



# GOOSE CREEK

## CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Goose Creek CISD reaches out to dropouts

Forty-three high school dropouts have pledged to return to school, all because of a pep talk from some volunteers representing Goose Creek CISD.

The third annual Reach Out to Dropouts Walk on Sept. 11 aimed to convince students who have left school to return and graduate. This is achieved through door-to-door conversations between targeted teenagers and district and community volunteers who come with a belief that everyone deserves a second chance — the dropout and the school system.

It's a proven method that works. Take the case of Ramon Ledezma.

Born and raised in Baytown, he attended Carver Elementary, Horace Mann, Cedar Bayou, Lee and Goose Creek Memorial before dropping out of school on his 18th birthday.

He got a job working as a maintenance helper. But after watching his friends graduate from high school, he became somewhat envious.

"It hit me that I was just as smart as they were," Ramon said.

Yet, he was still was not motivated to go back to school. He had quit his job and wasn't doing much of anything.

"Then a couple of people from Goose Creek knocked on my door early in the morning. I was still sleeping, and my mother answered the door," Ramon said. "My mother woke me up, and I remembered being greeted by the senior counselor at Goose Creek Memorial and other volunteers. They talked to me about getting back into school."

He knew that a traditional school setting was not for him, so he enrolled in the night school program at the Peter E. Hyland Learning Center.

With a renewed sense of purpose, Ramon passed all his courses and passed all the required TAKS tests on the first try.

"I graduated this past May and was able to march with my class at Goose Creek Memorial," he said.

Ramon is employed at Wal-mart and plans to attend Lee College to study criminal justice and become a police officer.

"I want to thank those volunteers who knocked on my door that early Saturday morning. I want to thank the Peter E. Hyland Learning Center for providing me with a caring and nurturing environment. Lastly, I want to thank Goose Creek for being committed to helping me complete my education."

After Ramon's testimonial, the inspired crowd of 300-plus volunteers erupted in applause and rose to their feet. Then they set out in teams to find more students to bring back to school.

This year, Reach Out volunteers — teachers, administrators, and community members — went to the homes of 200 former students and made them aware of after-school programs that could help them finish their education. Volunteers made face-to-face contact with 36 dropouts who will hopefully be re-enrolled in classes.

Most re-enrolled students 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.

In two years, the Reach Out Walk has been responsible for 30 former dropouts returning to school and earning high school diplomas.

"Knocking on doors is to evoke a sense of, 'we care, we are concerned,' " said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Toby York. "The doors of opportunity will not be opened to students who do not complete high school."

A 2007 report from Columbia University's Teachers College found each high school graduate provides a \$127,000 net benefit in terms of reduced government spending and increased revenue. And according to the U.S. Education Department, workers with high school diplomas begin their work lives with about \$10,000 more in earning power.

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