



*Inside this issue, you'll find our annual salute to neighbors who have graduated from high school in the last few weeks. We've been producing this feature for at least 15 years, and it's one of our most popular. Per the imitation-is-flattery canard, we're flattered, as other local publishers have "adopted" the concept for their pages, too.*

The Skidaway Class of 2021 has 75 members, according to our research. They completed their studies at a variety of local schools, both public and private; while a few earned degrees far outside our zip code. Many are headed to college in the fall, with a significant cohort set to fill SEC stands and root for their Dawgs, Tide, Vols and War Eagles. The friendly confines of Georgia Southern will welcome a cluster of our kids. Both West Point and the Naval Academy will train Skidaway progeny to lead. And some kids are venturing a long way from home: as far west as Pepperdine University in Malibu and across The Pond to St. Andrews University in Scotland, where golf and studies are similarly revered.

Let's say, for estimation purposes, the 75 number is consistent across classes, from pre-K through 12th grade. (It's probably not near-exact, as economic considerations might impede very young families from moving here so early in their lives.) But we'll use it anyway, to develop a ballpark guess. With 13 grade levels and 75 students per grade, Skidaway is home to close to 1,000 school-age children. Which is a rather amazing statistic for a community that is sometimes misperceived as a retirement village.

Speaking of education: Skidaway's youth continue to fare well, when considered as a bloc. But things are very different for other kids. I've spoken with lots of children recently. Every single one proclaims that they and their schoolmates completed almost zero real work during the pandemic year. Kids slept in until noon and turned their Zoom cameras off when they were awake. They ignored assignments altogether. Yet passing grades miraculously appeared. All this during a time when school districts expended unusual energy to ensure they received their "due" from the "COVID relief" bonanza, presumably to enable them to deliver quality instruction in innova-

tive ways. Trust me – according to students – the process failed.

I say this as a man with two feet in a classroom. I continue to believe that education is our most potent tool for making positive social change. But there's significant space between social change and social engineering. The era of schools as social-engineering agents must end. School systems as employment centers for career bureaucrats: A good thing for pension-inspired grown-ups, a disaster for our children and the society they will inherit.

One thing is obvious to me every day that I teach. Kids are smart. And inherently curious. And, basically, "good." Until adults figure out ways to help them screw things up. Education should be about pushing us all to reimagine the limits of "the possible." And to remind us that the only people who can expand those limits are ourselves.

Teaching is a noble pursuit. Betraying the teacher/student covenant for any other purpose or less-pure agenda might be society's most insidious crime against itself.

Congratulations to the Class of 2021. Your winding paths to anything you can imagine begin here and now.

*Scott A. Laurienti*



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



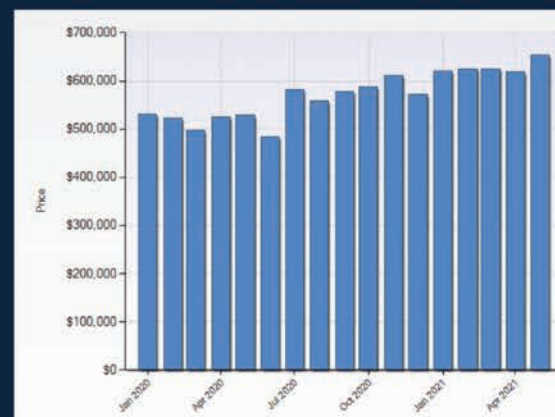
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