



Arts for Life! 2025-2026 Scholarship Application

Arts for Life! annually awards a one-time \$2,000 scholarship to 35 graduating high school seniors who demonstrate excellence in creative writing, dance, drama, music or the visual arts. Launched by former First Lady Columba Bush in 1999, the program has awarded scholarships to more than 650 gifted high school seniors.

Application Period:

September 1, 2025 – February 9, 2026

Eligibility:

High school students who are graduating from a public, private, or virtual school or a home education program in Florida in the spring of 2026.

Application Process:

Students can apply directly online at <https://artsforlifeaward.org/#apply> or <https://forms.gle/snfMcZDMJ6f6f5x57> or by email to Lisa@ExcelinEd.org

For students applying by email, you must submit a completed application form (page 5); a brief essay explaining “How the arts have positively influenced my life”; and, a portfolio of work based on the parameters (listed on pages 2-4) in creative writing, dance, drama, music or the visual arts. Applicants may apply under more than one discipline.

Selection Process:

A committee of judges for each of the five disciplines, comprised of respected experts, reviews and scores the students’ essays and work samples. Students with the top scores in each discipline are awarded a scholarship. Winning seniors will be notified in the Spring of 2026.

Questions:

Please contact Lisa K. Raguso, *Arts for Life!* Program Director, at (407) 223-1955 or Lisa@ExcelinEd.org

General Guidelines

Portfolio:

- Content must be applicant’s original and current (less than one year old).
- There are specific portfolio requirements for each discipline. Failure to follow these requirements could result in disqualification.

Essay:

- Applicants are required to submit an essay on “How the arts have positively influenced my life”.
- Essay should be 250 to 500 words.

Resume:

- Applicants may submit a resume to be included with their application, though it is not required.
- Resume may list employment, extra-curricular activities, volunteer activities and awards.

Portfolio Requirements

Visual Art:

All forms of visual art are eligible, including art forms such as ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, crafts, photography, video, filmmaking, architecture, graphic design and fashion design.

Parameters for filmmaking:

- Provide three (3) videos/films from the current school year (less than one year old). Each video/film should be between 3 - 5 minutes long.
- Applicants will be judged on professional filmmaking potential and the overall quality of the work submitted.
- Particular attention will be paid to expression, interpretation and construction of the visual image.
- There are no restrictions on the art form used in film production—live action, animation, Claymation, still photography or any combination are welcomed.
- Entries may be scripted or candid.

Parameters for all other forms of visual art:

- Provide five (5) digital images of original artwork from the current school year (less than one year old).

Format:

- Submit film/video in one of the following common file formats: WMV (Windows Media Video), MOV (Apple QuickTime Movie) or MP4 (Moving Pictures Expert Group 4)
- Submit all images of artwork as a JPEG file.
 - Include the following for each image if applicable:
 - Title of work
 - Dimensions
 - Medium
 - Date created

Music:

Only solo instrumental and vocal performances are eligible.

Parameters:

- Provide two contrasting pieces up to 5 minutes maximum (both pieces together are not to exceed 5 minutes).
- Applicants may select a movement from a larger work or portion of a single movement work.
- Recorded performance must be current (within the last year).
- Performance should show command of technique (e.g., appropriate tone, expression, style and performance skills).
- Before the performance begins, state your name and the name of the pieces you are performing.
- Appropriate accompaniment is allowable.
- Video recordings are highly encouraged; however, audio recordings are eligible.

Dance:

All forms of dance are eligible. Solo performances only, group performances will be disqualified.

Parameters:

- Provide two contrasting pieces up to 5 minutes maximum (both pieces together are not to exceed 5 minutes).
- Recorded performance must be current (within the last year).
- May be original choreography by applicant or any other choreographer.
- Before the performance begins, state your name and the name of the pieces you are performing.
- Group performance pieces will not be considered.

Format:

- Camera should be fixed and stationary with full body visibility.
 - Film against a neutral background if possible.
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Drama:

The drama category encompasses theatrical performances or musical theatrical performances.

Parameters:

- Provide two contrasting pieces up to 5 minutes maximum (both pieces together are not to exceed 5 minutes), either:
 - Two monologues, or
 - One monologue and a piece that showcases singing voice and, if applicable, movement, dance and choreography.
- Recorded performance must be current (within the last year).
- Before the performance begins, state your name and the name of the pieces you are performing.
- Group performances will not be considered.

Format:

- Camera should be fixed and stationary with full body visibility.
 - Film against a neutral background if possible.
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Creative Writing:

Three forms of creative writing are eligible, including creative nonfiction, poetry and short story.

Parameters:

- Content must be original and current (less than one year old).
- Applicants may submit a portfolio in only one category per application.
- There are specific portfolio requirements for each form of creative writing below. Failure to follow the instructions below could result in disqualification.

Creative Nonfiction:

- Provide three (3) creative nonfiction prose pieces, including memoirs, literary journalism and personal essays. Submissions that resemble term papers, book reports or specific class assignments will not be considered.
- Total submission is not to exceed 16 pages.

Short Story:

- Provide three (3) short stories.
- Total submission is not to exceed 16 pages.

Poetry:

- Provide six (6) poems.
- Total submission is not to exceed 10 pages.

Format for all creative writing portfolios:

- Typed in standard font, such as Times New Roman, 12 point.
 - Label each piece with applicant's name and title of the piece.
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Application Form

DEADLINE: Postmarked on or before February 9, 2026

Please type or print:

Student Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: Florida Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____ E-mail: _____

Weighted Grade Point Average: _____

Discipline: Please check the box for your discipline.

☐ Visual Art ☐ Film ☐ Dance ☐ Music

☐ Drama – check one: ☐ Monologue ☐ Musical

☐ Creative Writing – check one: ☐ Nonfiction ☐ Short Story ☐ Poetry

School Information: Please check one.

☐ Public School ☐ Magnet School ☐ Charter School
☐ Private School ☐ Virtual School ☐ Home Education ☐ Other

School Name: _____

School District: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Teacher's Email: _____

Principal's Name: _____

Principal's Email: _____