

# Upfront

I am the chair of the board of Horizons Savannah, which sounds grandiose, yet I am also a middle school teacher for the education-focused, non-profit, social-benefit enterprise. It's with both hats-in-hand that I ask for your support. (If you want to skip the narrative, go right to the solicitation – the final three paragraphs below.)

Horizons Savannah is a not-for-profit organization with a clear mission: We partner with youth, their families, and the community to enrich the lives of students through the joy of learning, while developing the skills for success and inspiration to reach their dreams. The program features time-and-research-tested components that differentiate it from other educational interventions. At its core: Six weeks of full-day classroom instruction, recreational activities, cultural exploration, and relationship-building. Kids come to the program from all over the public school district. While they share socioeconomic challenges, they also share the basic human desires for connection, growth and fun. Horizons kids are eligible to join the program as kindergartners and can remain in the community, year-after-year, through high school graduation. Many come back to the program after their high school years to work as volunteers or professional teachers as young adults. Horizons operates at the generous invitation of four local independent host schools – Savannah Country Day, Bethesda Academy, St. Andrews School, and Savannah Christian. Horizons students enjoy the resources that these institutions provide as program sites. Young people from host schools volunteer as classroom and activity assistants. Horizons brings people together from disparate circumstances who might never otherwise meet. These connections demystify our perceived differences and create valuable lifetime bonds. Horizons also teaches kids to swim. Swimming is both a survival skill and an esteem-building activity, especially for kids who have never dipped a toe in water before.

The program works. Horizons kids' reading and math standardized test scores, measured at the beginning and end of the summer session, significantly improve, in stark contrast to many of their non-Horizons peers. I was first introduced to the program when my kids volunteered as students at Country Day. Later, their mother, in the last few years of her life, worked as a middle school teacher after returning to school to qualify to do so. Now me. I put on my purple tee shirt, shorts and sneakers, and clock in at 7:30 every morning (yes, we use a digital punch clock and pay staff an hourly wage). I celebrate the little wins (a hesitant kid suddenly blossoms as she reads aloud to the class from our selected novel), and I lament the challenges ("If you're not going to put your phone away and join what we're doing, you can leave, because you're wasting your time and you're wasting mine"). It's an incredible privilege to have a chance to positively impact a kid. It's a special gift to honor Louise's legacy through service.



Horizons Savannah depends on people like you. We employ professional teachers and limit teacher/student ratios to 15:1 (plus a paid assistant and a volunteer in most classrooms). We feed our kids – breakfast and lunch, every day. We transport them using contracted buses. We operate all day, five days a week, for six weeks in summer, and we supplement the core session with ongoing engagement throughout the school year. We run a swimming program. We take five field trips. We offer a variety of clubs, ranging from personal finance, to yoga, to lacrosse, and many more. And we do it all for a cost of approximately \$1,500 per student for the entire year. This summer, we will welcome approximately 300 students, while more than 100 remain on our waiting list.

Horizons Giving Day is our single most-important fundraising initiative each year. "Day" is misleading. The actual day is May 18, but the campaign continues through the entire month of May. Please consider supporting the work. I have worked with and studied many social impact groups – I am confident Horizons is among the very best (and offers the greatest return on your investment). You can learn more about the organization and link to a live donation opportunity by visiting my personal fundraising page. The internet address:

[horizonsgivingday.org/campaigns/scott](http://horizonsgivingday.org/campaigns/scott)

I know it's clunky, so I'll make it easier. If you have difficulty typing the link into your browser, you can email me directly, [slauretti@theskinnie.com](mailto:slauretti@theskinnie.com), and I'll answer any of your program questions and donation logistics concerns. We also have a live, clickable link on the front page of our magazine's website at [theskinnie.com](http://theskinnie.com).

Let me propose an exchange. It costs me/us about \$2.30 every two weeks to get this magazine in your hands. For those of you who have been around long enough, you know we've done it more than 500 times. That's close to \$1,200 per household. We have never charged a penny for subscriptions. Make a \$100 (or more or less...which I'll personally match, dollar for dollar) contribution to Horizons this Giving Day, and we'll call it even. Thank you...very much.

Scott Lauretti

To contact us with your ideas, responses, letters and more, email us at [mail@theskinnie.com](mailto:mail@theskinnie.com)

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