

The Justin Russ "Gus" Oakeson Memorial Scholarship

In loving memory of Justin Russ Oakeson, fondly known as Gus, this scholarship honors a man whose life was deeply rooted in the values of hard work, resilience, and a passion for the Western way of life. Justin's love for rodeo and horses defined much of his journey, from his days as a proud member of the Oquirrh High School Rodeo Team to his time on Utah State University's Rodeo Team. He carried with him the heart of a true cowboy, embodying grit, grace, and an unwavering connection to the animals and the sport he loved.

Tragically, Justin passed away in March 2024. In his memory, the Justin Russ "Gus" Oakeson Memorial Scholarship aims to support youth in the rodeo community, encouraging them to reflect on the importance of mental health while pursuing their dreams and finding balance in life.

Scholarship Details

This scholarship is open to members of the Utah High School Rodeo Association (UHSRA). Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded annually for the next five years, 2026-2030.

Application Requirements

To apply, applicants must submit by email an essay (500–700 words) that addresses the following topics:

1. **Healthy Mental Health Practices:** Share your thoughts on maintaining good mental health and why it's essential for pursuing your dreams.
2. **Personal Growth and Balance:** Reflect on your own journey—how you strive to balance the challenges of rodeo, school, and personal life while working toward your goals.
3. **Future Dreams:** Discuss how you plan to carry forward the lessons you've learned to achieve your dreams and inspire others.

Selection Criteria

Essays will be evaluated on the following:

- Thoughtfulness and insight regarding mental health and balance.
- Personal reflection and connection to rodeo or the Western way of life.
- Clarity, creativity, and authenticity in expressing your goals and values.

This scholarship is a tribute to Justin's legacy, reminding us of the importance of supporting one another, staying connected, and finding strength in the rodeo community.

Application Deadline: June 2, 2026 7pm

Submission Instructions: Please email your essay to: uhsra.scholarships@gmail.com

Together, let's honor Justin's memory by encouraging conversations about mental health and celebrating the dreams of the next generation of rodeo athletes.