

New scholarship for adults with Down syndrome

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The Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico is proud to announce the establishment of the Southern New Mexico Down Syndrome Families Scholarship Fund. This fund, by the Southern New Mexico Down Syndrome Families (SNMDSF) organization, was created to provide financial assistance via a scholarship to those persons with Down syndrome who want to pursue post-secondary studies or life-skills training at approved educational institutions or organizations.

For the past three years, the SNMDSF organization has been sending local families to the annual conference of the National Down Syndrome Congress. It's at this conference that SNMDSF witnessed a number of inspirational stories of accomplishment by persons with Down Syndrome. Examples of these accomplishments include being elected councilwoman, graduating with honors from a technical college, earning a bachelor's degree in educational psychology, along with a number of talented artists, musicians, actors, models, and athletes.

"Even in New Mexico we have the example of Tim Harris, a young man with Down syndrome who graduated with certificates in food services, office skills, and restaurant hosting," shared Tim Query, SNMDSF treasurer. "Tim now runs his own restaurant in Albuquerque called *Tim's Place*."

It was also at the National Down Syndrome Congress Conference that SNMDSF discovered that an increasing number of educational institutions are providing programs customized for those with developmental disabilities. So, SNMDSF only found it fitting to create a scholarship for young adults with Down syndrome living in Dona Ana, Luna, Otero, or Sierra counties who wish to take advantage of these educational opportunities.

"Just like any other parent, our families love our children and we want to see them reach their potential, whatever that potential may be for each individual," Query said. Through this scholarship, SNMDSF hopes to not only provide financial assistance to area persons with Down syndrome to pursue their passions and interests beyond high school, but to also use it as an awareness tool for Southern New Mexico parents, helping them realize that their child with Down syndrome can live a rich, productive life and make meaningful contributions to society.

Interested applicants must be a resident of Dona Ana, Luna, Otero, or Sierra counties and must be pursuing post-secondary studies or life skills training at an approved educational institution. Additionally, a letter of recommendation must be submitted along with a 250-word essay describing future career goals.

If you would like to learn more about the Southern New Mexico Down Syndrome Families Scholarship Fund, or if you would like to make a contribution, please contact Courtney Merhege at 575-521-4794 or courtney@cfsnm.org. For more information on the SNMDSF organization and to get involved, visit the SNMDSF Facebook page.