



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Annual Goose Creek CISD Reach Out Walk showing great success

Goose Creek CISD held its fifth "Reach Out Walk" on Saturday, Sept. 8.

More than 280 district and community volunteers went door to door to find more than 160 students who have not returned to school, who have dropped out, or who may need encouragement to be successful graduates.

Goose Creek CISD Superintendent Dr. Salvador Cavazos thanked the volunteers for their time and told them that the Walk is about letting students know "we care about you and want you back in school."

"These visits change lives for some of our kids," Dr. Cavazos said. "The work today is about finding the lost. You're doing the Lord's work this morning by bringing them back to school."

District personnel provide volunteers with names and addresses of students. Where students or families with school-age students were found, volunteers encouraged them to complete their high school education and provided resource information to assist students with any obstacles they may encounter in their return to school. Volunteers left flyers and brochures with a school district phone number and information on how students can go about re-enrolling on doorknobs when no one answered.

As has been the case every year, several students expressed an interest in returning and earning high school diplomas.

Most students targeted in the Walk will require tutoring. Some will need flexible schedules for work and school. More than a few will need day care for their children. And others will require all of the above.

Whatever the need, Goose Creek will provide as much help as possible.

Research about dropouts is sobering: they have lower job prospects and income potential along with higher incidence of incarceration and teen pregnancy than their peers who finish school.

Nationally, approximately 25 percent of students who begin ninth grade do not finish high school with their peers.

Before volunteers headed out to the streets, they heard from Robert E. Lee High School graduate Prodigio Hernandez.

His trouble, he said, started in seventh grade and got worse, heading down a path of self-destruction. He was behind in credits and thought it would be impossible for him to graduate. He decided to drop out and later spent some time in prison.

On Saturday, Sept. 10, 2011, his life changed. That's when Goose Creek CISD Reach Out volunteers visited his home.

He and his family were contacted during the Reach Out Walk by the team of Lee Principal Bruce Davis, Board member Agustin Loredó III, retired GCCISD principal Judy Duncan, teacher and City Councilman Scott Sheley, and Baytown Junior teacher Jerry Shafer.

After that contact, he did return to school, opting for the flexible schedule at the Peter E. Hyland Center. And he did graduate in May, earning three scholarships for college along the way.

After Prodigio's speech was over, a man went over to him and gave him the watch off his wrist. He told Prodigio to "use your time wisely."



Volunteers gathered at Ross S. Sterling High School Saturday, September 8th for the District's annual Reach Out Walk. Teachers, administrators, and community volunteers went to the homes of former students and made them aware of after-school programs that could help them finish their education. [Click here to view more photos!](#)

Today, Prodigio works two jobs and is enrolled at Lee College with hopes of becoming an underwater welder.

"Helping even one youth return to school is worth the effort," said Mr. Davis.

This year, Davis' team for the Reach Out Walk included Lee counselor Kim Fox, Lee teacher Ryan Lopez and retired Lamar teacher Maria Juarez.

They were able to make contact with one of the students on their list.

The young lady had completed all her school requirements, but still needed to pass one state test to earn her diploma. The group encouraged her to take a test-prep class and get this behind her. She seemed receptive and promised to call on Monday.

"It's important that every child in Baytown and Highlands succeeds in life, both for them individually and for our community as a whole," said Mr. Davis. "Education will give them the tools they need to do that."

In four years, the Reach Out Walk has been responsible for 57 former dropouts returning to school and earning high school diplomas.

Organizers declared the 2012 version of the Walk a transformative year because the number of students sought is steadily declining. In fact, the District's list of dropouts in 2012 is half the number of students on the list in 2008.

"The number of dropouts keeps going down," said David Yannotta, Director of Assessment and Accountability and Walk organizer.

Furthermore, out of the three high schools, only 15 seniors did not graduate last year, he said.

"We appreciate the many District and community volunteers who donate their Saturday mornings each year to support this endeavor. Their time and commitment is invaluable," said Goose Creek CISD director of guidance and counseling Janci Alexander-Alfaro. We believe our efforts will be successful and students will return to school and be on the road to graduation."

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