

Upfront

In mid-May, I appealed to you, in this column, to support Horizons Savannah. I won't re-introduce you to the organization now; if you're curious, horizonssavannah.org will tell you everything you want to know.

A couple of months ago, many of you responded to my solicitation. Some longtime friends, and some folks I have never met. Each of you should have the opportunity understand the importance of your generosity and its meaningful social impact. The following is a collection of excerpts (with contextually necessary enhancements) from a letter I sent to the Horizons Savannah board, at the end of last week.

We have so much to celebrate, and each of your deserves thanks and congratulations.

While our innovative Horizons@Home program – which was very well-conceived and received, in light of this summer's unique challenges – has ended, we aren't done yet. Next week (which is now this week to Skinnie readers) thanks to (Horizons Savannah Executive Director) Christy (Edwards)'s gritty determination and diligence, and (Bethesda Academy President) Dr. (H. Michael) Hughes' and the Bethesda Board of Governors' generosity, we will welcome our youngest Horizons Savannah students to our swim program at the Bethesda pool.

We (Horizons) have completed extensive specialized training and facilities preparation, and secured essential permissions and legal opinions, to ensure the safety and security of our team, students and families.

The program is designed for a student and parent/designated guardian to participate together in the water. We intend to offer swimming instruction and recreation to our students for three to four weeks, depending on school schedules and pool availability.

One of our new parents (a mother of a kindergartner) posted the following message of gratitude. It quite convincingly reinforces the value of our shared commitment:



"I just wanted to take a minute and say thank you to Horizons Savannah. I heard great things about (the program), but after these 4 weeks that my son completed with Horizons online, I was impressed. He learned about the sun, the moon, graphing, number bonds, rhyming, community helpers, germs and so much more. All the items he needed to complete his projects were given to us and he needed nothing. (Horizons) went above and beyond to teach but make it fun. And thank you to Amy for teaching how to stay safe, cool, calm and collected during the pandemic. I can't wait to see how much fun my son will have next summer!!"

Our leadership team is currently considering means, methods and channels for continued and impactful engagement with our students and families during the coming school year. With private schools opening for in-person matriculation and public schools limiting offerings to online instruction until further notice, the fundamental goal of our program – narrowing the "opportunity gap" – is more imperiled than ever. It is somewhat counterintuitive that society's noble desire to employ education as our most potent instrument for social change leads us to decisions that ensure our most vulnerable children have the most limited access to a school experience. So, we hope to find ways to fill the gap.

A big thank you to you, the supporters of Horizons Savannah. You positively impacted our community's young people this summer, and you ensure the work continues.



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Linda Novack 912-596-1908	Suzanne Lin 912-441-8003	Liz Giddens 404-277-1614
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