

GOOSE CREEK CISD
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

STUDENTS'
Choice

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

Tuesday, April 2, 2024
IMPACT Early College High School

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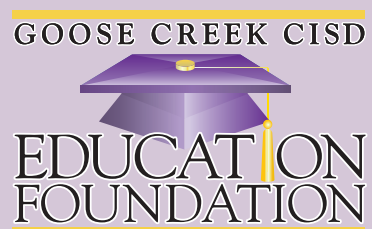
Awards & Engraving

Hotchkiss Disposal Service, Ltd.

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PROGRAM

AGENDA

Introduction Dr. Anna Espinoza

Welcome Ashley Shibley

Pledge Richard Clem

Invocation Gilbert Santana

DINNER

Superintendent's Remarks Dr. Randal O'Brien

Student and Teacher Video Community Engagement Team

Recognition of Students and Teachers Michelle Bitterly

Ashley Shibley

Dr. Anna Espinoza

Dr. Randal O'Brien

Education Foundation Board

Closing Dr. Anna Espinoza

Goose Creek Memorial Platinum Show Choir

under the direction of Holly Lewallen and Jalon Douglas

1



OVER
\$2,005,274
MILLION
AWARDED
IN INNOVATIVE TEACHING
GRANTS AND
DESIGNATED DONATIONS
FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS

\$198,880
AWARDED FOR
INNOVATIVE
TEACHING
GRANTS IN 2023



2

GRANT SURPRISE
PATROL
AWARDED
45 GRANTS
TO
79 TEACHERS
AT 20 CAMPUSES

3



\$762,340
IN-KIND
DONATIONS
FROM 2010-2023



4



\$137,307
RAISED FROM
GET ON THE BUS
CAMPAIGN
IN 2023

1,588
GET ON
THE BUS
PARTICIPANTS
FOR THE 2022-2023
SCHOOL YEAR

6



5

\$19,763
RAISED FROM
ALUMNI &
FRIENDS
CAMPAIGN



8

210
TEACHERS
RECOGNIZED
AT THE STUDENTS
CHOICE AWARDS
BANQUET
FROM 2010-2023

7



GOOSE CREEK CISD
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

MEMBERS

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Ashley Shibley – President

Preslie Cox Lastovica – Vice President of Development

Susan Harper – Vice President of Programs

Natalia Matusz – Vice President of Marketing

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Courtney Caylor – Secretary

Ronnie Hotchkiss – Immediate Past President

Dr. Randal O'Brien – Goose Creek CISD Superintendent

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MORE THAN \$2 MILLION

BENEFITING GOOSE CREEK CISD

The Goose Creek CISD Education Foundation is proud to honor our 15th 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 350 entries were carefully reviewed, 15 students from across the District were chosen for the 2024 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 \$1,796,564 for innovative teaching grants to more than 1,100 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 \$2 million to the benefit of Goose Creek CISD over the past 15 years.



If you would like to be a part of the Foundation, contact Dr. Anna Espinoza, 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.linktr.ee/gccisdfo> 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:

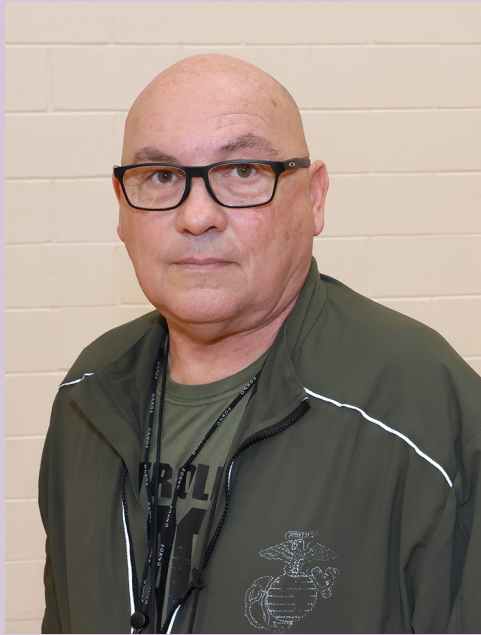
- Involve the community in assuring a quality education for the leaders and workers of tomorrow
- Support staff for innovative efforts
- Recognize staff for exemplary teaching
- Encourage all students to work at their highest potential

GOOSE CREEK CISD EDUCATION FOUNDATION
2023-2024 STUDENTS CHOICE

AWARD WINNERS

TEACHER-STUDENT

MSgt. Scott “Top” Anderson <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>	–	Camryn Madden <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>
Brandie Barriga <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>	–	Aidan Gonzales <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>
Katie Dean <i>Robert E. Lee HS</i>	–	Adolfo Flores <i>Robert E. Lee HS</i>
Leslie Haymon <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>	–	Fabian Cienfuegos <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>
Shonda James <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>	–	Michell Hernandez <i>Robert E. Lee HS</i>
Kimberly Justice <i>Lorenzo De Zavala Elementary</i>	–	Aspen Wilson <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>
Holly Lewallen <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>	–	Bailey Newsom <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>
Stacey Nethery <i>Stephen F. Austin Elementary</i>	–	Angie Ontiveros <i>IMPACT Early College HS</i>
Diamond Price <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>	–	Dreha Hernandez <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>
Christy Reves <i>Victoria Walker Elementary</i>	–	Jolacia Mackyeon <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>
Lisette Rosa Hernandez <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>	–	Anthony Jacobs <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>
Claudia Sanchez-Jimenez <i>Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary</i>	–	Andrea Rivera <i>Goose Creek Memorial HS</i>
Annette Slawson <i>Dr. Johnny T. Clark Elementary</i>	–	Emily Gonzalez <i>IMPACT Early College HS</i>
Diana Urrecha <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>	–	Sofia Corrales Buzon <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>
Annie Watson <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>	–	Briley Blanchard <i>Ross S. Sterling HS</i>



**MSGT. SCOTT
“TOP” ANDERSON**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**CAMRYN
MADDEN**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

I would like to nominate my JROTC instructor Mas. Serg. Anderson (Top). Top is a very wise man. Yes, he's stern, but he is only hard on us because he knows that the world is not easy. Top looks at each of his cadets as an individual player on a team called the world. He studies us, learns our self doubts and our greatest potentials and leads us know that what we want is never too far to obtain. Most kids my age wouldn't like him, because they'd rather talk than listen to words from a wise old man. In the classroom Top treats us as if were the adults.

He and Gunny gives us our agenda for the day, and we (platoon commanders/ squad leaders) makes sure that the rest of the platoon is on task and completing our mission. I remember one time we wanted to have a fun day and Top told us no. Our response was that "it's not fair". He responded with "War is not fair". He didn't say it in the terms that we would be in an actual war but rather than. "Life is a war", and life is not always going to be fair. You just have to take what you've got and either run with it or make it into something new.

I believe that my teacher should be nominated not only because he is a great instructor but also an even greater friend. Many times you'll have a friend that tells you what you want to hear and those kinds of friends typically don't last long because they get you no where in life. Top has taught me so many things about myself that I didn't even notice. I've learned that fear is just the safe space in between reaching my goals and holding myself back from them. Today, Top showed me that. No only me but many other students from all over the world and all walks of life, military inlisted and not. Being a very hard person there are many ways that you can go wrong. But Top beat the odds and changed that in the lives of many young men women and soldiers, and that is why I believe he should be nominated.



**BRANDIE
BARRIGA**

Ross S. Sterling HS



**AIDAN
GONZALES**

Ross S. Sterling HS

I can't recall a teacher that has had more of an impact on my life than my art teacher, Ms Barriga. I first met her during my freshman year, which was my Covid year. I stayed virtual for the whole year, and pretty much all of my classes changed halfway through the year, which caused me to get moved into Ms. Barriga's class. During a confusing and worrying time of my life, I felt that she was one of the few teachers that was willing to still teach me and help me in art even with all the complications and things going on during that time.

There was a time in my life when I felt stuck with art, like I wasn't any good and that I was just waiting my time. I remember considering leaving it all behind and trying to find something else to do. The big decision for me to stay was one day, when Ms Barriga came to watch over our class. She recognized me, and asked me if I planned on taking art 3 the following year.

I think that taking the class was one of the best decisions I made at the time, because the opportunities that opened up from pursuing it were some of the most significant of my life. I remember feeling lost during that time, not being a part of any sports teams or any clubs or organizations, and Ms Barriga presented our class with an opportunity to join our National Art Honor Society. I took up this opportunity and joined the club during my junior year, and it led to a ton of memories. I also got the chance to paint murals for the school, and to make new friends.

She also gave me the help I needed to compete in VASE that year, a competition in which you create an art piece and present it in front of a judge. She was there the whole time to provide me with the materials I needed and gave me advice on how to make what I was imagining look as good as possible. She let me stay after school on many occasions to work on my piece to make it turn out the best that it possibly could be. I ended up scoring a 3 on my piece (out of 4). The experience was amazing, and ever since then I have been wanting to compete in the next VASE competition and win a medal. My senior year I continued on with my art career. I can tell that she expects great things from me and wants the best for me. She has asked me to handle special projects, such as creating a sculpture that she wanted done to display for the future. She expects the best from me when I did my rodeo art and when coming up with a VASE idea. She wants me to do great and I can tell.

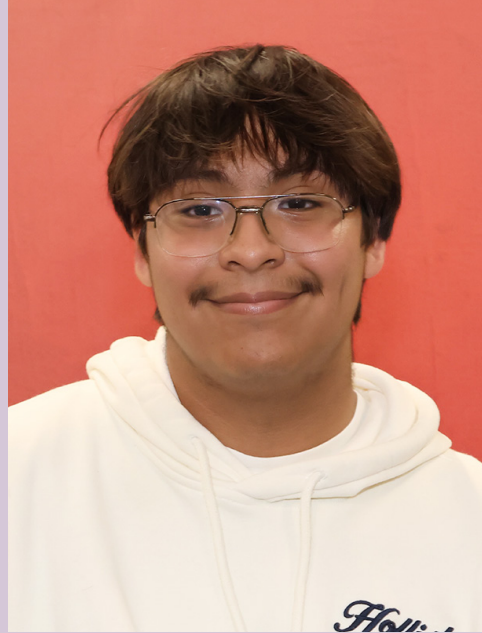
She's also been there for me this year when times got tough. There were times when I was losing friends in my life and she was there to tell me that things were gonna be ok. She helped me when I was struggling with personal matters. She gave me advice on handling situations that I was completely lost in. Gave me advice when it came to surrounding myself with the right people. She was there for me when I needed someone and I will forever appreciate her for that. Even when I was having troubles with figuring out what to do with my life after high school, she talked to me and gave me ideas of career paths relating to my interests and talents. She was the one who inspired me to apply to UNT and gave me ideas on careers I could pursue that would make me happy.

I can't think of anyone else who has had this much of an impact on my life as Ms Barriga. She helped me academically, mentally, and with my future plans. I feel like she was one of the most impactful not only teachers, but people in my life. She was there when I needed someone to turn to and ask for help from. I will forever be grateful and appreciative to have had her as a teacher for this long.



**KATIE
DEAN**

Robert E. Lee HS



**ADOLFO
FLORES**

Robert E. Lee HS

When my sister was in high school at Robert E. Lee she claimed that Ms. Dean was one of the best teachers she has ever had. I was still in middle school at the time so I had to wait and see what she was talking about.

In my sophomore year of high school I decided to take photography and digital media because I thought they would be fun electives. Once it was the first day of school I checked my schedule online in the morning to see what classes I had. My sister also checked and immediately pointed out I had Ms. Dean not once but twice. I didn't even notice I had Ms. Dean until she told me. My sister told me that it was going to be a chill year for me because her classes were really fun. Once I got to my sixth period it was photography taught by Ms. Dean. When I first walked in the classroom she made a warm welcome to me and I felt comfortable already. Once class started she introduced herself and gave facts about her personal life and teacher life. I really enjoyed listening to her because she made her life sound very lovable. I then told her that she taught my sister a while back and she remembered who she was and started asking about her. We instantly clicked after that conversation.

In my eighth period I had her once again and she did the same process of introducing herself but I didn't get bored. Once a few weeks passed by and we were starting to learn new material I was struggling on how to use the camera settings for photography. I asked Ms. Dean for help and she showed me how to use shutter speed, ISO, and aperture correctly. I learned so much from her photography class that she inspired me to create my own photography. After a year or so I got my very first camera and started taking portraits of seniors when I was a junior. Now taking senior portraits is a side hustle I do thanks to Ms. Dean who showed me how to use a camera properly.

In my junior year of high school I took yearbook with Ms. Dean and was thrilled to see her on the first day. She started teaching us how to make modules, headlines, and captions since we were her rookies in her class. We learned so much from her and created our wonderful yearbook over the semesters. I decided to join yearbook II again for my senior year because I love how creative we can get on themes and how we can bring an idea to life. This year we had to use a new company to make our yearbook so Ms. Dean had to learn herself and also teach us how the new website works to create our yearbook.

This year Ms. Dean has also made me editor-in-chief to show my dedication and leadership in yearbook, which I get from her. Yearbook can be very stressful because there is a lot of time management and deadlines involved. Ms. Dean experiences stress most of the time but doesn't let it get to her. She confidently fights it and gets on top of her game. She inspires me to never give up if I'm experiencing a lot of stress. I always need to resist it and continue on with whatever task I'm doing. Once I graduate in May I will be sad because I won't see Ms. Dean anymore. I know that she will be proud of me and cheering for me when I walk the stage just like how I was proud of her and cheered for her when she had to deal with yearbook stress.



**LESLIE
HAYMON**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**FABIAN
CIENFUEGOS**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

I recommend Leslie Haymon, a Dual Credit Instructor and AVID Teacher at Goose Creek Memorial High School. Throughout my four years in high school, it has been an unprecedented experience. Generations before me had never graduated high school or even attended an education in the United States, and I knew that I was setting a stepping stone for the future generations of my family. I am blessed to have had a mentor in my high school experience like Mrs. Haymon.

I experienced her AVID class, a part of the college readiness program on campus. Though the program is meant to prepare us for college, it was only possible with the consistent support given by Mrs. Haymon. Whether it was presenting the importance of a resume or organization or even consistently pushing us to use our planners, such small lessons have significantly impacted my life. Walking inside her classroom, I held a blank slate, a mind with no knowledge of what a resume was or even how to plan things. With the assistance of Mrs. Haymon she introduced me to vital skills that I can use throughout my life and in future generations of my family. The competitive and rigorous environment set in the classroom would challenge me and prepare me for my future dual enrollment college courses. I am graduating with an Associate of Arts in Business from Lee College (72 college hours) before receiving my high school diploma in Spring. Thanks to Mrs. Haymon's resume tips, I have also earned the privilege to serve as a Grant Research/Marketing Intern for the GCCISD Education Foundation. The organization and structure that Mrs. Haymon instilled in me have made this possible.

More importantly, Mrs. Haymon introduced me to the importance of getting INVOLVED! As I got involved, I began joining organizations and discovering my identity. Eventually, I found my passion for GIVING and wanted to create a cultural service organization. I also noticed that despite GCM's 56% Hispanic population, we were heavily underrepresented. Taking the initiative, I told Mrs. Haymon about my idea; she was full throttle with me and would support Tuesday, January 9, 2024 me in creating the Association of Hispanics and Latinos. As our sponsor, she would undergo pages and pages of paperwork as our sponsor to ensure our events and goals went through. We became a social space for students to celebrate and preserve our culture in and outside the classroom.

As Mrs. Haymon referred students and faculty, our group grew to over 75 members, making it the largest service organization on campus. We hosted bilingual events that helped families discover various cultures and reconnect to their traditional customs. She helped sponsor a symposium for the Hispanic community that helped them learn about historical events and celebrities who have broken societal barriers. Today, we have 100+ members across the district. With such a large number, Mrs. Haymon consistently shows selflessness in and outside the classroom. She is generous, considerate, and charitable.

Today, Mrs. Haymon can be found in the classroom, continuing to impact students like me. She is always going out of her way to provide for students, whether by applying for grants from the Education Foundation to grow our skills or finding time to give us life advice. She is a fantastic mentor who deserves recognition. I do not doubt that Mrs. Haymon will continue impacting students' lives.



**SHONDA
JAMES**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**MICHELL
HERNANDEZ**

Robert E. Lee HS

I am writing to express my heartfelt nomination for Mrs. Shonda James, my Digital Electronics teacher for tenth grade at Robert E. Lee, who is currently located at GCM High School, for the GCCISD Teacher award. Mrs. James has made a profound impact on my high school experience, fostering a love for STEM education and inspiring not only academic growth but also resilience and dedication in the face of adversity.

Mrs. James introduced the Technology Student Association (TSA) to our school, a decision that marked a turning point in my educational and career trajectory. As a passionate advocate for STEM education, Mrs. James created an environment that encouraged students to explore and excel in these fields. Under her guidance, TSA became a hub for hands-on learning experiences, critical thinking, and participation in competitive STEM-related events. From the early days of my high school journey, I harbored a deep-seated desire to pursue a career in engineering. However, the specific engineering discipline that aligned with my interests and goals remained elusive. It was through TSA, thanks to Mrs. James's mentorship, that I found clarity and direction. Participating in TSA not only allowed me to delve into various aspects of engineering but also provided me with the opportunity to compete at the national level. These experiences, centered around problem-solving, research-based presentations, and biotechnology, opened my eyes to the challenges and innovations within the engineering field. What sets Mrs. James apart is not only her commitment to academic excellence but also her remarkable resilience and dedication to our school community. Despite facing personal tragedies, including a cancer diagnosis, the passing of her family member, and her husband's amputation due to a diabetic stroke, Mrs. James continued to inspire and support her students. Her ability to persevere in the face of adversity left an indelible mark on my character and instilled in me a deep sense of resilience. Mrs. James's personal journey has resonated with me on a profound level. Witnessing her navigate through life's challenges with grace and determination has inspired me to make a positive impact and help those facing unexpected hardships. I am committed to embodying the same resilience and dedication in my pursuits, hoping to contribute positively to the lives of others. Moreover, after being unsure of what engineering field I wanted to pursue a career in, Mrs. James played a pivotal role in helping me realize that it is biomedical engineering that truly aligns with my passions and aspirations. Her guidance has been instrumental in shaping my career path, and I am excited to embark on this journey with a newfound sense of purpose and direction.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly believe that Mrs. Shonda James is a deserving candidate for the GCCISD Teacher award. Her contributions to STEM education, coupled with her unwavering commitment to her students and the school community, make her an exemplary educator. I am grateful for the transformative role she has played in my high school experience and am confident that her influence will continue to shape the lives of countless students in the years to come.



**KIMBERLY
JUSTICE**

Lorenzo De Zavala Elementary



**ASPEN
WILSON**

Ross S. Sterling HS

I've pondered over who I'd nominate since I was told about this in December, and while there were many teachers who have impacted my life, one really stood apart from the rest. Her name is Kimberly Justice, my 4th grade reading teacher. Due to her compassionate heart and immense patience, I've become the person I am today. As a child, I never was much of a reader, in fact I hated it. I couldn't focus on the words for longer than two or three sentences and would forget everything right after I stopped reading. And that was only if I could sit still long enough to even start the book. But she was always beside me to guide me, never giving up on me like my other reading teachers had before.

Although our bond was first formed over a shared love for red velvet Oreos and my moms homemade snacks, it ended up growing into something much larger. I can still vividly remember sitting on her mismatched rug, in the front row, listening to her read whatever book she believed would hold our attention that day. Thanks to her patient persistence, Ms. Justice helped me come to love reading, making it my favorite hobby to this day. She taught me that one doesn't just hate reading, they simply haven't found the right genre for them yet. But reading isn't the only thing Ms. Justice helped me embrace. Due to being born on Valentine's Day, I was used to having my birthday forgotten by my fellow classmates. Even though I was used to it, it still hurt that no one at school seemed to remember my birthday. I understood that people would celebrate the holiday more, and eventually I stopped expecting anything at all. Even today, it's something I struggle with. But on my eleventh birthday Ms. Justice pulled me aside at the end of the day and gave me a big hug and a bright red and pink gift bag. She wished me a happy birthday with a big smile on her face, a smile so filled with warmth that I can still see it when I close my eyes. Because of that one gift, I don't get upset when my birthday falls on a school day, instead I remember the pure joy she brought me. To this day, I've yet to meet another teacher who is as kind and compassionate towards her students as Ms. Justice is. She is an enigma of a person, someone who will brighten your day by just being there. Her ever present diligence and overall happy attitude is infectious, making everyone around her want to strive for more.

Ms. Justice was such a turning point in my life. She took a hold of a loud, boisterous, walking distraction of a girl and helped her become a straight A early graduate who looks forward to learning something new. Ms. Justice was more than just a teacher-- is more than just a teacher. She is someone I deeply respect and look up to, an unconscious standard I hold other people to. When I'm stuck in a difficult situation, be it with friendships or school work, I ask myself what Ms. Justice would say to me. Her patience, compassion, and perseverance toward teaching and her students is unlike anything I've ever seen in any of my teachers. She'd always put her students first. Even when she was going through hardships I couldn't even imagine going through, she still came to school everyday and taught us with a smile on her face. I'm the girl I am today because she never gave up on me, even though I definitely made it a challenge for her to do so. It has always been a goal of mine to become even a fraction of the kind of person she is, and as such, she has continued to shape my life even after all these years. Even though we haven't seen or spoken to each other in so long, I continue to strive to be a person she can be proud of. With all that in mind, it's with pride that I nominate Ms. Justice as a teacher who has had an impact on my life. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to read this and for considering her for this. I truly can't think of anyone more deserving.



**HOLLY
LEWALLEN**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**BAILEY
NEWSOM**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

I would like to take the time to write this letter to recognize an excellent candidate for the 15th annual Student's Choice Award, the head choir director of Goose Creek Memorial Mrs. Holly Lewallen.

I have been in choir for 7 years and never in each of those years I have never met a director so willing to help and work with her students. Mrs. Lewallen creates a welcoming environment for all her students offering a competitive and encouraging class. She takes the time to engage in each student, to learn their name, and to learn who they are as a person. She treats her class as more than just an extracurricular free period, as she is always more than willing to help and counsel students when asked upon.

I was a junior in her varsity choir when an unexpected disaster befell my family and home. During the January months of 2023 we had experienced a house fire, causing my family many moves and upheaval. Mrs. Lewallen had only heard of the situation and contacted my mother to offer us a place to stay. Through her church she gave us a home to stay in while awaiting repairs on our own house. She gave us a house for us to stay in without monthly rent, only utilities were required, when she had heard that I hadn't much salvageable clothes to come back to school, she spent her own money and shopped for me bringing me shoes and some pants and shirts allowing me to return to school earlier than expected. She offered me many words of encouragement when it seemed as though that devastation would permanently damage me and my family. I will always remember her kindness and she will always be a friend to me and my family even after I graduate. This act of community and kindness deserves recognition, the supporting community she has created deserves the recognition.



**STACEY
NETHERY**

Stephen F. Austin Elementary

Throughout my years at various GCCISD schools, I have had many teachers. Each teacher was different from the last. Most teachers were kind and just overall good teachers. However, the teacher I think has been the most impactful in my life is Mrs. Nethery.

I have always enjoyed reading. I would spend hours reading books from as many genres as I could. Once I was done with a book I was immediately on the hunt for a new one. I often spent a long time in the library looking carefully through each shelf reading all the summaries until something caught my attention. I loved books because each one told me something I hadn't known before. I've always been a very curious person so reading stories was a way I was able to satiate my craving to always know more.

Then in fourth grade, I had Mrs. Nethery for Texas history at Stephen F. Austin Elementary. As the school year progressed I began to notice how similar learning history felt to reading. To me, history was like reading a good book because like reading history tells a story. During this time, my love for history began. Mrs. Nethery's class specifically was the catalyst for my lifelong interest in the subject. To this day my favorite subject is and will continue to be history. Because of Mrs. Nethery's class, I was able to discover one of my passions and quell my curiosity since history answered questions I had never even thought about before. In fact, currently, I am planning to double major in university in both art history and computer science. I want to major in art history solely because of how much I enjoy the subject and wish to continue to learn more about it.

I'm nominating Mrs. Nethery not only because of how much I like history but also because of how good of a teacher I remember her being. She always was able to explain and present information in a way that was easy to understand. I greatly appreciate this approach to teaching because many times teachers can complicate a subject that isn't actually that complex just by the vocabulary they use and/or the manner in which they explain. However, Mrs. Nethery never did so. She didn't make history feel like a difficult subject but instead, something that was easily approachable. Her classroom always felt like a place where I could learn at my own pace and in my own way rather than forcing students to learn in an approach that was not suited to them. She fostered a comfortable environment of learning in her class which made me feel at ease when in there. To this day, I remember how excited I would be to get to her class to learn more about history each day.



**ANGIE
ONTIVEROS**

IMPACT Early College HS



**DIAMOND
PRICE**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**DREHA
HERNANDEZ**

Ross S. Sterling HS

Education is a journey filled with countless experiences that shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. Throughout my thirteen years of education, one teacher, in particular, stands out as the most significant figure in instilling in me a passion for math and teaching: Ms. Price. Her impact goes beyond the classroom, leaving a great imprint on my intellectual and personal development. She was not only an excellent teacher but also a mentor as my basketball coach. Coach Price was more than simply a math instructor, she is passionate, a motivator, and an inspiration.

From the first day of her class, her approach to teaching went beyond the standard approaches. Her passion for math was contagious, creating an atmosphere of excitement and curiosity. Unlike other teachers who followed firm lesson plans, Coach Price formed her teaching to the needs and interests of her students. Coach Price's ability to make complex concepts understandable and enjoyable was one of her exceptional skills. This not only made the subject more approachable, but also sparked a genuine desire to dig into the subject of math. Coach Price instilled confidence and determination in her students, in addition to teaching the subject matter. She did this by challenging us in our points of confusion and not taking "I don't know" for an answer. She believed in every one of us and pushed us to look at problems as chances for progress. Her continuous support fostered a safe learning environment in which mistakes were recognized as stepping stones to mastery rather than roadblocks. I can recall a time when I was having a difficult time understanding what she was teaching. She noticed this and asked me to answer a question. Flustered, I explained that I could not do that because I did not understand. When I answered incorrectly, she did not go on to look for the correct answer from someone who knew it; instead, she walked me through the problem until I could do it on my own. This not only helped my math skills but also built a resilient attitude within me that served me well in other areas of my education and life. I developed a mindset that making mistakes is a part of growth.

Coach Price always supported and uplifted her kids. For example, when I first expressed an interest in teaching, she enthusiastically supported me and my endeavors. I recall her delight when I was accepted into the Future Educators Academy, which I applied for largely because of her support. She threw her arms in the air and smiled from ear to ear. She ignited a passion for education that I never knew existed, ultimately shaping my career goals of being an educator. If I had not enrolled in her class in my eighth grade year, my high school experience would look different. As a senior, I am now heavily involved in my academy and the Texas Association for Future Teachers because of her influence. Without her encouragement, I do not believe that I would have been as successful in my high school math classes.

As a coach, she was uniquely able to bring out the best in her players, both academically and personally. She was always there for us on and off the court, helping anytime we asked. Her dedication to fostering a love for learning extended beyond the confines of the classroom. Through her initiatives, Coach Price demonstrated the power of education in shaping not only academic success but also lifelong passions.

Coach Price stands as the most influential teacher I have encountered throughout my thirteen years of education. Her innovative and passionate methods to teaching math not only instilled a love for the subject within me but also inspired a deep appreciation for education. Her impact continues to resonate in my life, influencing not only my academic pursuits but also my aspirations to become an educator who, like Coach Price, unlocks the potential within every student.



**CHRISTY
REVES**

Victoria Walker Elementary



**JOLACIA
MACKYEON**

Ross S. Sterling HS

I remember the first time I met Nurse Reves. It was the Monday after Thanksgiving break, 2016, my fifth-grade year. I had just been diagnosed with a chronic illness and had my entire life turned upside down. I was anxious walking into school that day. Even though not many people at the school knew of my diagnosis, for some reason, I thought everyone knew. I had imagined the entire series of events that would happen on that first day back at school. I would walk in, and the whole student body and faculty would simultaneously turn and, with judgmental looks, stare at me. I know, dramatic, right, but on that day, something different happened from what I expected. I walked into the nurse's office and was met with this beautiful smile on this fantastic person with the title of my elementary nurse, who would leave an everlasting impact.

Due to my new diagnosis, I had to go to the nurse's office every day before lunch. Many of my classmates stared at me while I stepped out of line to go to the nurse's office, and they had many questions for me when I came back. Even though I hated all of my classmates' questions and speculations, I looked forward to this part of my day each day. It was the time of the day when I could meet with one of my favorite people. Every day I stepped into that nurse's office, Nurse Reves met me with an unimaginable sense of warmth. It was almost like the sun was wrapping its arms around an iceberg. Each day that my illness caused me shame, embarrassment, and pain, Nurse Reves gave me confidence, joy, and love. She created a safe, comfortable, and nurturing environment for me. I went there every day, and she helped me feel independent, smile, and, most importantly, take care of my health each day. I would leave the office feeling rejuvenated and ready for the rest of my day.

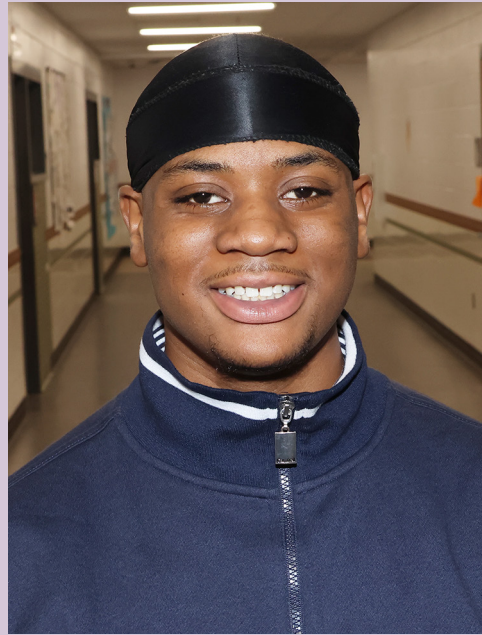
Towards the end of my fifth-grade year, I began to cherish each second I had with her because I knew it was running out. I was going to middle school and would have an entirely different nurse. I did not know who my new nurse would be, but I knew they would never live up to Nurse Reves. On the last day of school, our last day together, Nurse Reves called me to her office. I was, of course, greeted with that infectious smile and soothing voice of hers. She then proceeded to give me something. I do not know if she remembers this moment, but I have never forgotten it. She gave me a gray box with shiny embellishments and a yellow envelope with a card. The card had the most beautiful note inside of it. Nurse Reves filled the card with such encouraging, enlightening, and nurturing words that made me feel like I could take on the world. It filled me with love, confidence, and hope for the following chapters of my life. Then I opened the gray box that had a butterfly necklace inside. This necklace served as a reminder for me for the next several years. Every time I looked at it or wore it, I was filled with the same warmth and confidence that she gave me throughout my year with her. Lastly, the necklace reminded me of the tremendous blessing God gave me when I received Christy Reves as my nurse for my fifth-grade year.

I could never fully describe how impactful Nurse Reves was in my life. At a time when I felt so alone at school, she made me feel like I was the most important person in the world. I will always be eternally grateful for the warmth and comfort she gave me as my fifth-grade nurse.



**LISETTE
ROSA HERNANDEZ**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**ANTHONY
JACOBS**

Goose Creek Memorial HS

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. Teachers are much like a second parent, and you could say that they spend just as much, if not more time each day, with a child than parents do. They help mold and shape a child's personality, and often times 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 aquatic science teacher, Ms. Hernandez.

Ms. Hernandez 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. Those are character traits that I feel I have improved upon because of her. 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.

Mrs. Hernandez 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 effort to reach the needs of everyone in her class. We often play games to study for a test, which is an exciting and easy way to review the information. She closely watches who works well together, and places them next to each other when we are doing work. This year, I am a teacher's aide in her class, and this experience has given me insight into how well her teaching style helps her students succeed. There are very few kids who don't do well in her classes. Clearly, she has worked hard to figure out what is best for each person in her class. This has made me recognize that each person has their own individuality, and that they should be respected for who they are.

The lessons that Mrs. Hernandez has taught me are invaluable. Not only have they strengthened the foundation of my life, they are the building blocks of my future. She has been an exemplary role model, and has taught me to have many strong traits. I can be trustworthy and hard-working, while never losing sight of who I am as an individual. Mrs. Hernandez has been the one teacher that has affected my life the most. 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.



**CLAUDIA
SANCHEZ-JIMENEZ**

Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary

Throughout all my years in school I tried to figure out what teacher impacted me the most not knowing that it would end up being my first ever teacher. Mrs. Jimenez was my Pre-K teacher that until this day I am extremely grateful for. She has helped me in ways no other teacher has. I feel like most kids forget about their Pre-K teachers after they graduate elementary, but Mrs. Jimenez managed to stick to me all throughout elementary, middle school and high school.

After elementary school I didn't see Mrs. Jimenez much, but she always stayed in the back of my mind. I always remembered her as my first teacher. The teacher who taught me to count, learn my colors, and learn English. As someone who came from a household that only spoke Spanish, having a teacher who was able to teach me English meant so much to my family. I remember that she always pushed us to do our best because she knew we could do great things. She never gave up on us or let us down and that's something of her that I will always carry with me.

A couple of years later I was able to reconnect with Mrs. Jimenez. At first I didn't know who she was. I looked at her and something told me that I should remember her. I kept trying to figure out where I knew her from and then it clicked and she had been my Pre-K teacher. After realizing who she was it all came back. It felt amazing seeing her again after a couple of years of not seeing her. Hearing her say how much I've changed and how proud she was of me meant so much because she saw me when I was 6 years old and now she's able to see me "all grown up."

I remember that at one point in middle school I was going through a rough time and my parents first thought was to ask Mrs. Jimenez for help because they knew she'd think of something, and as always she did. She lent me an ear to listen and I will always be extremely thankful for that. She didn't care that we went to her house on a weekend. All she cared about was figuring out how to help me fix my problems. She never cared what the situation was, all she cared about was putting her student's first. Even till this day she is helping my family and I with whatever we need. She's always looked at us as part of her family.

I have recently been able to spend a lot more time with Mrs. Jimenez because she allowed me to be a student teacher for her. Being Mrs. Jimenez's student teacher has allowed me to interact more with her and see her impact a new set of students. It reminds me of when she was my teacher and it makes me happy to see that she's still as amazing as she was with us. Everyday that I go to Pumphrey she makes sure to greet me with a smile and a hug and in a way it heals my inner child. In the sense that it heals me knowing that 13 years later she's still a huge part of my life and she will continue being a huge part of it.

I hope that at one point in life my future kids have a teacher like Mrs. Jimenez. Someone who helps them despite the circumstances. That will put them first and that will listen to everything they need. I also hope that when they get that teacher they always have contacts with her because as someone who was able to experience this it meant a lot.

Lastly, I want to say thank you. Words will never be able to explain how thankful I am for Mrs. Jimenez. She meant and will always mean so much to me. I wish everyone had a teacher like her.



**ANDREA
RIVERA**

Goose Creek Memorial HS



**ANNETTE
SLAWSON**

Dr. Johnny T. Clark Elementary



**EMILY
GONZALEZ**

IMPACT Early College HS

I am someone who always remembers. From my early school days, every teacher I have had the pleasure to have lingers in my mind in at least one way. But, one teacher has left a more significant impact on me. My 3rd grade teacher, Mrs. Slawson. To this day, I am often reminded of her classroom atmosphere and the feeling I got each day I attended her class. Though I was just eight years old, I had much to learn from her. I still remember her presence in her classroom and how I felt comfortable in the class. The sciences and math were always my favorite subjects; her teaching these subjects helped in my interest. Her teachings played a significant role in my future decision-making of where I wanted to take my education path. With her help, I decided to further my education in science, now that being STEM. She introduced me to a world that I did not know was the one I belonged in. Even if it was just 3rd-grade science, it was a jump start to what I wanted to study and make a career out of. The projects and assignments she brought along were always fun and intriguing. Mrs. Slawson's teaching was always engaging, and I vividly remember. She was very interactive and made each moment of learning memorable. Not only were they educational, but we had a lot of fun activities as well! One of my favorites was when we made snowglobes for Christmas. To this day, I still have it set up on my furniture and always recall the memories.

Mrs. Slawson helped me not just educationally but personally as well. I still remember the day I was awarded the "Cowboy of the Year" at Clark. This was the first year that Clark received this award, and it is one of my core memories from there. The most exciting and memorable moment was when my teachers congratulated me. To be more specific, Mrs. Slawson. What made it more special was the support I got from her. She was there to witness the accomplishment. Congratulating me and taking pictures alongside me was one of the most memorable moments in my elementary days. Not only was she close to me, but she also had a friendship with my parents, which was a plus. She was one of the teachers that was always easy to talk to. Her nice personality made it easy to create a friendship with my parents. Mrs. Slawson was relatable and had always communicated well with them! With each school event my parents could attend, she was always there to greet and welcome them. This increased the importance of the impact she has left me through the years. To this day, I often remember the times I spent in her classroom. I still talk about her with my friends and family. Though I have not had the opportunity to meet with her since middle school, she still has impacted me.

Overall, Mrs. Slawson has made an impact on my life. Through the years, I have often thought about how she is doing and her life. Even if it has been years since I have been in her classroom, I can still vividly remember the days. Her impact on me is one that will stay with me as I advance in my future career.

This is why I would like to nominate Annette Slawson for the Student Choice Awards 2023-2024. I thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with one of the most impactful teachers in my school career.



**DIANA
URRECHA**

Ross S. Sterling HS



**SOFIA
CORRALES BUZON**

Ross S. Sterling HS

I am the first to recognize that every single teacher marks their students' lives somehow. Teaching is inherently a noble career, and anyone working in the field should be recognized. However, certain teachers can change, rather than mark, the student's life. This is what Ms. Urrecha did for me and many others.

I met Ms. Urrecha on the first day of the second semester of my first year of high school. I arrived early to find that the only person in the room was Ms. Urrecha. She smiled at me kindly and asked me to take a seat. This happened day after day, and every day I was the first to walk into that classroom, we spoke a little more. We spoke of our respective cultures and bonded over our shared experiences of immigrating to America. She was always professional but with a warmth that could melt away the coldest of facades. She was never afraid to ask what was wrong if one of her students was especially quiet. She took the time to get to know every single one of us and treated us with the respect and dignity few teachers allowed their students.

She remembered birthdays and special occasions. For every birthday, she would play "Las Mañanitas." If she knew you had a school event or performance, she would want to know every detail the next time she saw you.

I chose to join her Honors Spanish 3 class during my sophomore year because I was confident it would be a wonderful experience. In addition to her caring nature, Ms. Urrecha was (and is) a great teacher. She made sure students understood the hardest of topics. Every assignment was designed to help us learn Spanish; there was never busy work. However, lessons were seldom dull. We learned "preterito perfecto" by analyzing songs. She made sure we knew everything we were learning in that class had a use and application outside of school. She was considerate when it came to absences and missing work, continually granting students a second chance to make up for missed assignments. It is difficult to find a teacher who is dedicated to her craft and can also form bonds with her students.

In the years after leaving her class, I visited Ms. Urrecha daily between classes. I became one of the many kids who lingered in her classroom every day as long as I could to hear her stories without being late to class. She was eager to continue to share her wisdom with us former students. She told tales of her travels and her life in other countries. She was cultured and knowledgeable, so she often helped students with work from other classes. It is also rare to find a teacher who can manage to help with so much in addition to performing her regular duties perfectly.

Ms. Urrecha wrote me a letter of recommendation for college applications, which I submitted with all my applications. This letter helped me get admitted to my dream school and dream program. When I shared the news with her, she celebrated with me. Other teachers I care for congratulated me and moved on, but Ms. Urrecha recognized that this was a massive achievement for me and matched my excitement.

Ms. Urrecha is kindhearted, intelligent, understanding, helpful, and empathetic. In these last few years, she has improved my and many others' lives. She made the most out of the forty-five minutes she had to teach us daily. I believe Ms. Urrecha has yet to get the credit she deserves for all the credit she has given her students over the years. I attribute part of my academic achievements in High School to her.



**ANNIE
WATSON**

Ross S. Sterling HS



**BRILEY
BLANCHARD**

Ross S. Sterling HS

I have been an art student for years now. As relaxed as it may be, that doesn't make any work done less difficult and even piles onto my other projects. Highschool isn't entirely easy for anyone and it's always refreshing to have a teacher who truly recognizes individual struggles. That is why I am nominating Ms. Watson; the best art teacher I have been lucky to have.

She is by far one of the most endearing and outgoing teachers I've crossed paths with. I remember one time I had left my artwork at school, which was a tendency of mine, and Ms. Watson ended up dropping it off by my residency since we live in generally the same area. A generous and unexpected act for her to go even slightly out of her way to help me out. I couldn't name a single teacher who would do that for me other than Ms. Watson. Not to forget the time she gave me some life advice and even mentioned some circumstances she had dealt with herself. She didn't only make me feel seen, but understood. She never failed to let me have a break on the days I needed it. Empathizing and sharing conversations about things that would go on outside of school. My heart felt as warm as her smile.

I value everything Ms. Watson does for everyone as she is very engaged in each student as much as possible. Even when she remains busy, she's constantly talking with peers, going to their tables, and giving an artistic opinion or just sparking a small conversation. I was never afraid to ask her anything, even when I felt it was ridiculous.

Ms. Watson hasn't only opened my eyes for art, but my heart. She makes me want to continue a positive and loving stride the way she emulates. That's an understatement, too. I couldn't even begin to explain the volumes she has influenced me. For the last two years, I have looked forward to walking in her colorful classroom and seeing her greet me with such enthusiasm. Thank you so much, Ms. Watson



MSGT. SCOTT
"TOP" ANDERSON
Goose Creek Memorial HS

CAMRYN
MADDEN
Goose Creek Memorial HS



BRANDIE
BARRIGA
Ross S. Sterling HS

AIDAN
GONZALES
Ross S. Sterling HS



KATIE
DEAN
Robert E. Lee HS

ADOLFO
FLORES
Robert E. Lee HS



LESLIE
HAYMON
Goose Creek Memorial HS

FABIAN
CIENFUEGOS
Goose Creek Memorial HS



SHONDA
JAMES
Goose Creek Memorial HS

MICHELL
HERNANDEZ
Robert E. Lee HS



KIMBERLY
JUSTICE
Lorenzo De Zavala Elementary

ASPEN
WILSON
Ross S. Sterling HS



HOLLY
LEWALLEN
Goose Creek Memorial HS

BAILEY
NEWSOM
Goose Creek Memorial HS



STACEY
NETHERY
Stephen F. Austin Elementary

ANGIE
ONTIVEROS
IMPACT Early College HS



DIAMOND
PRICE
Goose Creek Memorial HS

DREHA
HERNANDEZ
Ross S. Sterling HS



CHRISTY
REVES
Victoria Walker Elementary

JOLACIA
MACKYEON
Ross S. Sterling HS



LISETTE
ROSA HERNANDEZ
Goose Creek Memorial HS

ANTHONY
JACOBS
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CLAUDIA
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Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary

ANDREA
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