

Thank you.

In the previous installment of this column, I asked for your help as Horizons Savannah funds its first-ever “Horizons at Home” version of its summer programs for economically-challenged young people in the region. While we have determined that our “normal,” full-day, in-person operational model is logistically infeasible this year, we remain committed to providing platforms from which our kids can leap (metaphorically...don't worry) to their highest heights. Doing so requires collaboration – our professional educators, partner organizations, volunteers, student families, vendors and service providers, and you... all working together to deliver transformative educational and developmental experiences. When we succeed, when our students access their potential and navigate towards their best lives, our entire community benefits. The work matters.

Our delivery systems are different from our traditional template this year; we are compelled to innovate in response to THE virus. Rather than our kids coming to us at our host school sites, we are taking our programming to them, by sending (physically and digitally) curriculum kits and books and activity bundles and laptops and internet connectivity and nutritious meals and live tutoring and video-produced, anytime-access lessons and social-and-emotional support. So, in the last issue of *The Skinnie*, I solicited you to fund Horizons-at-Home kits (\$125 each) or Google ChromeBook laptop computers (\$250 each), or whatever you could comfortably contribute towards our efforts. And you had only a narrow time window during which to act: The magazine arrived at your home May 16, Horizons Giving Day was May 20, and the online portal for the Horizons Giving Day campaign is digitally available through month-end. While it's impossible to precisely attribute a gift to its prompting, the data is pretty convincing: Readers of this magazine have – as of writing (May 26) – generously contributed approximately \$13,000 in response to my plea. Consider the import of this amazing result: We are able to secure 100 Horizons-at-Home summer experience kits and get them in our kids hands. Or, doing the math another way, more than 50 young people who would be lost to us for the summer because they lack technology to participate will be with us, virtually, every day, thanks to the laptops and connectivity your gifts have financed.

So, thank you, sincerely. Out of respect for each of you, I will not name you here without your consent. But you are champions in a valiant fight, by my scorecard. These quiet acts of kindness have the power to positively alter the trajectories of many lives.

As for the aforementioned virus – what a weekend this one (Memorial Day) was?! Firsthand, I can report, from the beach to the bars downtown (I don't drink, so mine is the view from the outside-in), if you landed here from another planet, you might not realize there had

ever been talk of a pandemic, at all. Unmasked masses congregating everywhere, not enough distance between group members for slivers of light to shine through. On the road to Tybee (I drove out and back for observational purposes, but didn't leave my car) – license plates from states and commonwealths representing every region of the U.S., and lines at ice cream shops and frozen drink kiosks – more conga than socially-distanced. Whatever we were doing since March, there's the real possibility we are undoing it in less than a week in May. Don't mistake my concern for a political point-of-view. Philosophically, I am – simplifying things – “pro-freedom,” but I am well-trained in sciences and math, and I have made a life by acting upon reasoned risk-assessments. It might be that, in this crisis, there is no thread-able needle, which suggests we could be double-losers, in a way.

Most humans are both empathetic and self-interested. Sometimes, these disparate instincts can combine and amplify each other for “good.” Philanthropy, kind of, works that way. Other times, though, these impulses work at cross-purposes...and a global pandemic could be one such time. Consider the binary choices: 1) Do nothing-ish: Let the virus advance as it “wishes,” while harnessing market forces to stimulate development of treatments and prophylactic measures (there is considerable profit incentive for firms to work this problem and capital to flow in support of the work) or 2) Do anything and everything to prevent as many deaths as you can, regardless of ancillary impacts on any other societal objectives. If you think about it, we have kind done a lot of number 2, followed by a sudden shift to heavy-number 1 (with some feel-good-but-probably-futile-in-the-face-of-entropy (if not absurd) remnants from number 2. Or, we tried hard, and then we didn't. Most of us have attempted to construct some suitable hybrid – a little from column A and little from column B; but, the efficacy of each option depends on its universal application, so our approach is probably doomed.

The language in the sentence above (use of the verb “to try”) is at the root of our collective problem. We equate trying with active intervention; but “trying,” or effort, might just as well be making the conscious choice to do nothing at all. It comes down to honestly assessing the likely outcomes from each intervention, including complete inaction, and choosing the course that leads to the best collective result. And, that's the rub...it's the old prisoner's dilemma (in somewhat complicated social psychology terms): A group whose members pursue rational self-interest may all end up worse off than a group whose members act contrary to their own selfish goals. Of, if payoffs are not assumed to represent self-interest, a group whose members rationally pursue any goals may all meet less success than if they had not rationally pursued their goals individually. Trying (desperately) to distill the academics: It is difficult to get rational, selfish agents to cooperate for their common good.

In other words, people aren't wired to deal with pandemics – we want to fix things, and we want things to be fixed, and, sometimes, there's no easy (or hard) way out of an insidious fix, at least not along a path we can control.

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

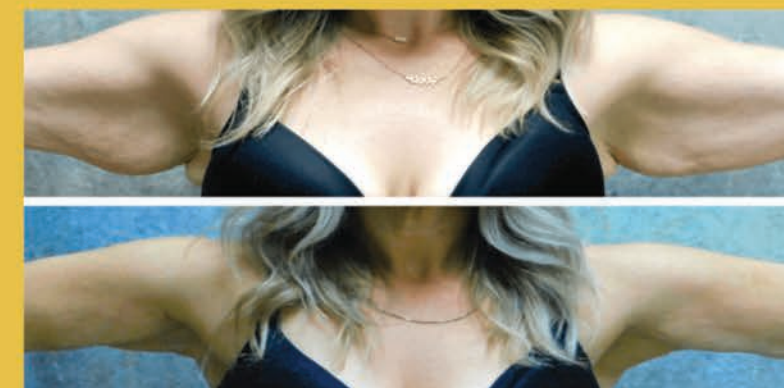
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