



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Groundskeeper Mario Moreno mows the playground area at Bañuelos Elementary.

GCCISD Grounds Department Keeps District Trimmed and Tidy

By Beth Dombrowa

Spring is here, and the Saturday morning ritual of lawnmowers roaring to life is a familiar sound to area residents. For Goose Creek CISD groundskeepers, however, mowing isn't a seasonal activity -- it's a year-round undertaking. The responsibility of the Grounds Department for keeping campuses trimmed and tidy also extends indoors, where they move and set up furniture and fixtures for events across the district every day. This complex, constantly moving group of about 45 performs behind-the-scenes tasks that help the district look its best, inside and out.

"This is the best group of people around," said Herb Minyard, director of operations and grounds. "They make coming to work every day so enjoyable, and they take so much pride in what they do. No one can really see all of the work our Grounds Department does to keep our district looking like a district of our caliber should."



Groundskeeper Donnie Baker served in the Army before joining the GCCISD Grounds Department 12 years ago.

Besides preventative maintenance, the group also consists of mechanics who maintain the district's white fleet -- all district vehicles -- as well as make repairs to heavy equipment, including tractors and golf carts, edgers, mowers and chippers.

"My dad always told me to learn a little bit of everything because you never know what you'll be asked to do," said Groundskeeper Donnie Baker. "That's how it is in the

Mowing and Maintaining for Safety

On average, the district's 22 groundskeepers, who are divided into four crews to cover all 28 campuses and other district facilities, mow about 1,000 acres a week. Weather depending, each campus is mowed every seven days, from the smallest site (San Jacinto Elementary) to the largest (Gentry Junior School). At each location, they also weed, edge and care for landscaping. Unless it's raining, groundskeepers mow every day; when it does rain, they perform preventative maintenance on their equipment, pressure wash district buildings and sidewalks, and hold safety meetings. Lawn maintenance of this magnitude requires a carefully orchestrated schedule and specialized equipment, depending on the size and scope of the area. For example, at Gentry Junior School, groundskeepers mow with a winged tractor a day before they follow with smaller mowers, which follow along to provide a finer cut.

All this mowing and pruning isn't just for aesthetic purposes – it's necessary for the health and safety of students. Taller grass can attract rodents, which may carry diseases. As part of their rounds, groundskeepers regularly inspect for wasps nests or honeybees. A few years ago, an elementary student had a severe allergy to fire ants that could have caused serious injury or even death. Groundskeepers inspected the playground daily, implementing a zero tolerance for ants, and communicated each day with the office that it was safe for the student to go outside during recess.

The Grounds Department is also made up of groundsmen assigned to high school campuses and Stallworth Stadium. They report to these locations each day and are tasked with caring for athletic facilities. They work closely with campus leadership and the Athletics Department to ensure the facilities are well-manicured ready for practices and sporting events. Further, two groundsmen are assigned to the district's junior school campus athletic facilities, as well as the Ag Barn. They are also responsible for irrigation.

Grounds Department. We never know what we'll be asked to do so we all know enough to help each other out to get done what needs to be done.”

Pest Control

This is Texas, after all, and we are known for sharing our space with an assortment of rodents and pests. Although it's not a pleasant thought, mice, raccoons, insects and other unwelcome critters can and do find their way into campuses and attempt to make themselves at home – perhaps in search of a quality education. When that happens, employees of the GCCISD Grounds Department are called upon to assist with removal of the intruder. Occasionally, employees ask for the additional assistance of Baytown Animal Control.

Weekly pest exterminations are scheduled to help eradicate pest activity; kitchens, cafeterias, locker rooms and other areas prone to attract insects or other invaders.

“We spot treat specific areas when needed, but we also regularly exterminate all of our facilities,” said Minyard.

Movers and Shakers

But what really keeps the Grounds Department moving is, well, moving. On any given day, two crews made up of four Grounds Department employees check work orders to find out what needs to be where, and how to get it there timely and in good condition. When guests walk into a performance, camera in hand and excited to watch their child perform, the chairs are in place and the risers are ready, thanks to movers within the GCCISD Grounds Department. All day every day, and certainly many evenings, Grounds Department movers are on hand to set up and break down for events, move furniture in and out of classrooms and anything else that requires relocating district items from one place to another.

“At the end of the day, we're extremely proud of the appearance of our campuses and facilities,” said Minyard. “We may not be in the classroom, but every day we're working for the kids and employees of Goose Creek CISD.”



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