

Foundation looks to gala to help students persist

Postponed after Harvey, Foundation Gala now set for Nov. 10 at Sylvan Beach Pavilion

BAYTOWN, TX — After making its own generous donation this semester to help Lee College students affected by Hurricane Harvey afford the costs of tuition, textbooks, transportation, food and even home repairs, the Lee College Foundation is preparing to host its annual gala in November and raise funds to ensure students can continue their education and finish what they started.

“Helping our students to recover quickly in order that they may focus on their education is in keeping with our board’s mission,” said Jennifer Marcontell, chairwoman of the Foundation Board of Directors. Board members make decisions for and lead the activities of the foundation, including raising outside funds to fulfill student needs and awarding scholarships to thousands of deserving recipients.

“Our first priority is to our students and their education,” Marcontell said. “Education creates opportunities and opens doors. We want this for as many young people as possible in our community.”

To date, 174 students have received financial assistance from the college’s Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, established shortly after the storm reached the local area. Contributions from the foundation and corporate and individual donors have been used to pay Fall 2017 tuition bills, purchase textbooks lost or washed away in floodwaters, buy gas or bus fare, and help fix home damages.

“It’s really about persistence,” said Pam Warford, executive director of Foundation and Resource Development. “Many of our students get started on their education but run into financial obstacles that take them off course. Donations to the foundation enable them to persist in their classes until they earn their degree or certificate.”

Now, the board is hoping for another record crowd at the 32nd annual Foundation Gala set for Friday, Nov. 10, at Sylvan Beach Pavilion. The gala, which was initially postponed out of respect for those who suffered losses in Harvey, is the premiere event to raise money each year for scholarships and other forms of student support.

“Our foundation, from the generous support of our gala, creates opportunities for students who may not otherwise have them,” Marcontell said. “We expect some effects from the recent storm setback, but we know that our patrons look forward to this event each year and will continue to support our efforts as they can. We all benefit when our students succeed.”

As chairwoman of the board, Marcontell’s goal is to provide encouragement and experience for her fellow “incredibly hard-working members.” Additional officers also elected to serve in 2017-18 include Judy Wheat as vice-chairwoman and Gilbert Santana as treasurer.

“I believe in education and I believe in Lee College,” Marcontell said. “I believe that the work we do to support our students in receiving an excellent education will benefit our community for generations to come.”