



[THENEXTSTEPSTL.ORG/2025PORTAL](https://thenextstepstl.org/2025portal)



2025-2026 SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Meet the Team	2
Contact Information	2
2025-26 Calendar and Deadlines	3
Requesting a Disbursement	4
Volunteering	5
Scholarship Policies	6
Annual Scholarship Gala	8

MEET THE TEAM

Rachel Jones



Operations Lead

rjones@thenextstepstl.org

Text: 314.719.2880

Call: 314.719.2880, ext 104

Rachel is your scholarship administrator. Contact her with any questions about disbursements, contact updates, or other scholarship matters.

Sherry LeBlanc



Senior Director

sleblanc@thenextstepstl.org

Text: 314.719.2880

Call: 314.719.2880, ext 102

Sherry oversees fundraising, marketing, and the Scholarship Gala. You will receive requests from her periodically to assist with these items.

Darcy Glidewell



Executive Director

dglidewell@thenextstepstl.org

Text: 314.378.9515

Call: 314.719.2880, ext 101

Darcy is the primary leader of The Next Step. She works closely with the team and board to ensure that our students have what they need to succeed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

CALL OR TEXT

314.719.2880

Texts are preferred so the right team member can reach out to assist you.

Texting occurs via a web-based platform to ensure your contact information is kept secure.

OFFICE LOCATION

10097 Manchester Road

Suite 207

Saint Louis, MO 63122

Office Hours: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm,
Monday - Friday

Please reach out to Rachel to make an appointment for an office visit.

2025-2026 CALENDAR

MAY 20, 2025

Award agreements must be accepted in the portal.

New St. Louis recipients must be signed up for orientation.

New Kansas City recipients and all returning recipients must complete the digital orientation.

JUNE 2, 2025

Active scholarship portal opens. You will not have access if you have not accepted your award and completed your orientation requirement.

Submit Summer 2025 disbursement requests.

JULY 1 - SEPT 1, 2025

Submit Fall 2025 disbursement requests.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your disbursement is submitted in time for payment to reach your educational institution.

OCTOBER 4, 2025

Annual Scholarship Gala
3:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Sheraton Westport Chalet
191 West Port Plaza Drive
St. Louis, MO 63146

Sign-ups begin in mid-July for our largest event and volunteer opportunity for St. Louis recipients.

NOV 1, 2025 - JAN 31, 2026

Submit grades for classes completed to date.

Submit volunteer activity reports to date.

Submit Spring 2026 disbursement requests.

DECEMBER 1, 2025

Scholarship application portal for 2026/27 opens.

Current recipients must reapply each year.

Applications are due by **April 1, 2026.**

MARCH 1, 2026

Deadline to submit any additional disbursement requests for the 2025/2026 academic year.

Scholarship funds do not roll over to the next year.

APRIL 1 - MAY 31, 2026

Submit grades for Spring 2026 semester or any additional classes taken.

Submit any additional volunteer activity reports.

APRIL 1, 2026

Deadline to submit a scholarship application for the 2026/2027 academic year.

Current recipients must reapply each year.



We frequently send important reminders by text and email, so be sure your contact information is always up to date!

REQUESTING A DISBURSEMENT

THENEXTSTEPSTL.ORG/2025PORTAL

Active Scholarship Portal

Welcome to the **Scholarship Portal**! Anything you need for managing your scholarship this year will be located in this section.

If you need assistance at any time, please reach out to Beth Robinson at 314.719.2880 (texts preferred) or email at scholarships@thenextstepstl.org.

Disbursement Requests

Disbursements for the 2025-26 Scholarship Program begin on June 1, 2025. Any disbursements submitted before that be held until the funding period opens.

VIEW STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR REQUESTING A DISBURSEMENT:
[Disbursement Instructions](#)

Open

1. Log in to the student portal. All requests must be submitted through the portal.
2. Click on **Active Scholarships**.
3. Click the button to open **Disbursement Requests**.
4. Submit your request following the guidelines below.
5. You'll receive an email once your request is approved and mailed.

DISBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

Disbursement Form Requirements

- Before funds can be disbursed, you must **submit a schedule** or proof of enrollment and your **previous semester grades**.
- Make sure your **Student Number/ID** is correct.
- Upload documents through the portal while completing your disbursement form (preferred) or email or text them to us.
- Grades do not need to be official transcripts, but must include your current GPA.
- New recipients or those attending school for the first time do not need to submit grades for their first semester/grading period.

Plan Ahead

- **Allow at least 10 business days for funds to reach your educational institution.**
- Know your tuition payment due dates and submit requests early.
- Some institutions may drop your classes if payment is not received on time.

Award Information

- The amount in your award letter covers the **entire 2025–26 academic year**.
- All disbursement requests must be submitted by **March 31, 2026**.
- Unused funds will not carry over to the next academic year.

Use of Funds

- Funds may be used for **tuition and books only**.
- Reimbursements must be approved and are only granted in exceptional cases.
- You may split your award across multiple semesters or use it all at once.
- Once funds are depleted, no additional funding is available.
- If your request exceeds your remaining funds, we will adjust the disbursement accordingly.
- See the full **Use of Funds policy** on page 6 for addition details.



The student portal works best on a desktop or laptop, rather than a mobile device.

VOLUNTEERING

St. Louis recipients are required to volunteer for The Next Step at least once each scholarship period. Kansas City recipients do not have a volunteer requirement at this time, but are encouraged to spread awareness about the scholarship. We will send more details via email and text as opportunities arise, but here is an overview of the available options. See our **Volunteer Policy** on page 7 for more details.

SCHOLARSHIP GALA

Saturday, October 4, 2025

3:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel

STL Students Only

The gala is our largest event of the year to raise funds for scholarships. Roles include event setup, registration, raffle ticket sales, and guest greeting.

See the included flyer for more details.

SHARING YOUR STORY

Sharing student stories is a key part of our fundraising. These stories appear in print materials, donor emails, and on social media. Participation is always optional, and we never use last names.

Opportunities include:

- Testimonials
- Newsletter stories
- Marketing videos
- Speaking engagements

THANK YOU NOTES

After the gala and throughout the year, students write thank you letters to major donors.

We provide you with cards, postage, and suggestions for what to write. It makes a huge impact on our donors!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

We participate in many community events and resource fairs throughout the year and need students to provide support to staff and board members during these events.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us and share our posts on social media, or set up a social media fundraiser!

Follow **@thenextstepstl** on Vimeo, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



Go to the **Volunteer Tracking** section of the student portal after completing a volunteer activity to submit your report.

SCHOLARSHIP POLICIES

I. USE OF FUNDS POLICY

- A. This scholarship must be used between **June 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026**. Recipients may divide the award as needed between semesters/grading periods.
- B. Funds may not be carried over from year to year. Recipients must reapply each year for a new scholarship.
- C. Funds are disbursed directly to the educational institution and are not personally issued to recipients.
 - 1. Scholarship funds may only be used for tuition and required textbooks.
 - 2. Special supplies required for a class or program may be covered with prior approval.
- D. Reimbursement requests (i.e., instances where a recipient pays out-of-pocket and later seeks reimbursement) are strongly discouraged. In exceptional cases where reimbursement is necessary, prior approval from The Next Step is required. Unapproved reimbursements will not be honored.
- E. Recipients must submit disbursement requests through the student portal and allow 10 business days for processing. Disbursements will not be issued without proof of enrollment.
- F. The Next Step will fund a maximum of two certification or vocational/technical programs per recipient.
- G. In rare cases where an educational institution issues a refund due to overpayment on the scholarship to the recipient, the funds must be returned to The Next Step.

II. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE POLICY

- A. **Minimum GPA Requirement:** Scholarship recipients must maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA during each grading period in which they are receiving scholarship funding.
- B. **Official Grade Submission:** All grades must be submitted from an official source, such as a school transcript or academic report issued by the institution. Your current GPA must be included. Screenshots are acceptable. All grades must be submitted through the student portal at the end of each semester/grading period.
- C. **Scholarship Probation:** If a recipient's current GPA falls below 2.0 during a grading period, they will be placed on scholarship probation for the following grading period. During this time, they will continue to receive scholarship funding but must improve their academic standing to remain eligible.
- D. **Continued Academic Standing:** If a recipient's GPA remains below 2.0 for a second consecutive period, their scholarship status will be reviewed, and future scholarship eligibility will be effected.
- E. **Dropped or Withdrawn Classes:** Recipients must inform The Next Step in writing if they drop or withdraw from a class.

III. RECOVERY AND CONDUCT POLICY

- A. Recipients must remain actively engaged in a 12-step substance use disorder recovery program.
- B. Changes in recovery status must be reported immediately to The Next Step.
- C. A relapse will result in the forfeiture of the scholarship.
- D. Recipients must abide by standards of ethical conduct at all times.

SCHOLARSHIP POLICIES

IV. COMMUNICATION POLICY

- A. Recipients must notify The Next Step of any significant changes in education, employment, recovery status, or personal circumstances that could impact academic progress.
- B. Changes to mailing address, phone number, or email must be reported immediately. All official communication is conducted via text and email.
- C. Recipients are encouraged to share significant life events - positive or negative - that may be relevant to The Next Step's support.

V. EMPLOYMENT POLICY

- A. Recipients must maintain at least part-time employment unless an exception has been approved by the scholarship committee.
- B. Changes in employment status must be reported to The Next Step.

VI. VOLUNTEER POLICY

A. Volunteer Expectations

1. Annual Volunteer Commitment

- a. **St. Louis:** Scholarship recipients in the St. Louis program are expected to volunteer at least one time for the organization during the scholarship period they receive funding.
- b. **Kansas City:** Scholarship recipients in the Kansas City program are encouraged to support the scholarship program by spreading awareness, but there is no formal volunteer requirement at this time.

2. Volunteer Opportunities (St. Louis):

Most volunteer opportunities take place in the fall and may include, but are not limited to:

- RecoveryFest STL (September)
- Scholarship Gala (October)
- Writing thank you notes to donors and supporters (October - January)
- Special Events: throughout the year volunteers may be needed for other fundraising events or organizational activities

B. Volunteer Reporting and Documentation

- 1. **Tracking Volunteer Hours:** After each volunteer activity, recipients must log in to the scholarship portal to submit a volunteer report.
- 2. **Reapplication Requirement:** When reapplying for the scholarship, recipients will be asked to summarize their volunteer efforts from the previous year as part of their application.

C. Exceptions and Non-Compliance

- 1. **Exceptional Circumstances:** If a recipient is unable to fulfill their volunteer commitment due to unusual circumstances, they must contact the program administrator to discuss alternative options.
- 2. **Failure to Volunteer:** Not fulfilling the volunteer requirement will impact eligibility for future scholarship funding.

THE NEXT STEP
2025
SCHOLARSHIP
GALA
CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2025

3:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel

191 West Port Plaza Dr, St. Louis, MO 63146

ABOUT THE GALA

- The gala is our largest fundraising event for scholarships, and this year is especially meaningful as we celebrate our 20th anniversary! Our goal is to raise \$750,000 to fund scholarships for next year.
- Student volunteers play a vital role in making the event a success.
- The gala is about more than volunteering. All gala student volunteers are invited to enjoy the dinner and program, where your achievements will be celebrated.
- You'll receive a sign-up email and text in mid-July. Space is limited to the first 80 students, so don't wait! If you can't attend, you can still help with setup or writing thank-you notes. This is a formal event.
- Thanks to generous donors, student volunteers attend the gala for free. All others must purchase a ticket (\$150) on the Gala website.

If you know someone who would be interested in a gala sponsorship or buying tickets to attend, please send them to the website:

[THENEXTSTEPSTL.ORG/GALA](https://thenextstepstl.org/gala)