



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Goose Creek photo by Carrie Pryor-Newman Robert E. Lee High School seniors and Celebrity officers Jamie Burton, left, and Rocio Arreola stands in front of the revamped school.

"It looks beautiful"

REL undergoes exterior facelift

After months of cleaning and painting, Baytown's old bird on Market Street has a fresh new look. Over the course of the summer, Robert E. Lee High School was transformed into yet another phase of its storied life, renewing pride in current and former Ganders.

The change was so dramatic and welcomed that when Lee Principal Bruce Davis spoke about the effort at the school's open house, the building itself earned a standing ovation from parents.

Since the restoration, Davis says visitors frequently stop by to tell him how much better the school looks now. "It looks beautiful," Davis said. "The beautification of the campus lets students and neighbors know there are people who care enough to give them a nice place to come to school."

Lee High School junior, band member and Interact president Jose Garcia says the overall student body perception of Lee has changed because of the beautification of the school.

"I feel that the enhancement of Lee now reflects its tradition and student achievement through triumph and tribulation over the course of 80 years. The same doors that welcomed students decades ago continue to stand tall and firm in providing entering students the door to excellence," Garcia said. "The most renowned visual improvement is not only the new cohesive look of fresh paint, but the reviving of a more sophisticated and picturesque view of Lee High School. The aesthetic components have highly influenced the overall look of our school, but perhaps in a greater sense, the changes that occurred have undoubtedly revamped the meaning of Gander Pride."

"Embarrassed" and "kind of sad" were some of the words folks used to describe how they felt about the appearance of the 81-year-old school before the makeover.

To get Lee looking good took a massive operation. James Balmes of Superior Painting in Baytown headed up the effort. "This was a huge job," he said.

First off, the building was power-washed for 19 days. Then, painters applied more than 1,600 gallons of fresh paint to the building.

Overall, the cleaning and painting took some 50 days.

Also, Goose Creek grounds crews put in plenty of hours.

Aside from the painting of the building, Goose Creek grounds workers personnel worked onsite to protect and trim existing trees. They also assisted in sprucing up the site, adding Crepe Myrtles and removing some of the portable buildings.

Lee High School was a first, and certainly most visible step of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Toby York's goal to enhance the district's physical appearance.

Dr. York is a firm believer that pride enhances performance.

"People like to take pride in the arena they perform in," Dr. York said. "Part of that arena is the facility they work in. Students are the same way."

This started with Dr. York and other administrators visiting all the district's campuses in the spring to assess needs. As far as looks, Lee was atop the list.

Built in 1928, Lee High School, over the years, has undergone numerous renovations, including the reconstruction of the main building following a devastating fire in 1987 and a new Art and Science building.

These renovations have allowed the high school to offer a state-of-the-art learning facility while preserving the beauty of this historical landmark. In 2000, a new cafeteria was added along with 13 classrooms on the second floor.

While the exterior renovation is not exactly a rise from the ashes, it is certainly a rise to prominence at the district's oldest high school.

Garcia says many of his peers have discovered a profound sense of pride. "Now, more than ever, the students are demonstrating such gratefulness through their desire to achieve and succeed in providing our school the recognition it deserves," Garcia said.

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