



# GOOSE CREEK

## CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

## REL holds graduation ceremony

By Robert Chambliss

The Baytown Sun

It was a night filled with pride and excitement for the Lee High School Class of 2010 as they walked across the stage for their final ritual of high school.

The ceremony was held at Stallworth Stadium, with crowd capacity filled once again for a Gander event.

The graduating class of 480 students was cheering from start until finish with "proud to be a Gander," always on their minds.

With advice given from many classmates, the Gander students had a lot to think about, including past history that class president Shelby Olive brought to their attention.

Olive talked of the difficulties they had to overcome as a class to get to the position they were in.

"From hurricanes to rezoning and from losses in football to loss of classmates, we have overcome a lot of things in our short time together," Olive told her class.

"We as individuals have had to overcome these events on our own. But we as a class have had to deal with them in the same way."

She went on to say how they overcame the events, and how she has learned from it.

"So now I tell you this class," Olive continued. "Now that we have this knowledge, let's use it as power. No matter what life throws at you keep turning your wheels.

"Because one day you will make it to whatever it is you want to be."

Among the other students in the crowd, two in particular were listening with great intent, as this is what they have done their whole lives ... overcome odds.

George Mercado and Armando Pena were good friends throughout school, and they both had good reason to be because odds were against them.

For Mercado, he is the first male to graduate from his family.

"Right now I have a lot of pride rolling through my mind," Mercado said. "I have never seen my dad cry like he did tonight, and it just makes me emotional knowing that he is proud of me."

With pride also came excitement for Mercado.

"I am very excited to see family I haven't seen in years," Mercado said. "It is cool to be in this position because I know they are all here cheering me on."

Mercado plans on getting multiple degrees from Lee College over the next few years. He starts school on Monday in Summer Session I, where he will try to obtain his process operator degree.

After that, he plans to get a degree as an analysis operator, and then a degree in business management.

Mercado wants to use his degrees to work in the chemical plants around the area and start his own business right here in Baytown.

For Pena, graduation night was late but it was great. Pena is 23.

At 16 years old, Pena dropped out of school because he had to raise his newborn child.

After things stabilized he decided to come back to school and finish what he started.

"Right now I can say I am a very proud man," Pena said. "I am so glad that I made the decision to come back because this is so awesome.

"This is a very emotional night for me considering my story. But I can say that the emotions are really great. I can't describe how happy I truly am to be walking across the stage."

Pena also plans on attending Lee College starting this fall.

While at Lee College, Pena plans on taking welding so he can further the career that he is already in.

It is stories like these that made this class special, and remembering the struggles is how Olive chose to finish her speech.

Said Olive, "Congratulations class of 2010. You really have persevered through a lot, and I can truly say that you guys deserve this."

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