



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

CLASS OF 2010 | REL sisters to graduate together

As the Robert E. Lee High School Band majestically plays "Pomp and Circumstance," three sisters will proudly accept their diplomas Saturday, June 5, while family members loudly cheer from the stands at Stallworth Stadium.

While this might not seem unique, the obstacles that twins Vicki and Vanessa Oliveros and their older sister, Angelica, have overcome to graduate make this an event that their parents, Fernando and Sylvia Oliveros, thought might never happen.

Angelica, a member of the REL Class of 1996, had always been disappointed that she had not received her diploma from Lee High School.

She had not passed the math portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), which was the state-mandated test at the time, so she decided to take the GED.

When this test proved to be difficult for her, she went on with her busy life, working and caring for her young daughters. It was not until she came up to the school in September 2009 to help Vanessa revise her schedule that the 33-year-old thought to ask about taking the Math Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

Imagining how exciting it would be to graduate with her sisters, she put her heart into preparing for the test. She also needed a credit in BCIS and a half credit in Communication Applications, but she was able to earn those using Odysseyware online courses.

Her daughters, Jasmine, 13, and Liliana, 6, encouraged her, but it had been quite a while since Angelica had practiced her math skills, and she knew that, although her Math TAKS would be graded on a scale comparable to that used for the TAAS, she had never felt confident when taking a math test.

"I was nervous about taking the test, but I wanted to show everybody that it's never too late," she said.

When her results came, her mother and sisters opened the envelope before she got the chance, but Angelica didn't mind.

"They were smiling when I opened it, and I jumped up and down and started crying. Now I can go to college," she said, explaining that without a diploma, she'd never been able to get the job she wanted in radiology.

Vanessa and Vicki, 19, are proud of their sister and don't mind sharing their graduation day with her, but they, too, have overcome some obstacles along the path to graduation. Vicki had to retake her Math TAKS, so she understands how it feels to have to beat the test, but both girls have been beating the odds since birth. Born with cerebral palsy, Vicki has undergone two surgeries to help her walk, and Vanessa, who hasn't had surgery yet, usually relies on her motorized wheelchair.



Although many students would have focused on their limitations, Vanessa and Vicki found other ways to participate in activities. Unable to play sports, they support their teams from the stands. At dances, they twirl across the floor, Vanessa in her wheelchair and Vicki dancing close by. Despite their differences, the young ladies deal with life head-on.

"It hasn't been easy for Vicki and me. Life has some obstacles, and you just have to overcome them," Vanessa said. "I have to do things differently, but it doesn't stop me from doing what I want to do. In my family, you don't get anything handed to you—you have to work for it." Proud that she is graduating with the Class of 2010, Vanessa plans to attend Lee College to become a paralegal so that she can help people. She has enjoyed all the senior activities, including dressing up for the Prom.

"If everything was easy for me, I wouldn't be the strong person I am today. I want to be independent and have my own life," she said. Hoping to use her experience in dealing with surgeries to help others, Vicki plans to enroll in the nursing program at Lee College. Walking is sometimes tiring for her, but her positive attitude gets her through each day. It makes her happy that the three sisters will receive their diplomas at the same time, since they are almost inseparable.

"I'm proud of what I'm achieving with the help of my family. I'm graduating on time in the top 50 percent of my class, and I can't wait to start college," she said.

When the members of the graduating Class of 2010 toss their caps into the air at the end of the graduation ceremony and head out of the stadium to begin their new lives, Angelica Oliveros will proudly walk with her sisters, tightly clutching her diploma—the one she's waited 14 years for—feeling even prouder than she would have in 1996. It hasn't been an easy road for the three young ladies, but they will approach their futures with the same determination that brought them to this night.

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