

# Foundation Gala Shatters Records



Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Lee College president and Breana Escobar, gala keynote speaker



The 36th Annual Foundation Gala took place at the Hyatt Regency Baytown on Friday, Sept. 29.

The 36th annual gala hosted by the Lee College Foundation was a remarkable success that will go down in the record books. The glamorous event, held to honor generous donors, raised an unprecedented sum of nearly \$225,000 with a record-breaking turnout of close to 400 guests.

This year, the celebration moved to the new Hyatt Regency Baytown. Guests toasted 55 years of the Foundation and student success — with the Fred Hartman Bridge as a picturesque backdrop for the festivities.

"It was indeed a great night. We could return to Baytown now that we have a venue large enough to hold all our foundation friends, both new and old," said Steve DonCarlos, gala master of ceremonies and past chair of the Lee College Foundation Board of Directors. "We raised a record amount of money for the foundation and had fun doing it."

The \$225,000 was made possible through ticket sales, sponsorships and proceeds from the live and silent auctions. The funds will be used to further the mission of the Foundation and the college's Student Resource and Advocacy Center (SRAC), which supports unmet basic needs such as childcare services, food, emergency aid and textbook assistance.

"This demonstrates the college's comprehensive commitment to supporting students in all aspects of their educational experience, ultimately contributing to their overall success and growth," said Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Lee College president.

Breana Escobar, a recent Lee College graduate, was the evening's keynote speaker. She shared her inspiring story of success and how the Foundation and the SRAC had a profound impact on her educational and career goals. The mother of two young children graduated from the Nursing program in August and is now a practicing licensed vocational nurse.

"I have the amazing opportunity to be considered the first college graduate in my family, and I can be the pioneer for my children," Escobar shared with the audience. "I can show them anything is possible regardless of any obstacles. I am so grateful for Lee College. It will forever be a part of me."

During the 2023 academic year, the Lee College Foundation awarded nearly \$800,000 in scholarships to 824 hardworking students.

While the gala traditionally celebrates current donors, it is also an opportunity to bring in the next generation of individuals advancing Baytown's philanthropic mission. This year, the Foundation documented a 44% increase in sponsorships compared to last year's event. Additionally, 18% of the event's returning sponsors increased their giving levels, demonstrating the community's ongoing support for the Foundation's work at the college.

For more information about the Lee College Foundation and the various ways to give, [visit the Foundation online](#).

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**At top:** Keynote speaker Breana Escobar addresses the audience.