Lee College Foundation Gala raises record $175,000 for scholarships and support

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BAYTOWN, TX — With nearly 400 guests in attendance and $175,000 raised, the 31st annual Lee College Foundation Gala was a record-breaking success that will help ensure deserving students at all levels will have the scholarships and other forms of support they need to pursue higher education.

And while many college and university foundations only offer scholarships to students attending school full-time, the Lee College Foundation will instead focus on meeting students' needs wherever they are.

Under the leadership of its Board of Directors, the foundation will award more than $470,000 to students this academic year, and all are eligible: those enrolled full-time; part-time; in dual-credit classes for high-school students to earn college credits; in non-credit classes offered by the Center for Workforce and Community Development; and in the Lee College Huntsville Center prison program.

"Many of our students are surprised and amazed that somebody they don't know is willing to donate funds to help them get an education," said Pam Warford, executive director of the Lee College Foundation and director of Foundation and Donor Relations. "The gala provides an opportunity for industry and the community to celebrate together and gives us the chance to thank those donors, who are so loyal and proud to have their own community college that's doing so well."

Tax-deductible contributions from industry and private donors are also used to support the Student Success Fund, created to help those facing extraordinary circumstances pay for college-related expenses. When a student was notified that she would receive a Pell Grant for her tuition — but not before the deadline when her classes would be dropped for non-payment — the Student Success Fund helped bridge the gap. When a student received a $400 textbook scholarship but still lacked several books she needed for her rigorous coursework in the nursing program, the Student Success Fund provided the additional money to buy all the books required for her class.

"Enrollment is one thing, but students have to persist, stay the course and graduate," said Pres. Dr. Dennis Brown. "So many little things can impede a student's progress and we have to be able to step in and help them. Financial contributions are immensely important — more important now than ever."

As the foundation continues in its mission to provide financial support to Lee College students, board members hope to see more donors choosing planned giving by setting up bequests, charitable trusts and annuities that will allow them to make a lasting difference for generations to come.

"I'm excited about my future," said Emily Vaughan, a native Baytonian and foundation scholarship recipient who is active in Lee College Theatre and plans to attend Sam Houston State University to earn a bachelor's degree in music education at Sam

Houston State University. “None of this would be possible without donations. They really lightened my load.”