



# THE MERLIN ARC FAYETTE

## SCHOLARSHIP

***Empowering Future Leaders  
in the field of intellectual and  
developmental disabilities***



## BACKGROUND

The Arc Fayette is proud to launch a new scholarship program that will support the next generation of professionals dedicated to advancing the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The Merlin Arc Fayette Scholarship **provides financial assistance to students pursuing careers in fields that directly benefit individuals with IDD**, such as special education, therapy, psychology, nursing, social work, and more.

The Merlin Arc Fayette Scholarship honors the legacy of the Merlin family in supporting individuals with IDD. As one of the founding families of The Arc Fayette, the Merlin family played a vital role in advocating for a world where everyone belongs, is valued, and has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

The Arc Fayette's roots trace back to 1959, when a group of concerned parents in Fayette County, including members of the Merlin family, united to fight for educational opportunities for their children with disabilities. At the time, children with disabilities were denied access to public education, but these parents' relentless advocacy efforts led to the establishment of a parent-supported program, offering individuals with disabilities a place to learn, grow, and thrive.

Through the years, The Arc Fayette's services have expanded to provide comprehensive support, empowering individuals with IDD and their families to live with dignity and independence. The Merlin Arc Fayette Scholarship is a reflection of that vision, empowering future leaders to carry forward the mission of inclusion, support, and opportunity for all.





## WHY THIS SCHOLARSHIP MATTERS

As we work to build a more inclusive community, we recognize the critical need for a skilled, compassionate, and well-trained workforce in the IDD field. The next wave of advocates, educators, therapists, and healthcare professionals must be equipped with the knowledge and passion to make a lasting difference.

By offering this scholarship, we will:



**Invest in the education** of students who are committed to transforming the lives of individuals with IDD.



**Support the growth** of the IDD field by encouraging students to pursue careers that promote inclusion, respect, and quality care for those we serve.



**Empower students** to become catalysts for change in their communities, ensuring a future where individuals with IDD have opportunities to thrive.

## BENEFITS TO THE IDD COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

This scholarship will not only help students achieve their academic goals but also contribute to the long-term success of individuals with IDD.

Key benefits include:

- **Fostering a skilled workforce** that is equipped with the knowledge and compassion necessary to serve individuals with IDD.
- **Encouraging students to pursue impactful careers** in fields that are crucial to the well-being and independence of individuals with IDD.
- **Creating a sustainable pipeline of professionals** who will carry forward our mission, ensuring that our community continues to grow and thrive.



## SCHOLARSHIP OVERVIEW

The Merlin Arc Fayette Scholarship will offer a scholarship to full-time or part-time students, residents of Fayette County, PA or within a 30-miles radius, enrolled in accredited degree programs that prepare them to support individuals with IDD. Scholarships will be awarded based on academic achievement, personal commitment to the IDD community, and a demonstrated passion for making a positive impact.

**Award amount:** The scholarship will provide financial assistance of \$2,000, the number of awards will depend on the funds available and number of applications received.

**Frequency:** The scholarship will be awarded once per year, with applications opening in the summer and recipients announced in the fall.

**By investing in the future of students, together, we will contribute to the future of care, advocacy, and support of individuals with IDD, ensuring it is brighter, more inclusive, and filled with hope.**





## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To apply for this scholarship, students must meet the following criteria:

- Be a resident of Fayette County, PA or within a 30-miles radius.
- Have been enrolled for at least one semester prior to applying.
- Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- Be pursuing a degree online or in-person in a field related to IDD: Special Education, Psychology, Social Work, Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Nursing, Disability Studies, Early Childhood Education, or related field.
- Be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program.

## SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process will be designed to ensure that we support students who are truly dedicated to making a difference in the IDD field. The following steps will be involved:

- **Application Submission:** Students will complete an online application form, which will include personal information, academic background, and contact details.
- **Personal Statement:** Part of their applications, applicants will be asked to submit a 500–1,000 words essay detailing why they chose to pursue a career in IDD-related fields and how they plan to use their education to make a positive impact on the lives of individuals with IDD.
- **Recommendations:** Applicants will be asked to provide two reference letters speaking to their passion and potential in the IDD field. These could include professors, mentors, or professionals.
- **Review Committee:** A committee consisting of Arc Fayette staff will review the applications and select scholarship recipients based on the strength of their academic background, personal statement, and demonstrated commitment to the IDD field.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### **Launch of Scholarship Application: July 1 – September 30**

- Online application portal live for easy submission of applications.

### **Review and Selection Process: October 1 – October 21**

- Applications review, final selection, and notifications.

### **Announcement of Winners: By October 30**

- The winners of the scholarship will be announced.

### **Scholarship Disbursement: November 1 – November 15**

- Funds will be disbursed directly to the recipients' educational institutions.



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*By investing in the education and future of students pursuing careers in the IDD field, we contribute to the future of care, advocacy, and support for individuals with IDD, ensuring it is brighter, more inclusive, and filled with hope.*



This scholarship honors the legacy of David and Shirley Merlin, whose generous donation helped lay the foundation for the Merlin Arc Fayette Scholarship. We are grateful to our sponsors whose contributions help sustain and grow this initiative.

Scholarship Contributor Sponsor:

