

Ava Scholarship Grant Recipient): Inspired to Make a Difference

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Ava Frost, a Providence College sophomore from Deep River, is pursuing degrees in elementary and special education, inspired by her sister Isabelle.

Inspiration is something that can be found in many places. For Providence College sophomore Ava Frost, it began right at home—with her big sister.

Ava has always been drawn to working with people, especially students with intellectual disabilities. Her motivation is rooted in her close bond with her older sister, Isabelle, who was diagnosed with Down syndrome. Watching Isabelle face and overcome challenges gave Ava a firsthand look at the importance of support, advocacy, and inclusion.

“She really has shaped my life for the better,” Ava says. “She is my best friend. We grew up and did everything together. I was an advocate for her and her struggles when she couldn’t advocate for herself. I think seeing the way that she struggled made me want to help other students who may be going through something similar.”

While attending Valley Regional High School, Ava became deeply involved in programs focused on peer support and inclusion. She even took the initiative to create a club of her own—Unified Buddies. The goal of the club was to connect students with disabilities to their classmates through activities, events, and mentorship. The group helped foster a stronger sense of community, both inside and outside the classroom.

“In Unified Buddies, we worked to help everyone feel comfortable,” Ava says. “It gave us a way to show that everyone belongs and deserves to have the best possible school experience.”

Ava credits the support she received at Valley for helping her identify and nurture her passion.

“At Valley, I could connect with staff and faculty who helped me explore different opportunities,” she says. “It was when I really knew I had a passion for this kind of work.”

One of the highlights of her high school experience was a trip to Disney World organized by Unified Buddies. Ava and her peers worked tirelessly to raise the funds needed to make the trip possible. The experience offered not only joy and excitement but also practical learning opportunities for students with disabilities, including communication and social skill development.

“The trip was more than just a vacation,” Ava says. “It was something that made a lasting impact on all of us.”

After graduating in 2024, Ava chose to continue her education at Providence College in Rhode Island. She is currently double majoring in elementary education and special education, building on the foundation she developed in high school.

This year, Ava received a grant from the American Association of University Women (AAUW), which supports women from Middlesex or New London counties based on academic achievement and future goals. She was one of eight recipients—and the only one from Deep River.

“With this grant, it allows me to explore new classes and opportunities here at school,” she says. “I had devoted my high school life to trying to change people’s lives, and now I get to work in classrooms with students in special education. The small community that I come from has shaped me into the person I am today.”

Ava didn’t wait long to get involved on campus. Shortly after arriving at Providence, she ran for class secretary for the Class of 2028 and joined the student congress. She has held the position since her freshman year, helping lead efforts to make the college a more inclusive and accessible space for all students.

“Being a part of the student congress has already given me so many different opportunities,” she says. “Alongside the other members, I am finding ways to make Providence more inclusive. When I got here, I wondered how I was going to make the most out of my college experience. I was not going to be just a number at this school.”

Ava shows no signs of slowing down. Her energy, drive, and sense of purpose remain strong, whether she's working on campus initiatives or staying connected to her community back home.

While she hasn't yet decided what her long-term career will look like, she's sure of her direction. Ava hopes to continue working with students who have intellectual disabilities, helping them find success, confidence, and joy in the classroom—and beyond.

"I don't know exactly where I'll end up," she says, "but I know I want to help kids like my sister—kids who just need someone in their corner."

By



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