

GOOSE CREEK CISD



presents

STUDENTS
Choice **AWARDS**

2019-2020

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The

Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation is proud to honor our 11th Annual Students Choice Awards winners.

We are once again showcasing 15 Goose Creek CISD teachers who have made a difference in the lives of students during their school careers.

Seniors from each Goose Creek CISD high school were asked to write a letter nominating one teacher who has impacted their school experience in a positive way.

After more than 600 entries were carefully reviewed, 15 students from across the District were chosen for the 2020 Students Choice Awards.

Established in 2009, the Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation aims to enhance community support and expand resources that enrich teaching, inspire learning, and maximize opportunities for all students in the Goose Creek school system.

The Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation is a charitable organization under the Internal Revenue Service section 501(c)(3) and contributions to the organization are tax deductible.

Since its inception, the Education Foundation has awarded more than **\$1,273,858** for innovative teaching grants to teachers across the district to enrich the curriculum for their students. Along with designated funds for additional projects, the Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation has donated more than **\$1,348,314** to the benefit of Goose Creek CISD over the past 11 years. Approximately **\$141,430.69** in grants will be awarded to teachers this year.

If you would like to be a part of the Foundation, contact Erika Foster, Goose Creek CISD Foundation Director, at P.O. Box 8081, Baytown, Texas, 77522; by phone at 281-707-3610; or check out its website at <http://www.gccisd.net/EducationFoundation>.

Mission

The Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation will partner with the community to provide resources to enrich teaching, inspire learning, and provide opportunities for excellence in education for all students in the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District.

Purpose

Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation will support educational excellence to enhance student achievement, to recognize exemplary staff involvement, and to foster community support.

In addition, this Foundation is organized independently and exclusively for charitable and educational purposes to benefit the Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District.

To this end, the Foundation shall at all times be operated exclusively for charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Goals

The Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation will achieve its mission by directing resources toward the following initial goals:

- Involve the community in assuring a quality education for the leaders and workers of tomorrow
- Support staff for innovative efforts
- Recognize staff for exemplary teaching
- Encourage all students to work at their highest potential

2019-2020

Students Choice Award Winners

TEACHER STUDENT

Samuel Laird (GCM) – Trenton Brown (GCM)

Mariela Chen-Barboza (GCM) – Claudia Rosas (GCM)

Rosie Adolphin (GCM) – Angelique Vazquez (GCM)

Peter Cushman (RSS) – Kera Adamson (RSS)
previously at Baytown JS

Misty Dolgner (GCM) – Johanna McKay (REL)
previously at Baytown JS

Michele George (Cedar Bayou JS) – Caleb Echols (GCM)
previously at Gentry JS

Roman Huizar (GCM) – Tania Rodriguez (GCM)

Kimberly Kelley (Horace Mann JS) – Stephanie Perez (IMPACT)

Amy Maddie (RSS) – Alexandria Lee (RSS)

Shonna Prentice (GCM) – Gabriella Lopez (GCM)

Jonathan Richards (REL) – Christina Rodriguez (REL)

Kathrine Robinson-Hull (William B. Travis Elem) – Victoria Gomez (RSS)

Jackie Scales (GCM) – Taylor Richardson (GCM)

Sheila Southall (San Jacinto Elementary) – Shelby Torres (RSS)

Clemencia Vigil (REL) – Sam Balandran (REL)



**SAMUEL
LAIRD**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**TRENTON
BROWN**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

Trenton Brown from Goose Creek Memorial High School nominated Samuel Laird, his law enforcement teacher for three years, for the Students Choice Awards. These excerpts from his letter tell why:

“I chose Mr. Laird because of how he shaped my character, attitude and education. My outlook on life has been greatly enhanced through his teaching. To me, Mr. Laird is more than a teacher; he’s a mentor and a lifelong friend who will always have my back and give advice to help navigate through challenges I have and will face.”

“Meeting Mr. Laird for the first time in the second semester of my sophomore year, I always knew something about him was different. He radiated with the charisma of a man, someone who was steadfast, strong, understanding and disciplined. Mr. Laird is the type of man I believe everyone should include in their circle of strong friends and mentors. His intelligence and wisdom have been extremely useful and impactful in my life, from information on working out, law enforcement, being a man, dealing with stressful situations, and mapping out the next destination in my course of life.”

“I’ve always been honored to see a side of Mr. Laird not many have seen. I’ve seen the father side of Mr. Laird, from times he’s had his three children here at the school. In these moments, he has been able to model what a father should be like – protective, considerate, comedic, loving, and enforcing order.”

“Without Mr. Laird I can, without a doubt, tell you I would not be the young man I am today. I have learned so much from Mr. Laird, and because of this, I nominate him as the teacher who has impacted me the most. I look forward to the upcoming freshmen who will have Mr. Laird as their teacher. I know he’ll continue to inspire and change the lives of everyone he meets.”



**MARIELA
CHEN-BARBOZA**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**CLAUDIA
ROSAS**

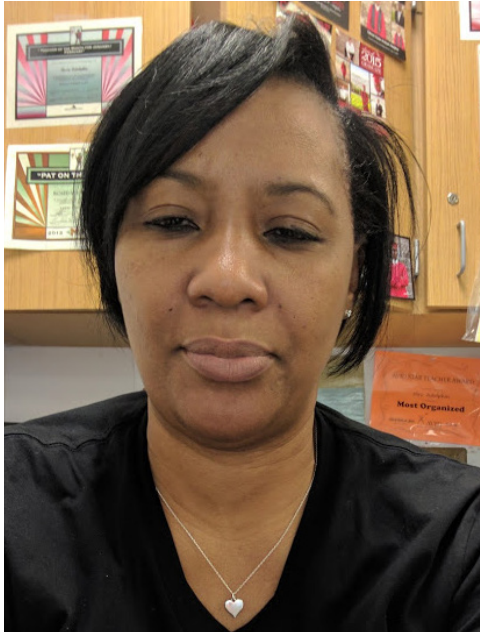
Goose Creek Memorial HS

Claudia Rosas from Goose Creek Memorial High School nominated Mariel Chen-Barboza, her Spanish teacher, for the Students Choice Awards because she changed her life for the better.

“Mrs. Chen is not only a teacher, but she is a friend to her students. As a senior in high school, I believe it is of the most importance that teachers build a type of foundation with their students. Moreover, to show students they are able to confide in them. Ms. Chen did exactly that. She may have been unaware of doing this due to her being naturally charismatic, but her attitude towards teaching and her students is outstanding. Being in her class is never a dull day. It’s always filled with laughs and education.”

“I was Ms. Chen’s student in my freshman year for her Spanish 2 class and then my junior year for her Spanish 3 class. My freshman and sophomore year I felt on top of the world and very accomplished, However, my last month of sophomore year what no one knew or knows is that my life changed drastically. My parents started divorcing when I was in elementary and it didn’t end until I was in high school. The last month of my sophomore year was tragic; it felt like life hit me with a bus. My aunt, who I considered a mother, passed away and I couldn’t go see her, and within days, my cousin, who was like my sister, fell terminally ill. She happened to pass away within days and my life just kept falling apart. At the time, my dad and I did not have a good relationship at all.”

“However, I took Ms. Chen’s Spanish 3 class my junior year, and thank God I did. She constantly till this day keeps reminding me to keep coming to school no matter how hard it gets. In addition, she made me laugh a lot. Even though she had no clue what was going on in my life, her actions and character helped me get through my junior year. This chapter in my life made me learn a key lesson in life – to never give up. I would not be where I am today. I am now graduating twice this year, not only from high school, but college as well. Ms. Chen didn’t give up on me, which helped me not give up on myself. For that, I will be forever grateful.”



**ROSIE
ADOLPHIN**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**ANGELIQUE
VAZQUEZ**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

Angelique Vazquez selected her freshman English teacher Rosie Adolphin to write a letter about for the Students Choice Awards, because no one had made an impact on her like this teacher had.

“Mrs. Adolphin not only had an outstanding way of educating her students, she also made sure she had a personal, yet professional, relationship as well. I first met Mrs. Adolphin my freshman year. I soon realized how outstanding a Pre-AP English I teacher she was. From the beginning of freshman year to the end, I became a different person because of her. I started off as a shy and introverted student, but I blossomed into a proactive and outgoing young lady.”

“Mrs. Adolphin’s lessons taught me how to be confident in myself and my work, which is something I still thank her for to this day. I learned to incorporate my personality and culture into my writing, and because of her, now every piece of my work has a touch of my individuality.”

“During her class, one of her assignments was to describe ourselves in a poem. We had been working on it for days, and I hate to admit it, but my poem was choppy and unoriginal. I turned it in just to get the grade, but the day after I submitted it, Mrs. Adolphin pulled me outside of class to speak to me privately. I will never forget what she said. She told me that I could do better. She asked me to dig deeper and write about who I truly was. Not who people thought I was, but about the person I new I was. She told me she wanted me to start over and think of the assignment from a different perspective.”

Sitting down to dinner, she looked at the Puerto Rican delicacy called “Arroz con Pollo” her mother had cooked. She saw it as a visual representation of herself – not just chicken and rice, but a mixture of many things.

“Just like the dish, I was a combination of many things, and not just what other people see. I had finally found out what she meant by digging deeper. She wanted me to include the “seasonings and veggies: into my writing, not just the chicken and rice.” As soon as dinner was over, I immediately started to write my poem. It probably took me about five minutes to finish it, because the words were just flowing from my brain to my fingertips. To this day, it is my favorite piece I have ever written.”

Mrs. Adolphin also expressed her concern about Angelique’s family in Puerto Rico during Hurricane Maria.

“She inspires me to become a better student, young lady, daughter and overall person as well. She has changed my perspective on life and is someone I will never forget.”



**PETER
CUSHMAN**

Ross S. Sterling HS
Previously at Baytown JS



**KERA
ADAMSON**

Ross S. Sterling HS

Kera Adamson's nominee for the Students Choice Award, Peter Cushman, has supported and encouraged her since she moved to Baytown her second semester of seventh grade. Nervous about attending a new school, Baytown Junior School, she immediately felt welcome in his class.

"I sat down in a seat that he had assigned to me at the front of the classroom. Everyone was looking at me, the new girl. I started to panic, but when Mr. Cushman started to introduce me, I felt like I belonged there. He introduced himself to me and told me about his interest, I already knew who he was due to my Uncle Carl. They are best friends and both the leaders of a Sea Scout Ship."

"Whenever I didn't understand the topic we were studying, he would go out of his way to show me what I was misunderstanding about it. Mr. Cushman is such an outgoing teacher. When moving to Baytown from an Oklahoma middle school, I found we were on two completely different subjects; therefore, he was very understanding about why I was doing bad at the start. One thing about Mr. Cushman is that he will always have your back about everything."

"Eventually during the year, I joined a program called Sea Scouts and I completely fell in love with it. It turns out that Cushman was the skipper for the ship, which means that he is the one in charge. Cushman is a wonderful person and a very trustworthy person. He started to work at Sterling High School a few years ago, and every day when I pass him, he checks up on my by asking how I've been and just starts a great conversation."

"Mr. Cushman has been here for me since I moved to Baytown, and I don't know how to give back the gratitude that he has given me. Because of him, I have driven myself to study education in college. I hope that I can make someone feel welcomed the way he did for me. Thank you for everything!"



**MISTY
DOLGNER**

Goose Creek Memorial HS
Previously at Baytown JS



**JOHANNA
MCKAY**

Robert E. Lee HS

Johanna McKay selected Misty Dolgner, her sixth-grade English teacher at Baytown Junior, to receive a Students Choice Award for making a positive impact in her education as well as in her life.

“Ms. Dolgner was a strict teacher, but unlike many others in my class, I liked that she was strict because it helped me know that she was going to do everything she could to help me excel in her class. Through her teaching I could see that she had a passion for what she did and that she wasn’t just trying to earn a paycheck, because at the end of the day, her goal was to help students grow in their education, life skills, confidence and inspire them to work hard for what they want in life.”

“Ms. Dolgner had expert communication skills, and she would always check up on me in class to make sure I was understanding the work. I have always admired how much she cared not just about me, but about every one of her students; she never wanted one of them to feel like they were alone.”

“As the year went by, I started to realize what an amazing impact Ms. Dolgner had made in my education and life. She taught me to be disciplined, patient, committed, and confident in my work. She held me accountable, which I liked because it helped me to better myself as a student and person. She made school comfortable for me again just by smiling at me in the hallway, asking how my day has been and reaching out to my parents to inform them that I have been an amazing student – which at first I thought was odd, but then shortly realized was an awesome thing to do.”

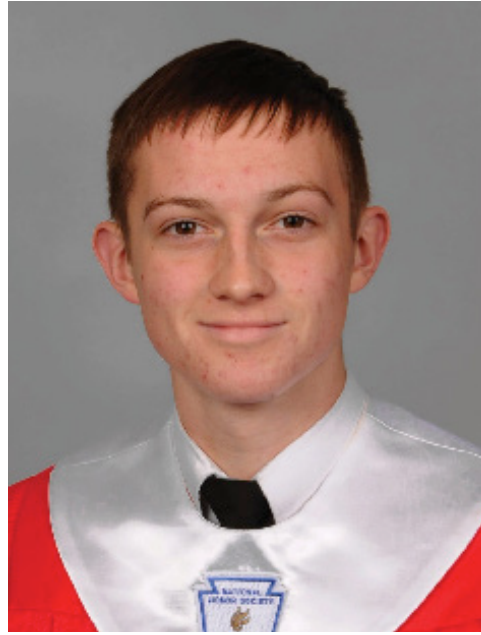
“I love her work ethic she was always on top of everything and when she was working on something, she always went the extra mile to make it the best for not just her, but for everybody.”

“Now that I am a senior in high school, I have started to realize that I am growing up and that I am becoming my own person. Without Ms. Dolgner, I wouldn’t have the confidence, bravery, structure, discipline and work ethic I have now. She has truly helped to show me the ropes in life and I will forever be grateful. Thank you, Ms. Dolgner, for making me the person I am today and for inspiring me to help others the way you helped me.”



**MICHELE
GEORGE**

Cedar Bayou Junior School
Previously at Gentry JS



**CALEB
ECHOLS**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

Caleb Echols wished to honor his seventh-grade writing teacher at Gentry Junior School, Michele George, for inspiring him to become a better student through her support and display of love for all her students.

Pulling him from class to ask him to consider moving from a regular writing class to a Pre-AP class, Mrs. George told Caleb that he was a talented student and a good writer.

“She believed Pre-AP would not only make me a better writer, but a better student. Although I did not care about my education in junior high, her belief in me made me believe I could do great things. When I got home, my father told me how Mrs. George called him and told him how talented I was and that I was bored being in regular because it was too easy for a student of my magnitude. I had chosen regular because I was already a grade ahead, so I felt as if I would be behind the other children being that I had skipped third grade and went through seven different elementary schools before I attended junior high. Moving around and being a grade ahead could have easily kept me from succeeding in school, but Mrs. George reassured my father and me that I had what it took to be successful student even if I did not see it at the time.”

“Most teachers never saw me as anything special. I was always the quiet, respectful student that did his work and never got in trouble. However, Mrs. George was the first teacher that made me feel as if I was an above adequate student. She made me realize that I could do anything with my academic career and succeed in it.”

“Mrs. George taught me many lessons that have carried on into my life outside of the classroom as well as in it. She helped us in learning to formulate our own opinions by having us read news articles and then write persuasive essays on them. Additionally, Mrs. George was always such a nice woman that it helped me understand the importance of being nice.”

“To her, I was not just another student, which is why I will never remember her as being just another teacher. Now, I am in the top 4% of my class and have taken two years of College English. I would not have been able to be as successful in school as I have been if I never had that simple push that Mrs. George presented to me. She truly had an impact on me and was one of the best teachers I ever had.”



**ROMAN
HUIZAR**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**TANIA
RODRIGUEZ**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

Tania Rodriguez nominated Roman Huizar, her soccer coach, for the Students Choice Awards.

“I have been coached by one of the most influential coaches for the past four years, Coach Huizar. I played almost every sport you can think of before I decided to focus on soccer and cross country coming into high school, and I have never met anyone as devoted to being a great coach as Coach Huizar. I could truthfully say that I have never experienced the amount of discipline that Coach Huizar instilled into the soccer program.”

“On that note, notice that every time I say ‘athlete,’ I also include the word ‘student.’ That is simply because Coach Huizar has always made it clear to us that it is our responsibility to take care of our classwork. ‘If you aren’t willing to work hard in the classroom, then you are not going to work hard on the field.’ Therefore, he expects all A’s and B’s from us, and he does not allow any failing players to be in the soccer program. Failing grades, bad behavior in class and on the practice fields, and even a tiny bit of trash left in the locker room calls for punishment.”

“On another note, he cares about us way beyond our ability to perform great on the field. He cares also about developing our character and in getting us ready for the real world. Finally, in a student-athlete point of view, he has made me a physically and mentally stronger athlete. Since my first cross country practice to my last competitive meet as a four-year varsity cross country runner, I knew I had achieved something that no one else could. This made me believe I could do anything if I just worked for it. He ran five miles, five times a week after school in the 95 degree weather just to prove that we could do it.”

“I achieved so much in both sports and on so many levels. On top of that, I am sitting at the top three percent of my class. I have over 140 service hours, 21 varsity medals and as of now, I have the highest leading record in goals. I have my coach to thank for all my achievements.”



**KIMBERLY
KELLEY**

Horace Mann Junior School



**STEPHANIE
PEREZ**

IMPACT Early College HS

Stephanie Perez nominated Kimberly Kelley, her seventh- and eighth-grade science teacher for the Students Choice Awards.

“She is what every teacher should aspire to be. Not only did she excel in teaching, she was also and still is one of the best friends I could ever ask for. My seventh-grade year, Ms. Kelley really got to know my crazy side. I would sit and do my work and do nothing at the same time. I had this talent of talking with anyone, even if I didn’t know them. She even tried to sit me by myself, and I would still manage to talk, but hey, I aced her class, so we were both doing something right.”

Stephanie found that her parents’ divorce was hard on her, since they suddenly couldn’t afford things, and she saw her mother less.

“Understandably, my character began to change. I’d keep my mouth shut, and when I did manage to say something, it was something negative. I was also around this time that I began to rebel against any sort of authority. I even went as far as dyeing my whole head red, just because my mother said I couldn’t get highlights. Then, when all was dark, Ms. Kelley came in like a beacon of light. She came to my desk one day and asked me to step outside. In all that time, no one had taken the time to talk to me. Ms. Kelley was the only one that asked me what was wrong.”

“Then, in a blink of an eye, Ms. Kelley not only helped me but also helped my family. Thanks to her, my mom found a cheaper lawyer to settle the divorce issue. She’s also responsible for getting me and my family into counseling. It is because of Ms. Kelley I also want to pursue a career in nursing. The ultimate goal is to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. I’ve always loved science, and Ms. Kelley helped with that, and I also want to help children like Ms. Kelley helped me. She made me see how special I was. She taught me something that all teachers should teach their students – self worth. I love you so much, Ms. Kelley, and when I help my first patient, I’ll be thinking of you.”



**AMY
MADDIE**

Ross S. Sterling High School



**ALEXANDRIA
LEE**

Ross S. Sterling HS

Alexandria Lee selected her superhero teacher, Amy Maddie, for the Students Choice Awards.

“Teachers are superheroes. I learned this at the beginning of my junior year of high school, as I stepped foot into my AP U.S. History class; however, I’m not confident at all that I will be able to put into words the impact this particular superhero had on me. Not only teaching me in-classroom subjects to an impeccable degree, Amy Maddie has also inspired me to become a teacher myself, all the while showing me the strength and influence that women who are confident in their abilities have on the people around them.”

“I have had the pleasure of sitting in Ms. Maddie’s class for almost two years now, so I can confidently say that when it comes to lecturing and getting her students to understand and retain information, she is unmatched. Everything is conveyed easily, thoughtfully and oftentimes there is some outlandish, hilarious story from history to back up her information.”

“However, it’s not only the classroom learning that is remarkable; she makes sure that she has a connection with us and she cares for each and every one of her students’ emotional wellbeing, getting to know us at a deeper level than simply, ‘I teach, you listen.’”

“My junior year of high school was hands-down the hardest year of my life, smacked in the face by a divorce and other uncontrollable things that mounted and mounted until I was crying every night and loathed the idea of even stepping out of my bed. My relationships with my friends were wavering, my home caught up in a riptide of pressure that topped both me and it over, and I couldn’t see any light in the tunnel at all, nonetheless at the end.”

“However, one thing that kept me getting up, kept me caring about my education, about my relationships, about my wellbeing, about my strength as a woman, and about my place in this big round world was Ms. Maddie’s eighth period AP U.S History class. I flourished and grew, I learned how to care for myself and my education, but most importantly, I learned that some superheroes don’t wear capes but instead write on Prometheans, teaching me about Greek art and the Civil War.”



**SHONNA
PRENTICE**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**GABRIELLA
LOPEZ**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

Gabriella Lopez honored her Pre-AP English II teacher, Shonna Prentice, by nominating her for the Students Choice Awards.

“In elementary school, I tended to get in trouble for talking too much during class. Moving on into high school, I started to try to try to be more focused on my studies, but I would try to have a good time in my classes as well. It was hard to balance school and my life outside of school. This soon became easier when I came into my third period Pre-AP English II class taught by Ms. Shonna Prentice.”

“Going into Ms. Prentice’s class I was skeptical at first because she seemed strict and it was intimidating. As class went along, I started to see the humor in the little things she would add during her lessons to keep us engaged. It really helped because I tend to get distracted easily especially with a lot of my friends in my class. Being that I am a very chatty individual, Ms. Prentice realized that quickly and tried to keep me more on track. One thing in particular that I loved is that she let us be ourselves in class and didn’t make us feel cautious about being ourselves. I started to talk to her more and get to know her more. At times when I would get stressed with school or life, I knew I could talk to her about it and get her very helpful advice.”

“On top of all that, sophomore year was a tough year for me because that was when my mom found out she had cancer. It was hard to go to school every day knowing she was in the hospital. It was hard to stay focused because I was so worried about my mother and my family. I believe I never told Ms. Prentice that I was going through this outside of school, but she made my class time with her so easy and enjoyable that the hard situations going on in my life would slip my mind for the 50 minutes I was in her class.”

“Even though she never knew she helped me more than she thought, it will always be an amazing thing I would look back on. I see Ms. Prentice every now and then at school and it brings me joy because in the back of my mind, I know she helped me get through my sophomore year.”



**JONATHAN
RICHARDS**

Robert E. Lee HS



**CHRISTINA
RODRIGUEZ**

Robert E. Lee HS

Christina Rodriguez selected her teacher, Jonathan Richards, for the Students Choice Awards due to the kindness and dedication he shared throughout his engineering classroom by focusing on academics and the personal character of his students.

“During my junior year, 2019, everyone became overwhelmed with the immense amount of AP classes in our schedules and the piles of homework received daily. Although it sharpened our academic skills, all students could feel the dread of attending school from the fear of gaining additional work to add onto their plates.”

“When I finally fell into the process of retrieving work and finishing it timely, my grandmother was diagnosed with metastatic kidney cancer, and while I know many have felt the pain of having a loved one struggle through cancer, Mr. Richards’ own journey from cancer was the hope I needed to get through the toughest days. Watching him receive treatment and eventually get stronger throughout the months built inspiration within me. My own strength and positivity flourished, initiating an appreciation for every moment I was blessed with to spend with friends and family.”

“Cancer has a way of drowning families in sorrow by inhibiting those directly affected, but Mr. Richards always showed up to class with a smile on his face and he put forth the effort to build relationships with his students by addressing them with complete kindness.”

“While engineering was interesting, I never tried to make it a priority until Mr. Richards incorporated captivating projects and assignments. My favorite project he gave us was the construction of a board game through the AutoCAD application. Overall, the passion and love for his students filled his presence. His devotion to us was obvious every single day. His selflessness was admirable because he never focused on just himself. He was able to share his journey with us, but he also made us all feel valued and appreciated to be in his classroom.”

“Seeing how he’s handled his process, I hope every day that my grandma can fight her cancer with the same strength and eloquence that Mr. Richards held each day he taught us.”



**KATHRINE
ROBINSON-HULL**

William B. Travis Elementary



**VICTORIA
GOMEZ**

Ross S. Sterling HS

Victoria Gomez looked back at her years in school to honor her elementary teacher at Travis Elementary, Kathrine Robinson-Hull.

“Looking back to my childhood and the many teachers who’ve influence my life and taken a big part of their day to educate the youth, there was one teacher that knocked their job out of the park. That teacher was Ms. Hull.”

“When I was a kid, I could be rambunctious and mischievous. Although we didn’t always deserve it, Ms. Hull always treated us with respect and talked to us like everyone else. She genuinely cared about our education.”

“I also have so much respect for her because of how she handled a situation when I was a child where I got into big trouble for forging. After he incident, my two other teachers I had at the time started treating me differently and I felt constantly ashamed for my bad deed. It seemed like my one mistake destroyed my good relationship and dynamic with my teachers. Although Ms. Hull never treated me differently and still loved me and she didn’t let my mistake change her view of me, and if it did, she didn’t show it.”

“Furthermore, she was a mother of three and pregnant at the time she was my teacher. It’s incredible that she dealt with a lot of the struggles of being a teacher and cared about all her students. She talked to us and would ask how we were doing. If we were overwhelmed or didn’t understand what we were learning, she would stop and help us individually instead of leaving us behind.”

“Ms. Hull was an incredible teacher who deeply cares about children’s education, treats every child the same and cares about each child’s wellbeing mentally.”



**JACKIE
SCALES**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**TAYLOR
RICHARDSON**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

Taylor Richardson chose to honor Jackie Scales, her freshman world geography and AVID teacher, for the Students Choice Awards.

“Being a part of Ms. Scales’ world geography class gave me the experience every incoming high school freshman should learn. As an incoming high school freshman, I was unaware of how to manage studying, homework and family correctly. Instead of dedicating parts of my time to certain aspects surrounding my life, I found myself drowning in my schoolwork and completely ignoring my responsibilities at home. Even though I spent an abundant amount of time studying for my classes, I struggled daily to make the grades that I expected out of myself. My first year of high school was definitely my roughest until I figured out how to study so that I was able to remember all of the information, which could not have been done without the constant help of Ms. Scales.”

“My older brother Troy was admitted to a hospital in Pennsylvania the week before finals because of his weak heart. We got the news that he was fighting the best he could, but that we should prepare ourselves for his passing. This was a drastic time for my family because of the distance between us and my brother, which led to my parents making the decision to travel and say their final goodbyes.”

“On May 18th, I got the news during my lunch that Troy had taken his last breath and was now no longer in pain. I informed my teachers of the situation and how I would be missing the last day of the school year due to Troy’s viewing and funeral. My teachers decided that I could take a final earlier so that I could still pass the year; however, Ms. Scales didn’t even think of a final for me. I remember her pulling me out of class and making sure that I was okay and informing me that I could always come talk to her.”

“Ms. Scales made it clear to me that in times like this, the main concern I should have is about my family and me. The words Ms. Scales gave me might have seemed like a small gesture of kindness to her, but the impact she made on me will be forever.”



**SHEILA
SOUTHALL**

San Jacinto Elementary



**SHELBY
TORRES**

Ross S. Sterling HS

Shelby Torres honored Sheila Southall, her teacher at San Jacinto Elementary, for the Students Choice Awards.

“Ms. Southall is absolutely the greatest teacher ever. She was always on top of what she was doing, but never forgot to ever stop caring and being that shoulder I knew I could cry on.”

“I remember elementary like it was yesterday, being so young and not having one care in the world. But to my surprise, I did have some complications and was usually upset a lot at school. Yet at the end of the day all my sadness changed when I was able to see the one person who made me laugh, which was Ms. Southall. I could be in the worst mood ever and all she had to do was call me ‘coconut head’ (the nickname she loved to call me) and instantly, I had the biggest smile on my face, which resulted in my day being great once again.”

“Once I left elementary, I felt an urge of sadness because the one teacher who made me smile every day was gone and there I was . . . facing middle school all alone with the fear of not hearing her jokes every day to make me feel reassured that I am okay. Although, there was a bright side, since my nieces happen to go to the same elementary school I went to. When I would go visit, I somehow always ended up seeing her and was able to catch up with her.”

“Ms. Southall, I cannot begin to thank you for the amount of happiness and strength you have given me. You constantly showed me there was always something to fight for. Our talks are constantly going through my head and giving me the hope that I can be someone great. I remember that talk we had about you wanting to travel the world, well, I couldn’t agree with you more than anything! You deserve to see the world, not because traveling is fun, but because you have given the greatest gift anyone could ever ask for. That gift is you. Thank you for making me who I am today and showing me that my greatest superpower is to just be me. As I end my last semester, I will be graduating soon. I hope that you are proud of who I’ve become. It’s because of you. You have shaped many students into the best version of themselves and I am forever grateful that you had a big part in my life.”



**CLEMENCIA
VIGIL**

Robert E. Lee HS



**SAM
BALANDRAN**

Robert E. Lee HS

Sam Balandran chose his Spanish teacher, Clemencia Vigil, for the Students Choice Awards.

“A good teacher can teach you something that you will remember for a day, but a great teacher will teach you something that you will remember for the rest of your life. A teacher can influence many important characteristics in a person’s life. They help mold a shape a person’s personality, and oftentimes, their future. They can teach you the importance of trust and being trustworthy. A teacher should also be able to recognize each student as an individual. I was lucky enough to find all of these qualities in my Spanish teacher, Ms. Vigil.”

“Ms. Vigil has influenced who I am as a person. She has taught me to work hard and always do my best. I would describe her as always being happy and cheerful. It doesn’t matter what my mood is before I walk into her classroom, because she will always bring a smile to my face. She demonstrates kindness and patience to each and every student in her class. Another important thing that she has taught me is to believe in myself. When a teacher believes in you, you cannot help but work even harder, which only leads to success. I hope that throughout the rest of my life I can demonstrate the same great qualities that I find in her.”

“Having these characteristics would mean nothing if she weren’t also trustworthy. Knowing that there is someone there who will listen to you makes all the difference in the world. Ms. Vigil takes her time to get to know each student as an individual. She takes pride in finding out how to help each student excel in their own way. She uses various teaching styles in an effort to reach the needs of everyone in her class. This year, I am a teacher’s aide in her class, and this experience has given me insight into how well her teaching styled helps her students succeed.”

“The lessons that Ms. Vigil has taught me are invaluable. Not only have they strengthened the foundation of my life, they are the building blocks of my future. She did not need to influence me to be a rocket scientist or brain surgeon, but she has influenced me to become the best at anything that I set out to be.”

GOOSE CREEK CISD



EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

STUDENTS
Choice AWARDS