



The Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship for SkillsUSA Special Education Students

About the Scholarship:

SkillsUSA Washington is proud to announce the Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship for Special Education students. The Scholarship has been established to honor the memory of Rhonda Downing, a dedicated advocate and instructor of special education. This scholarship aims to provide support to middle and high school students with special educational needs, who have been invited to participate in SkillsUSA Washington State Leadership and Skills Competitions (SLSC) related to Special Education (Action Skills, Community Action Project and Employment Application Process). Rhonda Downing's decades long passion for her students with special educational needs is the inspiration behind this scholarship.

Scholarship Purpose:

The purpose of this scholarship is to alleviate the financial burden associated with participating in the SkillsUSA State Level contests identified for Special Education students. Often, students who excel in their respective competitions face obstacles related to registration fees and hotel accommodation costs. The Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship is designed to eliminate these barriers, ensuring that deserving students can fully embrace the opportunity to showcase their talents and knowledge in their contests.

Eligibility Criteria:

To be eligible for the Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship, applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Be a Registered SkillsUSA Washington middle or high school student.
2. Have received an invitation to participate in the SkillsUSA Washington State Leadership and Skills Conference in a Special Education-related category.
3. Submit a compelling essay (500-750 words), or 1 to 3-minute video that articulates how receiving this scholarship will eliminate a significant barrier to their participation in the competition.
4. Provide a letter of support from the students SkillsUSA Advisor who can attest to the applicant's dedication to the contest they are invited to and their potential to excel in the competition.
5. Provide a letter from the appropriate school official on school letterhead stating that the contestant is classified under the provisions of Public Law 105-17, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997. This letter is also required for participation in the contest. Schools having restrictions on the release of this information may submit a letter on school letterhead of eligibility, which simply states: "I certify that (student name) meets the eligibility requirements for the SkillsUSA Championships (contest name) Signed, (school official)."

Application Process:

Interested applicants must complete the following steps to apply for the Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship:

1. Fill out the official scholarship application form.
2. Attach a copy of the competition invitation
3. Write a thoughtful essay explaining how receiving this scholarship will eliminate a significant barrier for them and allow them to participate effectively in the state competition.
4. Include one letter of support from a SkillsUSA Advisor with contact information for verification.
5. Include a letter from school official acknowledging the student qualifies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997

Submission Deadline:

All scholarship application materials must be submitted by March 11th, 2026

Scholarship Award:

One deserving student will be selected as the recipient of the Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship will cover the full cost of registration for the state competition and hotel accommodations for the duration of the event (Thursday and Friday night).

Announcement of Recipient:

The scholarship winner will be announced on March 16th. A public announcement will be made, recognizing the recipient's achievements and the impact of the scholarship.

For any questions or further information, please contact Adam Scroggins at ascroggins@bethelsd.org

We look forward to receiving applications from exceptional students who are eager to overcome barriers to success in their state competitions. Together, we can carry forward Rhonda Downing's legacy of support and advocacy in the world of Special Education.

The Rhonda Downing Memorial Scholarship Application Form

Personal Information:

Full Name as Registered with SkillsUSA Washington: _____

School that Registered with SkillsUSA Washington: _____

Advisors Name: _____

Advisors Email: _____

SkillsUSA Information:

Are you a SkillsUSA member? Yes / No

Qualifying Contest that you are Invited to SkillsUSA State Conference in:

- Action Skills
- Community Action Project
- Employment Application Process

Submission Requirements

Please verify that the following information is included with the application submission

- A copy of the competition invitation
- An essay or video explaining how receiving this scholarship will eliminate a significant barrier for you and allow you to participate effectively in the state competition.
- Letter of support from a SkillsUSA Advisor with contact information for verification.
- Letter from school official acknowledging the student qualifies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997 (IDEA)

Contact Information

Name of person who wrote letter of support: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name of School official verifying IDEA qualification: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Declaration:

I declare that the information provided in this application is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that incomplete applications will not be considered.

Student Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Advisor Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Submission Instructions:

Please submit your completed application form along with all other required documents (see below) via email to ascroggins@bethelsd.org

- Scholarship Application (pages 3 and 4)
- A copy of the competition invitation
- An essay or video explaining how receiving this scholarship will eliminate a significant barrier for you and allow you to participate effectively in the state competition.
- Letter of support from a SkillsUSA Advisor with contact information for verification.
- Letter from school official acknowledging the student qualifies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997 (IDEA)

Application Deadline: 3-11-2026

For questions or further information, please contact ascroggins@bethelsd.org.