

Foundation to award \$590K in scholarships for 2017-18

BAYTOWN, TX — As hundreds of friends and supporters bid on auction items, enjoyed dinner and listened to stories of student success at the 32nd annual Lee College Foundation Gala last weekend, the foundation announced that proceeds from the fundraising event and contributions from donors will allow \$590,000 in scholarships to be awarded to students this academic year.

The awards — \$440,000 in endowed scholarships and \$150,000 in technical scholarships — will be available to all Lee College students: those enrolled in courses full-time or part-time, in dual-credit classes where high-school students can earn college credits, in non-credit classes offered by the Center for Workforce and Community Development, and in the Huntsville Center correctional education program.

“The Foundation Board of Directors is always focused on helping students succeed, persist and complete their goals for their education,” said Pam Warford, executive director of Foundation and Resource Development, as she addressed gala underwriters, sponsors and guests. “Thank you for helping us to meet their needs.”

After a 20-year battle with drug addiction that kept him cycling in and out of prison, Lee College alumnus Adrian Touchstone welcomed faith into his life and made the decision to take ownership of his actions. A scholarship from the Lee College Foundation helped open the door to higher education and the chance to continue his transformation into a stronger, wiser and better man.

Now pursuing a bachelor’s degree at the University of Houston Clear Lake, Touchstone maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA while at Lee College and graduated in May 2017 with an Associate of Applied Science degree in drug and alcohol abuse counseling. He hopes to be an inspiration and source of encouragement for others facing challenges similar to those he has conquered.

“There have been times in my life that I have been hopeless. I had a backwards way of thinking. Love isn’t supposed to hurt, but selfishness and entitlement caused me to hurt a lot of people who did love me,” said Touchstone, who shared his story at the gala and drew a standing ovation.

“Life began to change when I figured out I was the problem,” he said. “I began a journey to seek meaning, and this has all been made possible by your generosity. Without your commitment, countless individuals would not have the support they need to have one of the most meaningful experiences of their lives.”

Like Touchstone, many Lee College students would be unable to complete their chosen program without financial assistance from the foundation. For Samantha McDonnel, a teacher education major and mother of two who also works full-time in the Office of Financial Aid, an award from the foundation allowed her to cover tuition after spending the money she saved for her education to repair damage her home sustained during Hurricane Harvey.

“I am thankful for the foundation and to all of its donors for giving,” McDonnel said. “When you donate, you’re investing in someone. You’re investing in your community. You are bridging the gap between what could be and what will be.”

Lee College Pres. Dr. Dennis Brown echoed that sentiment, telling donors and gala guests that their financial support proved their belief in the college and support of its mission to help students create better and brighter futures through quality higher education.

“We have a great opportunity to help students earn the degree or certificate they need to move forward into their careers with the skills, knowledge and ability to perform in any industry,” Brown said. “It’s not enough to get students into Lee College; we have to get them through Lee College.”