



Kirtland Credit Union Awards \$10,000 in Scholarships to Four Local Graduates

June 15, 2026

Albuquerque, NM

Media Contact: Rick Crocker, SVP Marketing / PH: 505.254.4314 Email: rcrocker@kirtlandcu.org

Kirtland Credit Union is excited to announce the recipients of its Scholarship Program awards for 2026. These four exceptional local graduates will be receiving a total of \$10,000 for their college educations.

Selected for their exceptional academic achievements, records of community involvement, and future aspirations, these four recipients represent a bright future for our community. Here are the 2026 winners:

- **Gracie Gabaldon**, the valedictorian of her graduating class at Belen High School, who plans to attend the University of New Mexico in the fall. After her brother passed away due to a heart problem, Gracie has dedicated herself to becoming a pediatric cardiologist.
- **Tobias Romero**, recent graduate of Valley High School, who will be attending the University of New Mexico. Tobias has worked multiple jobs and internships during high school to get ahead while also helping at home, using his handyman skills at home to repair things for his parents.
- **Dane Padilla**, graduate of Pius X High School and state champion wrestler, who will be attending Colorado State University – Pueblo to pursue a degree in Construction Management. Dane has completed over 130 hours of community service through volunteering at school and church and coaching younger athletes.
- **Rio Chavez**, graduate of Albuquerque Academy, where he was heavily involved in DECA and focused on business and finance. Rio plans to study at the Kelley School of Business at the University of Indiana.

Throughout their high school journeys, these students have demonstrated their strong commitments to academic excellence, community dedication, and making a positive impact. Kirtland Credit Union is proud to help them continue their work and pursue their dreams with fewer financial obstacles to overcome.

“Our mission at Kirtland Credit Union is to help our members Live Confident – and we know that empowering students to begin their educations and pursue their passions without financial barriers provides a great foundation to build from,” said Matt Rarden, President and CEO. “We are excited to support these incredible young leaders, with their incredible dedication to both academics and community, as they take the next step in their journeys.”



Kirtland Credit Union has been committed to empowering the lives of all members through personalized financial solutions for over 68 years. The credit union is excited to continue to support the next generation of leaders through initiatives like this scholarship program, ensuring they have the necessary resources to pursue academic and professional goals.

The vision and determination of these students epitomize the leadership of the future. Kirtland Credit Union congratulates this year's selected graduates and wishes them continued success in all their future pursuits.

About Kirtland Credit Union

Since 1958, Kirtland Credit Union has empowered individuals to live with confidence through innovative financial solutions. With over \$1.1 billion in assets and more than 52,000 members, Kirtland Credit Union is a trusted community partner, deeply rooted in the region and dedicated to supporting local initiatives, building lasting relationships, and helping individuals and families thrive.