



GOOSE CREEK CISD
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

STUDENTS
Choice

A W A R D S B A N Q U E T



Tuesday, April 20, 2021
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GOOSE CREEK CISD



PROGRAM

AGENDA

Introduction Erika Foster

Welcome Ronnie Hotchkiss

Pledge Christina Butcher

Invocation Jim Wadzinski

DINNER

Superintendent's Remarks Dr. Randal O'Brien

Student and Teacher Video GCCISD Communications Dept.

Recognition of Students and Teachers Susan Harper

Erika Foster

Dr. Randal O'Brien

Education Foundation Board

Closing Erika Foster

GOOSE CREEK CISD
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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GOOSE CREEK CISD
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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MORE THAN \$1 MILLION

BENEFITING GOOSE CREEK CISD

The Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation is proud to honor our 12th 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 2021 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 12 years.



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> or by scanning the QR code on the left.

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

AWARD WINNERS

TEACHER-STUDENT

Lizzet Austin (Alamo El) – Ninfa Diaz (REL)

Andrea Bechtel (REL) – Emily Navarro (REL)

Betty Benskin (RSS) – Charvel Chavis (RSS)

Sally Black (GCM) – Pranav Gupta (GCM)

Jeremy Bledsoe (RSS) Alyssa Caserma (RSS)

Tara Fountain (Gentry JS) – Chantal Torres (RSS)

Fortino Guajardo (GCM) – Geovanni Resendez-Sustaita (GCM)

Ashley Hillin (RSS) – Dakota Jacobs (RSS)

Debbie Himsel (GCM) – Rylie Parker (GCM)

Austin Holmelin (RSS) – Mark Contreras (RSS)

Jennifer Laubach (GCM) – Samantha Hillier (GCM)

Christina Marioneaux (Gentry JS) – Katherine Cash (GCM)

Denise Pumphrey (Walker El) – Zachary Fernandez (GCM)

Jerry Shafer (PE Hyland Center) – Samantha Cortez (GCM)
Formerly of Baytown Junior School

Sandra Whitley (RSS) – Sophie Stults (RSS)



LIZZET AUSTIN

ALAMO ELEMENTARY



NINFA DIAZ

ROBERT E. LEE HS

Robert E. Lee High School senior, **Ninfa Diaz**, honored her elementary teacher, **Lizzet Austin**, by nominating her for the Students Choice Awards.

“The school I went to was Alamo Elementary Elementary, and I was in third grade when Mrs. Austin was my teacher. As I was remembering and thinking about which teachers had an impact in my life, I immediately thought of her. Throughout my school experience, I considered many teachers and staff members from the different schools I attended who helped me with my academic journey. However, I chose to nominate Mrs. Austin because I feel that she went above and beyond to help her students learn.

I would describe her as helpful – she always made our lessons fun and interesting, and she cared if her students were learning. At least, that’s how I think of her. I won’t make assumptions, but I’m sure she had to deal with problems in her personal life, but despite that, she was always happy and had a positive attitude. I will tell a couple of anecdotes that I remember while I was her student. Mrs. Austin would make the class laugh and, therefore, I enjoyed her class.

In third grade, I remember that we were getting prepared to take the state STAAR test, and we had to learn a lot of things that were unknown to all of us. Mrs. Austin made it easier for me to learn what was expected in order to successfully pass the test. I can also say that she would care about her students, because one day I went to school, and I was feeling a little sick. I think I might have had fever. When I got to class, I headed towards my seat, and she asked me later that morning if something was wrong. I don’t remember for sure what I answered. She told me, I hope you feel better, or something along those lines. I’m not too sure, but little gestures like those are what made her different and unique from other teachers.

Mrs. Austin’s dedication is what made her stand out and have an impact in my life. The things that I remember from when I was in her class had an impact in my academic experience because they taught me to always try my best. As I went on to fourth, fifth and sixth grade, and so on, I found useful what she had taught our class.

Roughly, nine years have passed since then, but I remember her because I would always have fun in her class, and it really didn’t feel like I was pressured to learn in a hard way. It was really exciting for me to have her as a teacher because I knew that I would learn new things. She encouraged her students to work hard, and that’s what I’ve done. There aren’t many teachers like Mrs. Austin. Overall, there are really amazing teachers throughout the Goose Creek district, but I will always remember Mrs. Austin and the good times I had while she was my teacher.”



ANDREA BECHTEL

ROBERT E. LEE HS



EMILY NAVARRO

ROBERT E. LEE HS

Andrea Bechtel, STEM teacher and Robotics coach at Robert E. Lee High School, was nominated by **Emily Navarro** for the Students Choice Awards.

“I would like to nominate Andrea Bechtel as a teacher who has made a positive impact on my educational experience. She has exemplified the quality traits of what a prepared, dedicated and caring teacher should be.

My freshman year of high school, I just knew Ms. Bechtel as the other teacher in the STEM hall and had no clue of who she was. Then, my sophomore year I joined the FRC Robotics Club and she became one of my coaches. This was the year that changed me more and increased my passion for engineering. I walked into Robotics not having a clue what I was doing or what I was going to be doing, but Ms. Bechtel took me under her wing and made me feel welcome. If it weren't for her benevolent characteristics, I probably would have quit Robotics faster than I could say, yeehaw. She is the reason I didn't give up on Robotics, which I have been involved in for a quantitative amount of three enriching, joyous, exciting and eye-opening years.

Furthermore, I had the great pleasure of having Ms. Bechtel not only as a Robotics coach, but as a STEM teacher. Additionally, during my junior year, I had no interest in any type of environmental engineering in my future, but that was what the course was going to be based on. I wasn't excited about it as much as being in the previous STEM courses I had been in, but fortunately, Ms. Bechtel made the class fun and enjoyable. She had impacted the way I viewed situations like that.

‘Ms. Bechtel! Ms. Bechtel!’ I call on her for everything and anything I can annoy and bother her about still knowing she'll always put up with me. She is the teacher who wears crazy, colorful wigs or matches with her skeleton on school spirit dress-up days – the teacher who is always prepared, the teacher who undoubtedly has a snack laying around, the teacher who created my nickname Em, the teacher who always has the most hectic schedule but still manages, and the teacher who always sticks around to listen. I have learned from her that it is okay to embrace who you truly are, which I have. It is okay to have an extra charger packed, because I may need it. It is okay to have a full schedule and no days off, because she knows I can handle it. Lastly, it is okay to not enjoy something at first, but not to just scratch the surface of it and, instead, trust and explore.

Overall, I thank her for the impact she has had on my educational experience and saved me from having a later regret of possibly missing out on all the lifelong memories I have created and all the enriching moments I have gained.”



BETTY BENSKIN

ROSS S. STERLING HS



CHARVEL CHAVIS

ROSS S. STERLING HS

Charvel Chavis, a senior at Ross S. Sterling High School, nominated **Betty Benskin** for the Students Choice Awards.

“My ninth and eighth grade years of school were the best for me yet. The reason that I think these two years were the best for me was because of the teachers. I felt as if they were my parents. They used to look out for me all the time, and they never let me have the opportunity to fail. Although they gave us a lot of work, it paid off in the long run.

I remember it was this one time when I had made AB Honor Roll, Mrs. Benskin got me doughnuts. I told my parents, and they were so thankful for what she did. After that day, I looked at Mrs. Benskin different. She made me feel as if I were one of her kids. She never treated me or any one of her students wrong.

Another reason Mrs. Benskin was a very good teacher was because when I couldn't understand something, she had a special time in class. She would come to every individual student to help them. I felt very special at that point. I understand things better when the teacher is talking to only me. Undivided attention is one of the best feelings in the world to me – it showed so much respect. She made sure I was on top of all my classes, not just her class. Mrs. Benskin is a teacher I will never forget because of the way she treated her students. I am very thankful that I met a teacher like her.

Till this day, Mrs. Benskin has a spot in my heart. I forever think I will remember her because of her style of teaching. I am not the smartest in math, but because of the way she taught, she made it seem fun and interesting. If I could recommend a math tutor, it would most definitely be Mrs. Benskin. When I see her in the hallways, we usually speak, and I give her a hug, and I always tell her, ‘Thank you.’ She responds, ‘Why?’ I say, ‘For all the help you gave me’, and she just smiles. I know when I tell her that it makes her feel special in a way.”



SALLY BLACK

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



PRANAV GUPTA

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Pranav Gupta's nomination for the Students Choice Awards is his pre-calculus teacher, **Sally Black**.

"Even though I had Mrs. Black as a teacher my sophomore year of high school, our relationship started a good time before that year. I knew Mrs. Black long before she learned to say my name correctly (which wasn't until midway through my 10th grade year in pre-cal). During my eighth-grade year, the friends I had in high school urged me to join Key Club. They always gave me three reasons as to why I should join:

1. You'll learn to be a better person.
2. It will look great on college applications.
3. Mrs. Black.

Every time I heard Mrs. Black's name, words such as 'charismatic' and 'caring' would always follow. So, I followed the advice of my friends and joined Key Club. Immediately, she welcomed me and the other freshmen with open arms. Usually, people have a tough time transitioning to high school, but Mrs. Black made it easy. I learned to grow as a person and lead others with the intentions to serve those less fortunate.

I was fortunate enough to have Mrs. Black for my remaining years of high school. I will not lie, every day I walked into that class I was extremely confused. But I was also challenged and excited to learn new things. Along with teaching, Mrs. Black was still my advisor for Key Club, where I also learned new things. Whether it was math or leadership, I was guaranteed a new lesson every day that I was with Mrs. Black."

Mrs. Black also supported Pranav during his time as lieutenant governor of Key Club, and she kept a secret for several months about a Kiwanis Club award Pranav was going to receive just to make sure it was a surprise. Even through difficult times, as Mrs. Black's house flooded during Hurricane Harvey, she remained strong. Through Pranav's junior year, his calculus class and Key Club were the only bright spots. Then came his senior year.

"I had to choose between calculus and statistics, but Mrs. Black let the counselor know that she would be fine with me being in her Calculus AB class. At the beginning of this year, she let my two friends and me taking BC know that she would teach us after school so that she could teach both us and her AB class. I would like to say that I was shocked as to how someone could sacrifice their personal time off the clock to teach just three students. I wasn't, though, because I knew the sacrifices that Mrs. Black is willing to make for the betterment of her students.

We started this year off strong, designing service projects and giving back to the community during this horrible time and pandemic. I've learned and am continuing to learn how to lead, how to learn, how to care, how to have fun and much, much more from Mrs. Black. I cannot emphasize enough how invaluable my years of high school and my experiences with Mrs. Black have been. Mrs. Black is a role model for me and who I hope to become."



JEREMY BLEDSOE

ROSS S. STERLING HS



ALYSSA CASERMA

ROSS S. STERLING HS

Jeremy Bledsoe, Ross S. Sterling High School choir director, was nominated by **Alyssa Caserma** for the Students Choice Awards.

“These last few years of high school have been a serious time of growth and finding who I am not only as a vocalist but as an almost full-fledged adult. I can honestly say that Mr. Bledsoe has been one of my saving graces. Mr. Bledsoe always shows how supportive and understanding he is about not only grace with assignments but also shaping us into adults that can make our own decisions. Bledsoe has accepted me when I was at my lowest, although he may not know it. I think that if I hadn’t made Meistersingers last year, I would have definitely had a breaking point. Mr. Jeremy Bledsoe welcomed me into the program with open arms and an open heart, which is the saving grace I needed.

Moving from Bellaire High School to Sterling impacted me greatly. I felt like the ache from the thought of starting over new, a new school and new friends, would never go away. It’s always hard to move away from everything you know, but Mr. Bledsoe made the transition easier. I never had the chance to doubt Sterling because from the moment I walked into my homeroom class, I knew I was home. Choir has been one of the few places I have formed lifetime friendships and bonds.

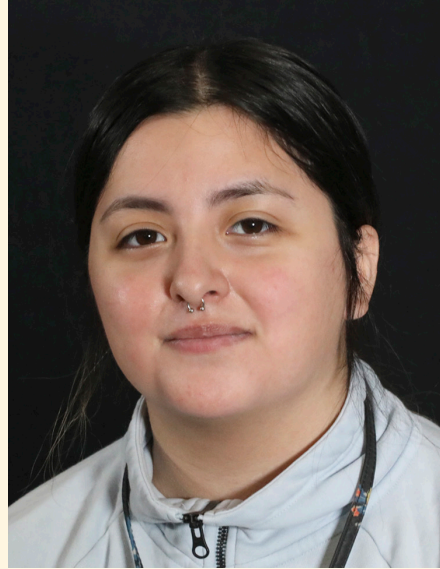
In choir, Mr. Bledsoe has taught many valuable life lessons, such as accountability, confidence, stress management, to become the best you can be and to strive for excellence. These life lessons have pushed me to fully immerse myself into living my best life with no regrets and high hopes. One of my favorite things about Mr. Bledsoe is that he is always and has always been so understanding. He cares so much that it upsets him to see us fail, but he always helps us up and makes us feel as though we aren’t alone.

Mr. Bledsoe has been a shining star in the darkness, a lingering presence and an amazing choir director, who has, in these two years, become a part of my family. Throughout the COVID season, Mr. Bledsoe has been through a lot. He’s had obstacles thrown at him from every direction and has never failed to get everything done. He is positive, caring, hardworking and real. I have never met a teacher who cares as much about his students and the adults we are to become than Mr. Bledsoe. I appreciate this teacher more than he will probably ever know.”



TARA FOUNTAIN

GENTRY JUNIOR SCHOOL



CHANTAL TORRES

ROSS S. STERLING HS

Ross S. Sterling High School's **Chantal Torres** chose **Tara Fountain**, her sixth-grade social studies teacher at Gentry Junior School, as her nominee for the Students Choice Awards.

"In sixth grade, I moved schools after Christmas break. On my first day, I was given a tour by a few other students. They said I could eat lunch with them. But when lunchtime came, I couldn't build up the courage to approach them. My aunt was the secretary at the front office, so I went and had lunch with her. Seventh period came and I had social studies. I had Mrs. Fountain and she was really nice. I immediately felt very comfortable, and I wasn't shy anymore, at least in that class.

She sat next to me and made sure I understood the work, and she asked me what school I was from, what's my favorite school subject, and stuff like that. A couple of days went by and I still didn't really have any friends yet, and I couldn't have lunch with my aunt anymore. Mrs. Fountain went to the cafeteria to get a lunch. She saw me and walked over to me. She asked me why I was sitting by myself, and I said that I didn't have anyone to sit with. She told me to get my lunch and my stuff. I followed her and she directed me to a table where a group of girls was sitting. She told me to ask them if I could sit with them. I told her it was fine and that I could sit by myself. So, she asked them for me, they said yes, and she told them to be nice to me. I was shy enough as it was, but I sat down and she left. The girls were really nice, though. I had lunch with them every day after that. I really appreciated that she went out of her way to make sure I was comfortable and I was making friends. Every day I looked forward to going to her class. Throughout seventh and eighth grade, I would go visit her classroom all the time.

Last day of middle school was a fun day, and there were parts of the school where kids were playing board games, watching movies or play video games, etc. I spent the whole day in her class. She signed my yearbook and wrote a really nice letter in it. I have not seen her since then, but she will always be really special to me and will always be my favorite teacher."



**FORTINO
GUAJARDO**

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



**GEOVANNI
RESENDEZ-SUSTAITA**

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Geovanni Resendez-Sustaita has not been in GCCISD long, but he still had some teachers who impacted his life, which is why he chose to nominate **Fortino Guajardo** for the Students Choice Awards.

“The teacher whom I’m typing this letter about is Fortino Guajardo, aka Mr. T, welding teacher at Goose Creek Memorial High School. From the first time I met him, he’s been so honest, has nothing to hide and was very respectful, and to some people like me, respect means everything. He’s talked to me about past jobs that he had, and it gives me motivation on what I can do in my future. He sat me down and listened to what I had to say. He also comes from a very rough background, just like me, and I guess that’s where we can relate-both growing up in a very hard position in life and seeing what other people can accomplish gives you a sense of hope on what you can do, and that is what I use as motivation.

Mr. T is not like the teachers who just give you the work and let you do it on your own—he explains every detail, shows how to do it and is very safe with all work. Not only does he show us how to weld but he teaches us safety and how much it matters. He shows us what to expect if that’s the career route you want to choose. Mr. T set a huge example for students to follow. I remember him showing us what he invested his money into, making all of the boys in his class work harder every day. We set little friendly competitions, which got pretty intense, just to have bragging rights for the rest of the class period. But those competitions were not just to see who does the best, they were to see everyone try their best to see where we could be if we try hard enough. He showed us if we always feel like a competition, you’ll always try your hardest, and even if it’s not the best in class, it’s your personal best, which means you’re pushing yourself to the best you that you can be.

I am greatly appreciative for Fortino Guajardo. Thank you for being the impact in my life without knowing it. If you ever read this or hear about this, just know everything you demonstrated to me won’t be forgotten.”



ASHLEY HILLIN

ROSS S. STERLING HS



DAKOTA JACOBS

ROSS S. STERLING HS

Ashley Hillin from Ross S. Sterling High School was nominated for the Students Choice Awards by her student **Dakota Jacobs**.

"All through my high school years, I've had a lot of problems with teachers and could never get along with them really, except a few. My sophomore year was really hard. I thought I was going to fail and have to stress more about my grades until I got really close with my physics teacher, Ms. Hillin. She was one of my best teachers, because she always knew when something was wrong and she cared. She didn't let you leave in a bad mood.

Anytime I had problems, she was like my counselor, honestly. She always told me to think positive and to keep pushing no matter what obstacles came towards me. She brought me up when I needed help with any class even if she didn't know anything about the class or subject. She tried her best to help me and make sure I graduated when the time came. She would always tell me to get to class when she saw me in the halls, and she was like a best friend, but she knew the teacher role, of course, but she didn't ever have a mean attitude.

I always thought physics was going to be hard, but she made it amazing and so easy. It actually made sense to me – she made everything make sense to me. She always went the easy way and she was so positive. She always had a smile on her face and was always yelling, but not in a bad way – it was all good and positive, she just spoke really loudly. I just loved the positivity she gave out. It helped me out a lot, especially since I was such a negative person in the past. She taught me to be bright and positive about things and not to let them get to me as bad as I did.

Ms. Hillin will always be my favorite and the best teacher I've ever had. She will always have my respect, and if she would ever need help, I would totally help her, no questions asked."



DEBBIE HIMSEL

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



RYLIE PARKER

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Rylie Parker from Goose Creek Memorial High School chose to honor her Principles of Health Science teacher, **Debbie Himsel**, by nominating her for the Students Choice Awards.

“I met Mrs. Himsel my sophomore year of high school in Principles of Health Science. Immediately after meeting her, I felt the most comfortable and homey feeling, and I knew it was going to be a great year. She reminded me of my own grandma (which I later found out they had the same birthday), and she always made me feel safe.

I didn't really know what I was doing or what I wanted to do with my career, but I knew it had something to do with healthcare, which led me to taking the class. Later in the year, I had a major spinal fusion, which left me with two rods and 28 screws in my back. I was a competitive cheerleader all my life and also on the cheer team at Goose Creek Memorial HS, so going from the sky being the limit to zero mobility took a huge toll on me in every way. I could not go to school for a while, but when I got back to school, I looked forward to her class every single day!

My junior year came along super fast and I was now in clinicals. I mentioned in Mrs. Himsel's class that I had a passion for nursing homes and elderly people, and immediately she got with the Rollingbrook Nursing Home and got me in. I had so much fun at the nursing home and I loved the experience so much.

We entered a pandemic towards the end of my sophomore year and I lost all motivation. I was depressed and I had been through a lot, and not being able to go to school and see my favorite teacher was tremendously hard. I wasn't doing my work, and my mom was going to meet Mrs. Himsel. She had never met any teacher, but she knew she had to meet Mrs. Himsel because of how much she was helping me.

We went into online school and I was failing all of my classes. I was lying down in my bed when I heard a knock on my door. My mom went and opened the door, and it was Mrs. Himsel! She cared so much about me that she had to make sure I was okay because I wasn't doing my work. Today, as a senior in high school, I still go by. She will never even know the impact she's had on me. She is truly an angel, and such an inspiration. Her faith and values are infectious and I truly believe I wouldn't have gotten this far if it weren't for her.”



AUSTIN HOLMELIN

ROSS S. STERLING HS



MARK CONTRERAS

ROSS S. STERLING HS

Mark Contreras, a senior from Ross S. Sterling High School, honored his English teacher, **Austin Holmelin**, by nominating her for the Students Choice Awards.

“You made a huge impact on me, because you always wanted the best for me and all your students. Every day, you tried to bring out the best in me and be involved in whatever lesson you were teaching that day. Although I wasn’t the smartest in the class, you sure did teach me a lot and made me want to learn more every day. That class, hands down, made my sophomore year good just because it was so fun, and all of my classmates vibed with one another.

My sophomore year of high school in my English class was probably the best year of the four years I’ve been in high school – not because we didn’t do as much work as other classes, but because no matter what the assignment was, you always tried to make it fun. I just thought English was so boring because we had to read, write essays, learn new grammar, etc. All that stuff was lame to me.

Even though I still had to do that, you taught me in a way that made English fun for me and made me want to actually show up to class, because you know I hardly showed up to any of my classes (lol). You went out of your way to help me catch back up with all my missing assignment, and you did that with other students as well. That’s one of things I admired about you – how you were so flexible with all your students. You even gave multiple opportunities to students who failed exams the chance to pass, but you helped them learn their mistakes on the way.

Believe when I say this, I wish all teachers were more like you. Maybe students would look forward to coming to school just to be in your class. Another reason why you had an impact on my life is because you always kept it real with me. If I were on the verge of failing, you would help me out and tell me what I needed to do to pass your class. Not just that, but you made sure every one of your students was good outside of your classroom. I remember you always greeted us at the door with a smile, and if you sensed something was wrong, you would pull us to the side and have a conversation with us. I don’t know if you remember, but that’s what you did with me when I was going through a tough time and you helped me see the brighter side of things and helped me push through the rest of my sophomore year.

You will always have a special place in my heart, Mrs. Holmelin. You helped out a lot in school, and when you could, outside of school. I hope you and your family have been safe throughout the pandemic. After I graduate high school, I hope to run into you somewhere to see how you are. You will forever be one of the greatest teachers in my life. Keep being you, Mrs. Holmelin.”



JENNIFER LAUBACH

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



SAMANTHA HILLIER

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Samantha Hillier from Goose Creek Memorial High School nominated her English teacher, **Jennifer Laubach**, for the Students Choice Awards.

“I am writing this letter to inform you about an extraordinary teacher who made coming to school something to look forward to each day: this teacher is Mrs. Laubach. She created such a positive and inviting environment in her classroom each day that made me excited to go to school.

Throughout my life, I had never really enjoyed English class. I always enjoyed science or math, where the directions and rules were exact and there was always a certain way to get the answer if you followed the right steps. She made me see English in a whole new perspective, and I was able to appreciate the literature and all the different aspects of it that she taught us. Going into Mrs. Laubach’s room provided a space where I could feel comfortable and be able to express myself. She allowed the class to be extremely collaborative and we were able to speak up when we had questions or we agreed or even disagreed on something.

Mrs. Laubach not only has amazing character, she was also an outstanding educator to me. English went from being my least favorite to my favorite subject. In English II, you take your last English STAAR test, which I excelled at thanks to her teaching. Her continuous support and encouragement throughout the year gave me the motivation to keep going to achieve my goals even after I was finished with her class. Her dedication to me and all of the rest of her students is inspiring and she deserves every good thing that comes her way.”



CHRISTINA MARIONEAUX

GENTRY JUNIOR SCHOOL



KATHERINE CASH

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Gentry Junior School Orchestra teacher/director, **Christina Marioneaux**, was nominated by **Katherine Cash**, a senior at Goose Creek Memorial, for the Students Choice Awards.

"I met Mrs. Marioneaux in my sixth-grade year when I decided to join orchestra. I had initially joined orchestra with no intention of remaining in the program for all three years of junior high. I would get my fine arts credit and get out, but Mrs. Marioneaux changed my attitude.

Orchestra quickly became my family at school as did the Marioneauxs. The program Mrs. Marioneaux led helped me grow as a person and become the leader I am today. I grew to become the president of the Orchestra Council at Gentry Junior School all with the help of Mrs. M pushing me along. She pushed me to be the best person I could be, all while teaching me to play the bass. She pushed me out of my comfort level, which forced me to grow as a person and a musician. When freshman year rolled around, I auditioned and joined the Baytown Symphony Orchestra, with the Marioneauxs cheering me on the whole way. Mrs. Marioneaux believed I could do anything I set my mind to.

My high school orchestra experience has been nowhere near textbook. From a sudden change in directors to a deadly pandemic, my enthusiasm as a musician started to fade, but Mrs. Marioneaux's belief in me never did. She would always reach out to me and see how I was during and reassure me that everything would work out in the end, even if she didn't even know herself. Even after I was no longer in her classroom, she was still inspiring me to do more. I could hear her voice telling me to do better and that I know better: and that I would figure it out. I always knew she was just one phone call away if I ever needed anything.

The unwavering faith Mrs. Marioneaux had in my success, not just as a musician, but as a person, created an everlasting sense of confidence in myself. Walking into her orchestra room as a sixth-grader changed my life. I found my passion for music and tremendously grew as a leader. Now, I am going to college to pursue a career in becoming an orchestra director, hoping that one day I can have the same positive impact on a student that Mrs. Marioneaux had on me."



DENISE PUMPHREY

VICTORIA WALKER ELEMENTARY



ZACHARY FERNANDEZ

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Zachary Fernandez from Goose Creek Memorial High School honored his elementary teacher, **Denise Pumphrey** from Victoria Walker Elementary, by nominating her for the Students Choice Awards.

“When describing the perfect teacher, one may think of some (or all) of the following characteristics: engaging, motivating, understandable, relatable, and most importantly, caring. I believe that Mrs. Pumphrey exemplifies all these characteristics, as she truly was (and is) a teacher that drastically changed my outlook on life in the most positive ways possible. I’ve had her twice, once in second grade, and the other in fifth, so please be ready, as it may take a while to explain just how much she has done for me.

Following my first-grade year, I had lost my grandfather and become legally blind in one eye (due to a cataract). Furthermore, I began developing a disease known as Henoch-Schonlein Purpura (HSP), which made my skin break out into hives and made every minute of my day unbearable and irritating. As a second-grade kid, I had no idea how to cope with all these obstacles that life so viciously threw in my way, that was, until I met Mrs. Pumphrey. When I spoke to her, whether it be about our founding fathers or about multiplying double-digit numbers, I could tell that she truly cared. This distracted me from all of the turmoil in my life and made me feel as if there wasn’t a problem in the world. As for curriculum, the jump from my first grade to second grade education felt substantial; I practically learned five times as much. Going into the GATE program felt very overwhelming at first, but Mrs. Pumphrey’s no-nonsense approach to the teaching side made my sponge of a brain absorb every last detail she threw at me. I’ll never forget the excitement she expressed once her students understood the concepts. Overall, my second-grade year was saved due to Mrs. Pumphrey’s dedication and kindness, and my mood went from very sad to through-the-roof happy.

As for fifth grade, I did learn a lot curriculum-wise, but the greatest education she gave to me was in the form of respect and eristics. In between the years I had her, I became that of a smart-Alec (that’s the kind way of putting it) and tended to have “verbal disagreements” with my teachers from time-to-time. Safe to say that it all ended when I had her again. She essentially taught me that not every point someone makes should be dissected and objected to, and if I live my life like that, I’ll have a tough time socializing and making friends (which I was having trouble with at the time). After she taught me this, I found myself making many more friends and being more liked in general. If it wasn’t for her teaching me the difference between a respectful debate and a contemptuous argument, I’d definitely be a different (and worse) person today.

Overall, Mrs. Pumphrey made my life better and made me a better person as well.”



JERRY SHAFER

PETER E. HYLAND CENTER
FORMERLY BAYTOWN JS



SAMANTHA CORTEZ

GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS

Samantha Cortez, a senior at Goose Creek Memorial High School, nominated her seventh-grade English teacher, **Jerry Shafer**, for the Students Choice Awards.

“I’m writing this letter because I would like to bring attention to my middle school seventh-grade English teacher, Mr. Shafer.

Because throughout my whole education career I have always been a slow learner. Not only, but back then, English was not my top best subject. Mr. Shafer noticed that my grades were not as good as they should have been, and he decided it would be best for me to come in for tutoring. During the tutoring, he would break down the material to where I could understand it more. Of course, at the time, and I say this with true honesty, I didn’t know if it was making any difference in my grades until he called us up to his desk for our grades like he always has and he told me, ‘Good job.’ ”

She continued to go to tutoring and was invited to an end-of-the-year ceremony.

“Now I have never been to a school ceremony before or if I have it was back in elementary school. The ceremony began and I heard my name called. At first, I was so confused but I had won a certificate of excellence award, which was a total surprise to me because I had no idea about it. But towards the left side of me is Mr. Shafer with a medal in his hands, and he says, ‘This is for all your hard work this year,’ as he puts the medal around my neck. I had never been so excited in my life before. That was the first medal I have ever received.

But I say this because Mr. Shafer showed me and helped me understand that if you put extra time and effort into something that it’s possible to achieve great things. And I’m never going to forget that because to this day that medal is still the only medal I have hanging in my room. But that medal has made me grow into a person with more confidence in my knowledge because throughout high school I have taken all dual credit programs. I have been a part of a dual credit program called Logistics with Lee College. This semester in my senior year I have one last college class to complete, and at the beginning of May, I hope to graduate with an associate degree in Logistics Supply Chain Management. Never in my mind would I have thought that I would finish high school and college at the same time.

Mr. Shafer, I want to thank you because you had faith in me and let me prove to myself that the knowledge in me is greater than I imagined.”



SANDRA WHITLEY

ROSS S. STERLING HS



SOPHIE STULTS

ROSS S. STERLING HS

Sophie Stults from Ross S. Sterling High School honored her OnRamps pre-calculus teacher, **Sandra Whitley**, as a Students Choice Awards nominee.

“For the majority of my time as a Goose Creek student, I’ve absolutely hated math. In elementary school, it took me two whole years to learn how to long divide. In junior high, I dreaded every math class I had even if I was doing well in the class. It didn’t matter if I had a good or bad grade in the class because I loathed math and it loathed me. Some of this mutual loathing even continued into my first two years of high school and made me question my aspirations of becoming an engineer. Fortunately, my relationship with math took a turn for the better when I took OnRamps pre-calculus with Mrs. Whitley my junior year.

While previous teachers made it palatable, Mrs. Whitley was the first teacher I had that really helped me change my outlook on math. Instead of a problem I had to grit my teeth through, her pre-calculus and AP Calculus classes helped me see math as a puzzle that can help me better understand the world around me. Part of this change may be attributed to how she made me feel more comfortable about asking questions. She was always so understanding when I was confused and didn’t make me feel guilty for asking what I thought were stupid questions.

My previous struggles in math were detrimental to my self-confidence. I’ve always taken pride in being intelligent, so having all A’s in every class except math class had irked me since elementary school. Since I wanted to become an engineer after college, having math as my worst subject made me concerned that I wouldn’t be smart enough to make it in a STEM field. Seeing my progress on math after being in Mrs. Whitley’s classes has made me more confident in my abilities and my future as an engineer. I’ve recently been admitted into UT Austin’s School of Engineering as an environmental engineering major, and I don’t think I could have done it without her classes.

While I’ve had many great teachers during my years as a Goose Creek student, Mrs. Whitley has definitely had the largest impact on my relationship with math and my self-confidence. Great teachers can make a subject I enjoy even better, but it takes a phenomenal teacher to take a subject I despise and turn it into one of my favorites.”



LIZZET AUSTIN
ALAMO ELEMENTARY



NINFA DIAZ
ROBERT E. LEE HS



ANDREA BECHTEL
ROBERT E. LEE HS



EMILY NAVARRO
ROBERT E. LEE HS



BETTY BENSKIN
ROSS S. STERLING HS



CHARVEL CHAVIS
ROSS S. STERLING HS



SALLY BLACK
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



PRANAV GUPTA
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



JEREMY BLEDSOE
ROSS S. STERLING HS



ALYSSA CASERMA
ROSS S. STERLING HS



TARA FOUNTAIN
GENTRY JUNIOR SCHOOL



CHANTAL TORRES
ROSS S. STERLING HS



FORTINO GUAJARDO
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



GEOVANNI RESENDEZ-SUSTAITA
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



ASHLEY HILLIN
ROSS S. STERLING HS



DAKOTA JACOBS
ROSS S. STERLING HS



DEBBIE HIMSEL
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



RYLIE PARKER
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



AUSTIN HOLMELIN
ROSS S. STERLING HS



MARK CONTRERAS
ROSS S. STERLING HS



JENNIFER LAUBACH
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



SAMANTHA HILLIER
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



CHRISTINA MARIONEAUX
GENTRY JUNIOR SCHOOL



KATHERINE CASH
GOOSE CREEK MEMORIAL HS



DENISE PUMPHREY
VICTORIA WALKER ELEMENTARY



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