

You could win \$1500!!!

The 2026 Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award

The Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) is proud to offer the Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award to support North Carolina high school seniors with disabilities. The award amount is **\$1,500**, with the potential for a higher amount and/or runner ups depending on funds. This scholarship is awarded directly to the student and can be used for any postsecondary experience, including further education, employment related expenses, independent living, pursuing hobbies, or purchasing assistive technology and/or other equipment needs. (Because the amount is over \$600, the student will receive a 1099 form.)

ELIGIBILITY:

ALL North Carolina high school students with disabilities that are graduating in Spring 2026 are eligible for nomination. This includes:

- Students who are homeschooled, enrolled in private schools, public charter schools, or traditional public schools.
- Students with or without a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Students who will receive either a diploma or a certificate.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Matthew Carmen Graziadei was a remarkable young man who died in January 1998 at the age of 26. At the age of seven Matt was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy. He graduated from Myers Park High School in Charlotte, NC and was elected to Who's Who in American High School Students. Matt was a student intern at the Charlotte Mint Museum and served as a Goodwill Ambassador for the Muscular Dystrophy Association both locally and statewide. He achieved President's Honors at Central Piedmont Community College and served in Washington, DC with the US Surgeon General's Council on Families and Disabilities. Matt also started his own business and was a contractor in facilities, engineering and computer services.

Scholarship recipients reflect the qualities that defined Matthew C. Graziadei:

- **Determination** – believing you can go beyond what seems possible
- **Perseverance** – staying strong even when things are tough
- **Persistence** – trying again and again until you succeed
- **Dedication** – putting in steady effort to reach your goals
- **Confidence** – trusting yourself to handle challenges
- **Motivation** – focusing on opportunities instead of barriers
- **Accomplishment** - achieving success while embracing new possibilities

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications will only be accepted through **Friday, February 20, 2026**. The award will be presented to the winning student during their high school awards ceremony. Based on applications received, additional students may be selected as Runner Up.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

Applicants must submit the following documents for consideration, **NOTE NEW REQUIREMENT:**

- Student Information Form – **TRANSCRIPTS ARE NOT REQUIRED**
- **Nominated student must submit a written or dictated paragraph about why they qualify for this award and how they would use the award to help with their future plans.**
- Nomination Narrative - A one-page narrative, completed by school counselor, teacher, student or someone who knows the student describing the student and his/her accomplishments in relationship to the attributes listed on the cover page. Include a brief personal history, education or career goals, and reasons why they should be selected for this award.
- **2 Letters of Recommendation**
 - Administrator from high School: Principal, Assistant Principal, EC Director, Director of Student Services
 - A Teacher, Coach, Job Coach or School Counselor
 - Community Member – Student's peer, relative, employer, pastor, neighbor, service provider, etc.

DEADLINE:

One copy of the completed, signed application packet must be received by **Friday, February 20, 2026**. Winner and finalists, if applicable, will be selected by April 10 and the Individual nominating the student or the high school counselor will be notified by May 1st. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and rejected.

SEND TO:

To send via email, scan your completed application, supporting materials, etc. **into a single PDF** and email to **MCGaward@ecacmail.org**. If you have not received an email confirmation within 3 business days, please contact 800-962-6817 before application deadline.

If emailing this document is not possible, documents may be sent via USPS mail, FedEx, UPS or hand delivered to:

**Matthew C. Graziadei Award
ECAC
907 Barra Row, Suite 103
Davidson, NC 28036**

MATTHEW C. GRAZIADEI ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Student Information Form

Please complete online, type or print neatly. Thank you.

Who is completing this form and what is your relationship to the student?:

Student's Name: _____

Student's disability: _____

Birthdate: _____ Student's Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Parent/Caregiver Name: _____

Address: _____

(if different from student)

City: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone Number: (____) _____

Parent Email: _____

The student is aware that winners will receive a 1099 form.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Name of High School (or Home School): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **Zip:** _____

Telephone Number: (____)_____ **Email:** _____

School Principal: _____

School Counselor: _____

Date/Location of Awards Ceremony: _____

The student is receiving:

- ☐ Diploma:
 - ☐ Future Ready Course of Study
 - ☐ Occupational Course of Study
- ☐ Certificate

The student spends the majority of the school day in:

- ☐ Regular setting
- ☐ Resource classroom
- ☐ Separate setting
- ☐ Separate building
- ☐ Other

The student is currently served under a:

- ☐ 504 Plan
- ☐ EP
- ☐ Private School Service Plan
- ☐ None of the above

Extracurricular activities: (use additional paper if needed)

Volunteer activities: (use additional paper if needed)

Future Plans: (use additional paper if needed)

Additional Comments: (use additional paper if needed)

With permission, we will post a photo of the winner and/or runner up on our website and social media. Please have parent/guardian of student sign below.

I, _____ give permission for ECAC to use photograph and/or video tape of my child _____ and to use this material to post on their website, social media sites, and printed media with the intent of educating the public.

Date: _____

Questions? Please email us at: mcgaward@ecacmail.org