

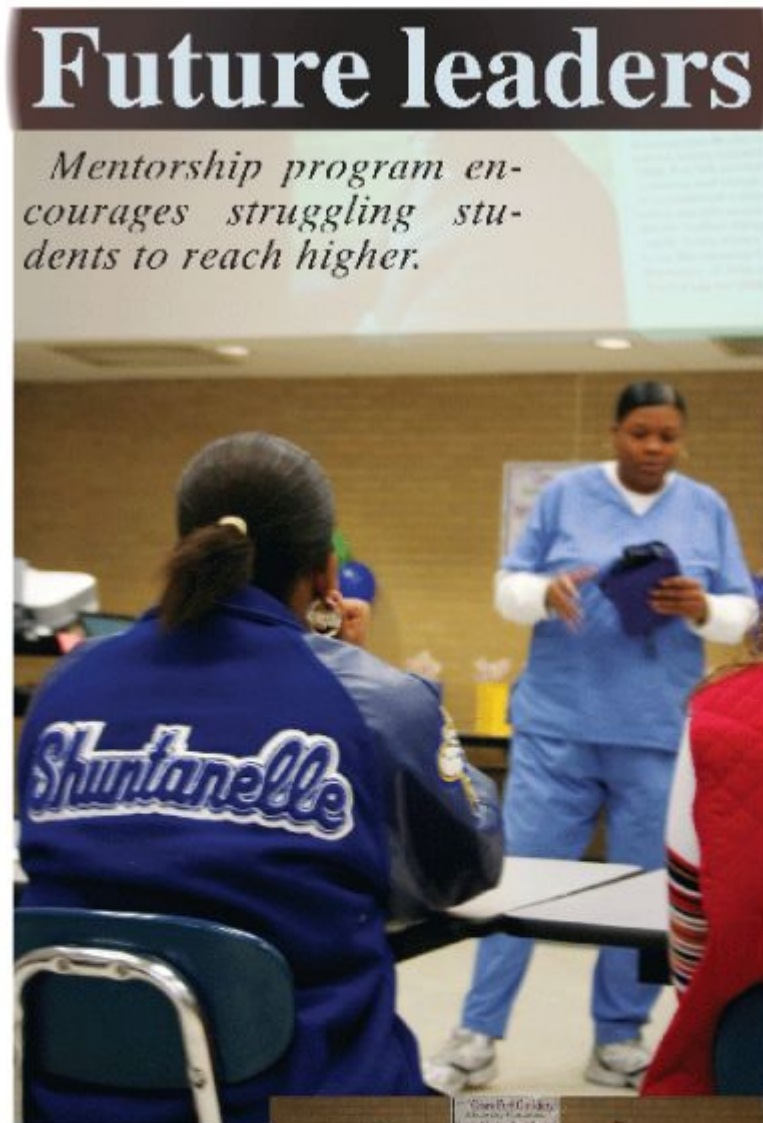
Organization allows people to invest in future leaders

By Robin Aaron
Tribune News

The Grace Fort Gouldsby Scholarship Foundation (GFGSF) Hooks High School Mentoring Program held a mentoring social and pizza party Saturday.

Special Guest Speaker Rae Thigpen, RN, MSBA, Regional Compliance Officer for CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System gave a presentation on positive leadership.

The program's purpose is "Improving College Access through Mentoring."



(Top) Shuntanelle Frazier listens as Rae Thigpen gives Hooks High School students a heads up about the medical profession Saturday during a mentorship event for the Grace Fort Goulsby Scholarship Foundation's mentorship program.

Photos by Robin Aaron



Students Channing Toombs, Justin Gabert, Justin Ward-George, Chris Campbell, Shuntanelle Frazier join mentors Beverly Shannon, Gina Clark, Lisa Jones, DeAna Smith, Kim Sherwin, Jim Sherwin, Thomas Rhodes Saturday.

Photos by Robin Aaron

There are a total of 10 participating students in the program, according to GFGSF Marketing Chair & Mentoring Program Director. Eight of them have been with the program since 2007.

The program and scholarship foundation helps students that may not otherwise be college bound by pairing them with an adult mentor and exposing them to career options.

"Our intention is to continue working with the original group to track progress and continue the momentum that is built between the mentor and student," Blakely said. "We started with 9th and 10th graders to have a better runway of success. Should we have folks drop out due to movement then we look to add other deserving students to keep us at 10."

Two Hooks High Schoolers involved in the program said Saturday that they have benefitted from mentorship.

"It helps you do good in life," senior Justin Ward said "It makes me think about what I want to be. It keeps your head up."

Ward's Mentor, Pastor Jim Sherman, is just a phone call or email away when he needs him, even though he has relocated to Dallas since Ward's acceptance into the program.

"To tell you the truth," Channing Toombs said, "I don't know where my mind would be if it weren't for this program."

Toombs is a Junior, but is already planning to study mechanical engineering once he graduates and heads off to college. His mentor, Deanna Smith is even available to help him with his school work when needed.

Saturday's event was ment to give mentees more time to gain knowledge about different work fields and to see their mentors personally.

Mentees are chosen through the counselors office, Beverly Shannon, in the case of Hooks High School and are invited to fill out a questionnaire to be selected for the program.

"These are kids that might not otherwise go to college," said Blakely, who is a past recipient of the Gouldsby scholarship.

Grace Lee Fort Gouldsby, born in 1923 in Bowie County, Texas, attended Hooks public schools, graduating in 1941 and entered Bishop College in 1942.

Her family established the Grace Fort Gouldsby Scholarship Foundation, a non-profit corporation, on the occasion of her retirement from the teaching profession in June of 1989 to express their love and appreciation for Mrs. Gouldsby's unsparing devotion to excellence in education.