

Short Bio

My name is Lia Young, I'm 22 years old, a raft guide and recent college graduate (as of December 2025 with a B.S. Environmental Science from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado). Since graduating college, I have gotten the amazing opportunity to live and work in Chile at a whitewater rafting camp as a trainee guide on the Futaleufu River in Patagonia. Overall, I am a very lucky person because I grew up in Colorado and spent my childhood rafting, mountain biking and skiing. In college, I studied abroad in New Zealand, underwent intensive corrective leg surgery on my right femur, and competed in collegiate downhill mountain biking. I also was a part of my school's humanitarian aid and engineering club, Village Aid Project (VAP). I am traveling to Zambia in May 2026 with VAP to volunteer installing a water distribution system in two rural villages.

Core Values

1. Work hard, play hard
2. Be kind!
3. Enjoy what you are doing
4. Take every opportunity to learn
5. Appreciate the process
6. Be open minded
7. Respect yourself and others
8. Take care of yourself, your friends, and your environment
9. Show up as your best self
10. Listen to some good music while you do it
11. Peace & Love
12. Go with the flow

Personal Essay

To who it may concern at Flyin' Ryan scholarship:

I am a recent college graduate with a Bachelor of Environmental Science who values hard work, respect, and community. These values show up in the things I am most passionate about; environmentalism, social justice and my relationships. Since graduating college, while on the hunt for job opportunities, I have also been using my time to work, travel, and go on adventures. During February and March of this year, I lived and worked for room and board at a very special whitewater rafting camp on the Futaleufu River in Patagonian Chile. I learned so much while working and training on 'The Fu'. This was a much anticipated dream come true for me, as I had worked multiple jobs at home throughout college and for a few months after to afford to come to the Futa. I am very lucky because I am getting the once in a lifetime opportunity to learn and be on a river that so many people around the world love, and live in a beautiful community that takes care of each other. Rafting is a big part of my life, as I come from a family of guides and have been guiding every summer since turning 18. Working as a raft guide and being a part of the river community has taught me invaluable life lessons, such as the value of hard work, importance of relationships, grit, communication and people skills with a wide array of people from different backgrounds, empathy, and most importantly, deep connection to land, water, and people.

I am also very lucky because in May, I have the opportunity to go to Zambia with a club that I was a part of in College. I recently graduated from Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO, with a strong desire to first go see the world before I continue my education. Village Aid Project is a student-led club that focuses on partnering with rural communities internationally to provide drinking water distribution systems to these

communities, with the support and direction of the community. Due to my involvement and dedication to the club over the course of my last year in school, I have the opportunity to travel to Zambia in May 2026 with Village Aid Project on the conditions that I pay for my flights and travel myself as a participating community member. I am very motivated to achieve the result, and have been working hard at multiple jobs in January and March to cover costs for my travel to Zambia and participating in the project. In Zambia, I will be working in the small villages of Mpasu and Nachili, alongside community members and VAP students, installing a student- designed water system for twenty days. After this time, I would like to travel through Zambia - and this region of Africa - as well as visit the Zambezi river (before it is dammed), a very rare and special opportunity.

I am applying to the Flyin Ryan scholarship with the goal of using the funds to help cover travel costs to Zambia.

This will be a special trip for me for many reasons. While I was slated to go with the Village Aid Project on their Nicaragua trip to the town of Buena Vista del Penon last year, the trip was cancelled. Receiving this funding would allow me to participate in a very important experience to me while I still have the opportunity and to do good for others. I would learn a lot, and this trip will be an adventure and learning experience for me in more ways than one. I am very excited for the growth, connection, learning and adventure this experience will bring me.

I am very grateful to the opportunity to apply to this opportunity, and additionally the fact that opportunities such as these are offered for anyone to apply for. I look forward to hearing back and I am again, so appreciative of the opportunity to apply.

Sincerely,
Lia Young