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# Beyond Tuition: How SPSFNWA Helps Single Parents Thrive

By Tricia Moore | Photos courtesy of Single Parent  
Scholarship Fund of Northwest Arkansas



Scholarship recipient Kelly Palma  
with her father, Martin Palma



Scholarship recipient Nikki Garrett and her children

**T**ransforming one's uncertain future takes courage. Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Northwest Arkansas supports and encourages area parents who once thought transformation was out of reach.

"When my dad came to the United States at just 15 years old," said Kelly Palma, a scholarship recipient, "he came with the hope of building a better

future. As a single dad, he worked hard to give me opportunities he never had and taught me that perseverance can open doors for the next generation."

Palma said that, with the support of SPSFNWA, she has been able to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. "As a single mom of three daughters, this opportunity is changing not only my future but theirs as well," she said. "My

dad gave me the opportunity to dream, and SPSFNWA is helping me turn that dream into reality."

For many scholarship recipients like Palma, SPSFNWA's support extends beyond tuition assistance. The organization also provides career development and resume guidance, free counseling, pantry support, tech access, financial literacy and healthcare referrals. The extensive range of supportive services helps remove the everyday barriers that could stand in the way of a recipient's graduation.

For recipients, the financial and emotional backing changes everything. And it also benefits a region that is striving to fill high-skill jobs that are currently vacant. While equipping more single parents to transform their lives, SPSFNWA is also helping to support the regional workforce and secure brighter futures for the next generation of workers.

SPSFNWA isn't just for four-year degrees; it meets parents where they are with short-term, high-demand career credentials. It has expanded into credentialing and workforce development scholarships alongside traditional associate and bachelor's degrees. It offers help with programs for in-demand local careers such as medical assistant, radiologic technologist and CDL drivers.

Key highlights from 2025 illustrate the organization's expanding reach across the community. SPSFNWA served 293 single parents (both women and men) — a 16% increase from the prior year — impacting 526 of the recipients' children. Total scholarship funding rose 8% to \$1,190,887, supporting 70 graduates, which represents a 32% increase in graduates over the previous year.

“Over the past several years, we’ve experienced remarkable growth,” said SPSFNWA CEO Frankie Rankin, “but what makes me most proud is what those numbers represent. More single parents are earning degrees, building careers with family-sustaining wages and creating new opportunities for their children. Every milestone reflects a life transformed and a family moving toward lasting stability.”

From program entry to six months post-graduation, recipients' salaries increased substantially. Average entry-level salaries averaged \$9,865.60, rising to \$30,819.20 annually post-graduation. While most scholarship recipients live in Benton and Washington counties, the program also serves surrounding areas, with 4.1% of recipients residing in Carroll County and 2.4% in Madison County. Many of these students are balancing heavy workloads, with 80% working while attending school.

Krystle Goodwin, public relations director at SPSFNWA, pointed out that with the cost of living and childcare costs rising, “Recipients are allowed to use their scholarship money for childcare expenses; this helps topple barriers that may stop a parent from making the decision to go back to school.”

“SPSFNWA has been a life-changing blessing for my family,” recipient Nikki Garrett said. “Their support has allowed me to chase my dream of becoming a nurse while balancing the responsibilities of motherhood and work. My children get to see that challenges do not have to stop you from reaching your goals.”

As Northwest Arkansas continues to grow, so does the demand for the life-changing resources that SPSFNWA provides. Every degree earned and every wage increase represents a family stepping out of financial uncertainty into long-term stability. ■

▶ For more information, visit [www.spsfnwa.org](http://www.spsfnwa.org).

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