



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Diane Baker thanks former student Dominic F. Gonzalez, who nominated her for the Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation Students Choice Awards as a senior in 2013 to honor her for the difference she had made in his life.

Remembering Diane Baker

The band plays on in the music hall at Cedar Bayou Junior School, largely due to the legacy left behind when Diane Baker, band director for 11 years at the school, retired in June 2013. In the band hall she once shared with Brenda Legendre, now at Bridge City Middle School, and more recently Kurt David, high standards were set, discipline was enforced, and attitudes were positive, resulting in an excellent music program.



Diane Baker

Baker recently lost her brief battle with pancreatic cancer, but the impact she had on her students lives on. For this band director, teaching music was secondary to forming relationships with her students. Baker's band hall was a safe and happy place. She encouraged her students as well as disciplined them with a firm hand and a warm heart. Everyone wanted to be in the band.

"She was a delight to work with. She came to us from Hardin-Jefferson High School and was such a fabulous teacher," said Sandra Bell, former principal of CBJ.

"Diane was an incredible woman, mentor and friend. Her personality and good spirit was and still is infectious. Diane lit up the room when she walked in. I learned so much from her about students, education and faith. Diane was a true blessing in my life. She made me a better man!" said David. Always thinking of others, Baker often brought treats for faculty and staff members to brighten their day. She referred to herself as Pattycake, and while it seemed to soften the blow when she addressed a reluctant musician, that student knew she meant business.

"You know Pattycake doesn't play games like that," she'd say. "Get your instrument out and get ready to play."

The student immediately complied.

In May 2013, Baker was honored along with 14 other teachers, nominated by senior students for making a difference in their lives, at the Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation Students Choice Awards. Her former student Dominic F. Gonzalez, who graduated from Sterling High School, wrote about her in a letter to the Foundation.

"The teacher that has affected my life the most is my junior high band director Ms. Baker.

Austin Dean, former CBJ musician, Sterling High School Swing Choir member, band member and drum major, is now assistant choral director at Klein Oak High School. His mother, Jodie Billeaudeau, remembers Austin's difficult transition to junior school.

"Austin just didn't have a niche at junior school, but when he got to 6th grade band, Ms. Baker took him under her wing, and he realized his purpose in life was to share the joy of music with others," said Billeaudeau.

Dean recently posted a tribute to Baker on Facebook.

"When you taught me to read music, you changed the course of my life forever. Grateful will never begin to describe how I feel toward you. Rest easy knowing you've done the same for countless young people," said Dean.

Kurt David, recently named assistant principal at Victoria Walker Elementary, directed the CBJ bands with Baker for seven years, but he had known her for much longer because she was so influential in the band world.

She taught me to never give up and to try my hardest no matter what the cause or how hard the challenge. She taught me that everyone is equal and deserves to be treated the same way, no matter what they have, how smart they are, or where they come from. She gave me opportunities that I never thought I was going to get. She wanted us to make a difference in the community and to be all that we could be. Ms. Baker from Cedar Bayou is truly the treasure of this school district, and I am proud to say that I was her pupil and I owe her everything," wrote Gonzalez.

In July, Baker will be inducted into the Texas Bandmaster's Hall of Fame. A GoFundMe account has been set up for the Diane Baker Endowment Scholarship for young aspiring music educators at Lamar University.

During the 40 years that Diane Baker shared her passion for music with students, many took away an appreciation for it, while others were inspired to follow in her footsteps as music teachers. With Baker as a role model, no doubt they also will motivate students to achieve their goals in music as well as in life.

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