

Students, Donors Connect at Scholarship Breakfast

For Miguel Hernandez, enrolling at Lee College several years ago to earn an associate degree in pipefitting began a series of transformations and promotions that changed his life for the better.

Now an instructor at the college, Hernandez and his wife, Maria, are also Lee College Foundation scholarship donors with a lofty goal: to give enough money to fill an entire classroom with bright students eager to pursue their dreams.

“It’s been a great satisfaction to see students get the same opportunities that I did,” Hernandez said Friday, April 11, at the 12th annual Foundation Scholarship Breakfast in the Student Center, imploring the students in the room to seek out a job that would allow them to make an impact on the world.

“Don’t embark on a career for material reasons,” he said. “Find purpose in what you do.”

Each year, the foundation breakfast gives scholarship recipients and their donors the opportunity to connect. Students are able to personally thank their donor for the tuition or textbook assistance that helped pay for their education, while donors hear firsthand how their generosity has made a difference.

After spending much of her life as a wife tending to the needs and schooling of her three children, Debra Long arrived at Lee College full of doubts about her ability to be a successful student – even after she learned she would be awarded a foundation scholarship.

“What began as an experiment became a passion,” Long told the crowd at the scholarship breakfast. “After three semesters, 18 honors hours and four conferences, I am filled with wonder at where I am in my life. I honestly would not be standing here if it wasn’t for you.”

The son of a single mother who worked multiple jobs to support a family of five, Fernando Izaguirre fell into drugs and bad behavior before turning his life around and gaining admission into Angelo State University. Working 40 hours a week to pay for school and make ends meet took precious time away from his studies, however, and he ended his first year with grades too low to continue.

Returning home to Baytown to attend Lee College was one of the best decisions he ever made, Izaguirre said. The foundation scholarship he received took a burden off his shoulders.

“I didn’t have to struggle and worry about how I was going to pay for my education,” he said.

Hearing the stories of the students’ ability to overcome their challenges with the help and generosity of Lee College donors “gives me goose bumps,” said Pres. Dr. Dennis Brown.

“I cannot thank you enough,” Brown said at the end of the foundation breakfast. “What you do with these scholarships means so much.”