBOWL!

2024 was a **banner year** for our annual summer RainBOWL events. We've held these family-friendly bowling tournaments in Austin and San Diego for years, bringing our community together each summer to raise funds and celebrate peeps rockin' that extra chromosome. It's long been a **dream of mine to host satellite events in other cities throughout the country**. That dream was finally realized with our **first RainBOWL in Medina, OH, last June!** It was a great experience, and we're planning another Medina RainBOWL for summer 2025, with **hopes of expanding to other cities soon!**

Down Syndrome Awareness Month

In October, which is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, the Ruby's Rainbow **word and theme for the month was pivot**. We'd had a whole awareness campaign planned that didn't work out last-minute, and that turned out to be more than OK—it was great! **Sometimes the most beautiful things come from changing an idea, a vision, or even the life we thought we were going to have**. We had so much fun with our pivot, kicking it off with a Facebook LIVE session where Ruby talked about what having Down syndrome means to her and answered questions her “subscribers” (as she calls them—can you tell she watches YouTube on the regular? 😊).



The rest of the month was just as spur-of-the-moment, and every bit as fun, as we chatted with several of our Rockin' Recipients about college life, with **Ruby's big sis Ella Mae about what it's like having a sibling with Down syndrome**, and generally raised awareness about the lives, interests, needs and dreams of people with Down syndrome.



Lindsay Davis

2022–23 Rockin' Recipient

Auburn University – EAGLES

"Going to college was a **dream come true for me**, and I could not have done it without the help and support of Ruby's Rainbow! I have loved getting to **live on my own, learning job skills, going to classes** and going to all of the school sporting events. Thank you, Ruby's Rainbow!"

Ben Wilhelm

2022–24 Rockin' Recipient
University of Arkansas – EMPOWER

"Ruby's Rainbow helped me to follow my dreams of going to college. I am learning in my classes and internships to be ready for my job of working in the environment and conservation."

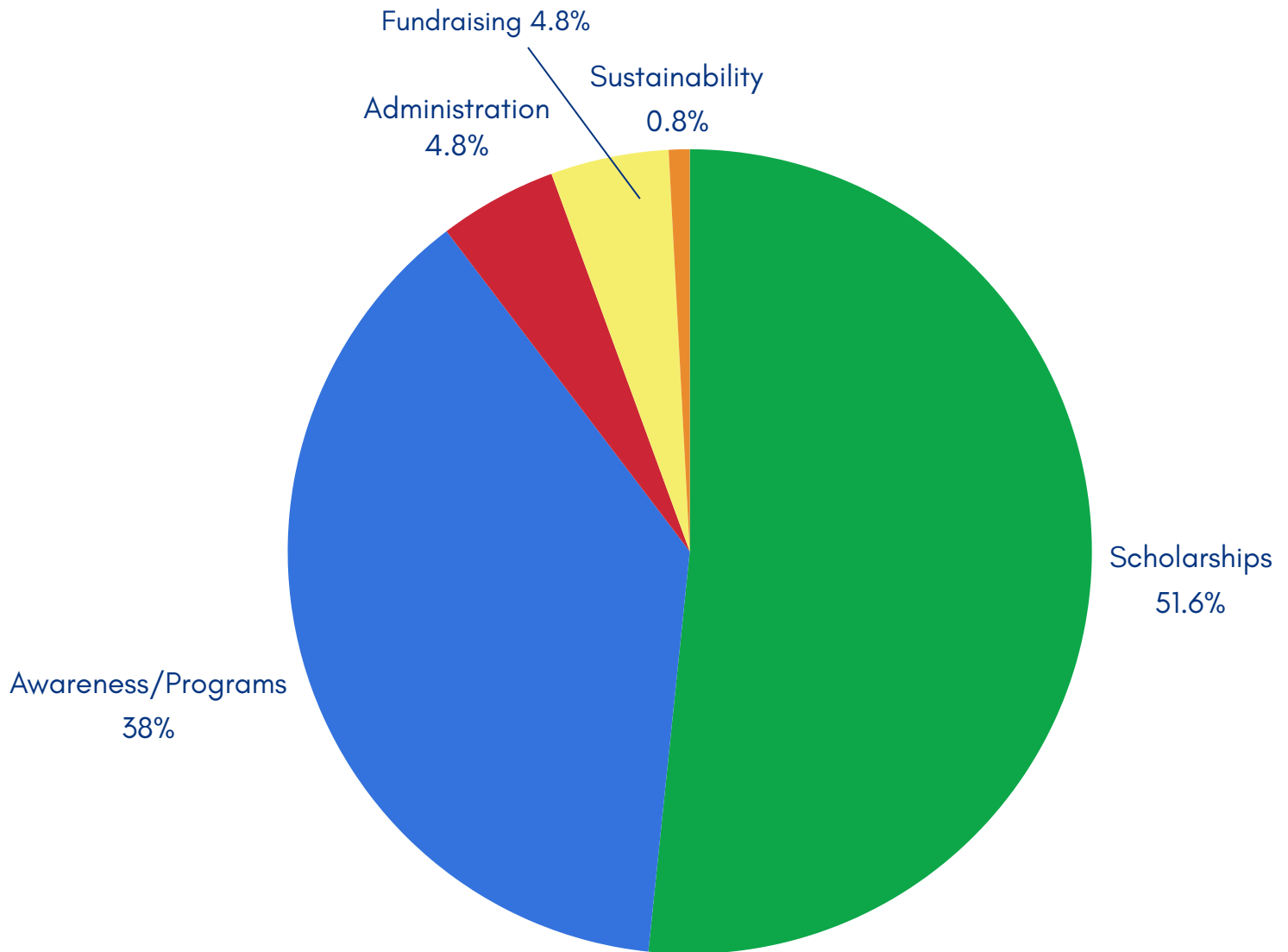


BreAnna White

2018–24 Rockin' Recipient
Georgia Highlands College

"Ruby's Rainbow has meant so much to me, **not only for college but also the friendships I have made.** I love Ruby's Rainbow so much and love what they are doing for people with Down Syndrome in this world."

2024 Financials



- Awareness/ Programs \$431,892 (38%)
- Administration \$53,987 (4.8%)
- Fundraising \$53,987(4.8%)
- Sustainability \$9,533 (0.8%)
- Scholarships \$586,751 (51.6%)

2024 tax form

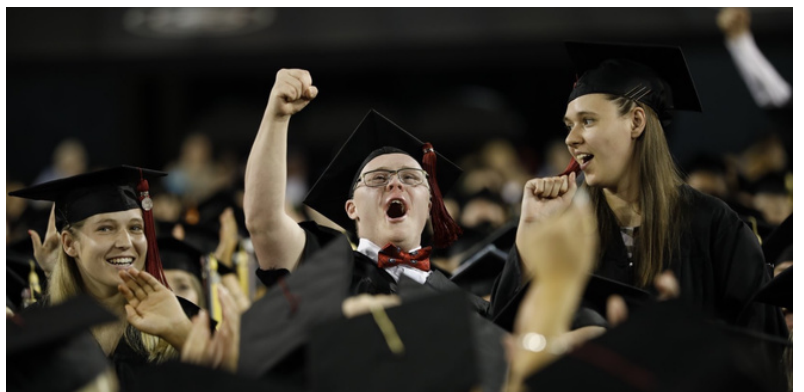
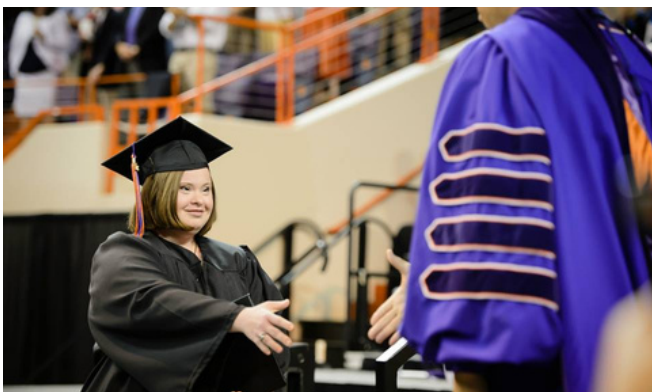
Financials & Strategic Plan



We are always proud to show our supporters how we allocate funds here at Ruby's Rainbow. **Please check out the chart on the next page** to see what your generosity supported in 2024!

We are also proud of **our first three-year strategic plan that we created and began implementing in 2022**. This roadmap was generated by a committee that believes in the Ruby's Rainbow mission, vision and core values, and wants to help guide our organization toward its key goals and objectives.

Since successfully carrying out that first strategic plan, we have worked hard to create the next one, which we have begun implementing in 2025. **We're excited to share more details in next year's Impact Report!** It's so exciting to see the growth from where we started over 13 years ago to today. **We've truly come so far!**





Kellyn Donahoe

2022–2024 Rockin' Recipient

Kent State University – Career & Community Studies Program

"To me, my Ruby's Rainbow scholarship means that **I am capable of going to college and choosing where I want to go.** I have the chance to **learn new things, find my communities** where I want to spend my time and energy, and live my college dream life."

Geerayu Lee

2022–23 Rockin' Recipient

University of Nevada, Las Vegas –
Project F.O.C.U.S.

"I am so **forever grateful**, and I appreciate Ruby's Rainbow for giving me the **opportunity of a lifetime** to have a knowledgeable experience of having an education in my life."



Donovan O'Malley

2019–22 Rockin' Recipient

Spring Hill College –

2022 Graduate – Bachelor's Degree

"Ruby's Rainbow **gives me purpose** by being a part of a wonderful organization that helps other people like me. My post-secondary education prepared me to be **ready for what comes next for me**. And it gave me the skills I need to be a **leader and an advocate**."



Looking Ahead

I hope you know what a **HUGE impact** your love and generosity make on the lives of our Rockin' Recipients, and that we are **beyond grateful!** You're helping us **change the world for the better**, and we honestly could not do what we do without you.

Here's to keepin' on rockin' it through 2025 and beyond!!

With SO MUCH love and gratitude,

Liz, Tim, Ella Mae, Ruby and the RR Crew!



rubysrainbow.org | (866) 766-RUBY (7829)

 @RubysRainbow  @rubysrainbow

We Love and Appreciate Our Sponsors!



2024 Rockstar Sponsor



Select Milk Producers

Ruby's Rainbow is proud to feature **Select Milk Producers** as our **Rockstar Sponsor** for 2024!

Select Milk Producers is a **premier dairy cooperative** made up of dedicated family farms committed to **producing high-quality milk with integrity and care.** Founded in 1994 on values of innovation, sustainability, and animal welfare, Select Milk Producers takes pride in Setting a Higher Standard in the agriculture industry.

Ruby's Rainbow is **so grateful to the wonderful folks at Select Milk** for their partnership and their incredibly generous support!

Visit Select Milk on the Web at **[SelectMilk.com](https://www.SelectMilk.com)**.

