

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Lee Academy for Gifted Education.... The School Where Everyone is Proud to be Smart

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Tampa, FL, February 19, 2008: Drive down Twin Lakes Boulevard in Tampa and if you don't know what you are looking for, you might accidentally drive right past a school that is unlike any other in Tampa Bay. Turn at a small vinyl sign and enter the long driveway past the mural-painted fence and you will be pleasantly surprised what awaits you there.

Opened in 1983, half hidden beneath a canopy of trees, Lee Academy for Gifted

Education resembles a beautiful rustic summer camp, situated on acres of nature-like preserve. Here, a wooden veranda overlooks a shimmering pond by the science lab inviting investigation by inquiring young minds. Largo, a friendly black Lab and school mascot owned by the Social Studies teacher, freely roams the freshly mulched playground in search of scattering peacocks that also call Lee Academy home.

As you open the doors of the main building and step into the foyer, you can immediately sense the pride Lee Academy has in its special students. While students' exhibits covering the walls proudly display their artist wares, multiple pegboards showcase poetry, photos of classroom events, and a call for submissions for yearbook and student magazine.

Instead of a sterile educational environment, this is what daily greets its eighty-five intellectually-gifted pupils, ranging from early childhood education through high school, whose chronological ages don't necessarily match their academic grade levels. Their insatiable curiosity is constantly challenged and encouraged by a group of dedicated teachers, specializing in providing an "outside-the-box" learning experience.

School Administrator, Jennifer Deitz explains in a crisp British accent, that Lee Academy for Gifted Education was created to fill a void. “Our Director Linda Lacey was working with gifted youngsters and felt that there wasn’t a place for them where they could actually begin learning. Lee Academy was built to give them that opportunity.”

What separates Lee Academy from other private schools is it is specifically designed for and only for the gifted learner. “We have a small class size, therefore more individualized attention for the students, and have specialty teachers even for the early grades.”

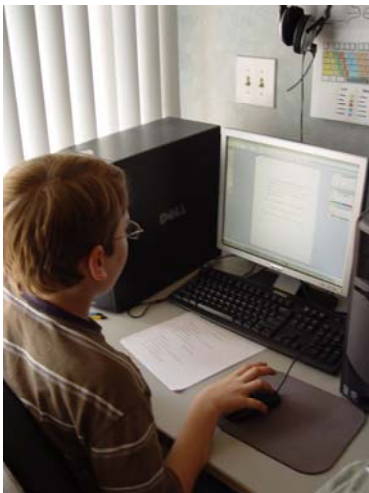
The non-institutional atmosphere promotes close relationships between all grade levels. “We are more like a family than a school, the children more like siblings than classmates. This is the one place where it is okay to be different, to be an individual, to be smart.”



At Lee Academy, an eleven-year old might begin school in his chronological grade, but be advanced due to his skill mastery. A thirteen-year old can easily be a high school Junior. A three-year old may share the same classroom materials as a five-year old. Here, ability and student need, not age, are the motivating factors in the child’s education.

“Children feel safe to experiment and take a chance in their learning. Our curriculum is designed to challenge. We encourage children to think creatively and outside-of-the-box and participate in as many hands-on activities as we can devise. We are very interested in the whole child, not just the academic, but social and emotional progress,” says Jennifer.

An average day for a Lee Academy student begins at 8:30 with two lessons before morning recess. “Students move from class to class and don’t stay with the same teacher all day. This idea follows our philosophy that physical movement is important to learning.” Another two lessons follow recess and then lunch outdoors, weather permitting, with all grade levels. “After lunch it’s play time. The younger children can run around, use our playground equipment, play basketball, play board games or invent their own games, which many of them do under constant teacher supervision.” Three more lessons occur afterwards and the school day concludes at 2:45.



The educational environment at Lee Academy is much like a laboratory or workshop, rich in materials with

simultaneous access to many learning activities. The emphasis is on experimentation and student involvement. Classes are as wide and varied as the student population itself and include Honors and Advanced classes in both Florida Sunshine State required daily core subjects and additional courses such as Art, Spanish, Latin, Computer Design, Physical Education, Yearbook, Magazine, Drama, among others. The success of the applied school philosophy can be easily seen in the sixteen families that have multiple siblings enrolled in Lee Academy.

Students at Lee Academy aren't forced into matching starched uniforms or polo shirts. They are, instead, encouraged to express their individuality. "We don't have a dress code, but we ask students to dress appropriately for the job they are doing. Clothing should be comfortable and not distracting, conducive to learning as well as spending time outdoors."

In February, Lower School (middle school) and Upper School (high school) students showcased such individuality with their In-Depth Study projects, a creative culmination of many months' worth of research, writing and assembling data on selected topics, preparing data boards and other visual media, as well as speeches reviewing the main highlights of each presentation. Subjects ranging from Paranormal and Italian Cuisine to Birth Defects, Tattoos and Digital Photography filled the many classrooms for parents, friends and other family members to explore.



It's not "all work and no play" at Lee Academy. Friday, a half-day in preparation for a week's vacation (*Lee Academy follows the highly successful British school system*), showcased the athletic talents of the school's faculty against the prowess of its student "Navigators" basketball team. Students and parents alike lined the basketball court and cheered their talented classmates on to victory by two points.

Anyone visiting the school can witness how much parents are actively involved. Jennifer says, "We have a parent-sponsored Booster Club that organizes special events throughout the year for the children. We have several parents that volunteer on campus with the curriculum, with field trips, with students' required community service



projects, and with coaching our basketball team. In our upper school, parents contribute to our career and college planning course by telling the students about their own college and work experiences which helps to continually broaden our program. It's an extremely safe campus because of its size and the fact that the teachers know all of the students and parents. We're always open to ideas for parent involvement."



At Lee Academy, not only are students academically challenged, but socially as well. Students volunteer in the community as a required part of their education experience. "We liaise with local food banks, participate in the Coastal Clean Up, join Making Strides Against Breast Cancer and we visit a retirement home at Halloween and Christmas. Lower School is currently fundraising for the ASPCA. We also have students who volunteer in the

community on their own."

Lee Academy offers a simple way for parents to learn if the school is a right fit for their child. "We like the parents to visit the school and see our children and the school in operation because we are not traditional. We then set up an evaluation where the child visits us for three days and becomes a part of our school, participates in lessons and different activities. At the end of that three day period, the school coordinator meets with the parents to determine if we and the child are a proper fit."

The success of Lee Academy can be attributed to several reasons, but one in particular. Says Jennifer, "Lee Academy has been successful for the past twenty six years due to Linda Lacey and our teachers' commitment to gifted education. This, combined with our flexibility with our students, allows us to create an integrative curriculum. The needs and interests of the students provide a base from which our curriculum is created. The student is always an active participant in the learning process. This enables us to provide the best specialized education to be found anywhere in Tampa Bay."

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For more information on Lee Academy for Gifted Education, to make an appointment for an enrollment consultation, or to simply learn if your child has characteristics of giftedness, please visit www.leegifted.com or contact Jennifer Deitz at 813.931.3316.