

upfront

How do you ask for money when 1 out of 4 Americans is out of a job?

Carefully. Humbly. Reluctantly, perhaps. And you introspect and ensure that the thing you are asking people to support is genuinely important and impactful.

Horizons Savannah is a summer enrichment program for economically disadvantaged kids in our area. Our core activity is a six-week, all-day, on-site immersive experience that includes classroom academics, social and emotional learning modules, specialized instruction (including science, technology, reading and swimming), cultural outings, recreation, meals, progress measurement, and remediation. We employ exceptional professional educators (7:1 student/teacher ratio) and operate at the generous invitation of our host independent school partners – Bethesda Academy, Savannah Christian Preparatory School, Savannah Country Day School, and St. Andrews School. Our students come from all over the Savannah-Chatham County public school system, and each of their families faces economic hurdles that can impede their kids' aspirational development. One amazing component of our summer program – young people who attend our host schools work as volunteers, thereby creating relationships between communities that might otherwise not collaborate organically. In addition to our core summer program, we work with our kids and families throughout the entire year. Oh...and we do it all for less than \$1,400/student.

This summer, we must do things a little differently. At Horizons Savannah, we started early, as the Covid crisis gained momentum, to innovate and ensure we continue to serve our students, their families, and our community. Among the national network of Horizons affiliates, we have been leaders in developing creative, efficacious solutions to the challenges of running a summer program for hundreds of young people from households that are hard-hit by rising unemployment, school closures, decreased mobility, food insecurity, and healthcare concerns. Now, more than ever, we need to battle against the risk that under-resourced kids might fall dangerously behind on their paths to their best lives.

For the summer of 2020, we have designed a program that keeps us engaged daily with our students. We focus on maintaining a strong connection with our kids and families, providing opportunities for them to learn and grow, and ways to remain active. We will deliver through channels that include live lessons, an online learning portal for students and parents, and adaptive skills practice with individual-

ized teacher support. We plan to offer club-style segments, addressing interests and activities like cooking, running and art.

Some of our families lack home-based technologies that enhance our learning experiences. So we will get a Google ChromeBook laptop device into every kid's hands. We are building boxes filled with learning and activity materials, and each of our students will receive one. We are working to ensure that our kids have a healthy breakfast and lunch, Mondays through Fridays, just as they do at our program sites during a "regular" summer. We have secured a referral partner that offers traditional day care for our families who require it.

May 20 is Horizons Giving Day, our most important annual fundraising activity. This year, my ask is different from other years. We have worked diligently to reduce expenses while adhering to our social impact and quality standards. Rather than a general donation to our pool of operating funds, please consider a targeted gift that satisfies child-specific needs that will make this summer as impactful for our families as it would be without the constraints a global pandemic loads onto education and youth development work.

\$250 funds a ChromeBook for a student family. \$100 provides a "box" of program materials that will be distributed to each student to enable his or her summer experience (Boxes include books, study materials, activity guides, craft materials, and recreational tools.) Horizons Savannah continues to grow: We serve several hundred kids, most of whom return to the program year after year. Doing the easy multiplication, \$500 purchases two ChromeBook computers or five program boxes; and \$1,000 gets computers into four of our students' hands, or buys 10 boxes to fill 10 children's summers with opportunity and joy.

The process is easy. Online, go to www.horizonsgivingday.org/organizations/horizons-savannah, scroll down until you see "Fundraising Campaigns" on the right side of your page, look for my name, and click "Donate." I'll match your gift. The system walks you through the rest. If you have trouble typing the string above, just Google Horizons Savannah Giving Day 2020. The initiative is active now, with actual Giving Day itself falling on May 20. So the window is a handful of days to participate.

Education and youth enrichment are the most important tools for social change. Thank you for your support.

Scott A. Lauretti

To contact The Skinnie with your ideas, responses, letters and more, email us at mail@theskinny.com

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