

I champion Albany public schools because...

The opportunity:

Twenty years ago, Glen Barker was one of the first students in a groundbreaking language program at Albany High School – Mandarin Chinese. He knew it was a unique opportunity; what he didn't know was how telling it would be for his future. Today, Glen is director of Pacific Rim scouting for Major League Baseball's Houston Astros.

Along with the opportunity to study a unique foreign language – he also took four years of Spanish – Glen remembers the emphasis on education he received from his family and teachers. Late Albany High social sciences teacher Bob Bellizzi, the beloved baseball coach at Glen's alma mater, The College of St. Rose, was instrumental in shaping Glen's college path, which included what Glen considers his greatest non-baseball achievement – having the opportunity to earn a degree while playing the sport he loved.

"I think there are more opportunities for kids today, but they have to take advantage of them. If you don't take advantage of opportunities, they're not going to go out and search for you. You've got to go out and look for them."

The achievement:

It was June 1993. The call Glen had expected from the majors hadn't come. One month earlier, he had graduated from St. Rose with a bachelor's degree in Chemistry and a minor in Math. He was ready to accept a job as a lab assistant there while pursuing graduate studies. Then the call finally came; the Detroit Tigers had drafted him. Six years and one organization change later, he was in the majors playing for the Astros. "I lived the dream."

"Everybody has the dream of making it to the big leagues, but there aren't many people who make it. That's why my parents always stressed education. My mother and father always pushed me, and Albany High had really good teachers that were always willing to help kids out."

Sitting in the familiar first-base dugout at Albany's Bleecker Stadium in July 2008, Glen Barker looked out on a field filled with memories. "I got this scar here," he laughed, touching the left side of his nose while recalling a college playoff game. Including his playing days at Albany High School and The College of St. Rose (Class of 1993), and in Albany's Twilight League, Glen estimates he played about 150 games at the venerable ballpark. He also played 235 career games with the Houston Astros (1999-2001) alongside stars such as Jeff Bagwell, Craig Biggio, Derek Bell, Doc Gooden and Roy Oswalt.



**Glen Barker, Albany High School, Class of 1989
Director of Pacific Rim Scouting for the Houston
Astros and former Major League Baseball player**