Out-of-School Time Stories

BOOST Grantee Spotlight: **Horizons Savannah**

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GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Horizons Savannah is a tuition-free program dedicated to inspiring and supporting K-12 students from Chatham County public schools. Through a six-week summer program, year-round clubs, tutoring, and enrichment opportunities, Horizons empowers youth to thrive and unlock their full potential.

The program is designed to meet students' whole child needs by providing educational services, meals, and a safe space where students can thrive. Integral to this philosophy is how Horizons Savannah provides a multitude of themed experiences students can choose to engage with, including lifeguard training, coastal ecology, and culinary arts.

> **The program creates a true sense of community, where our kids are encouraged to try new things, discover their unique interests, and build confidence in a safe, nurturing setting. From swimming lessons to academic enrichment, Horizons offers a perfect blend of fun and learning that keeps our kids engaged and excited.**
>
> **– Horizons Savannah parent**

2023-2024 Youth Served:
121 Afterschool
306 Summer

Ages Served:
K-12th Grade

Counties Served:
Chatham

Programming Offered:
Afterschool and Summer

BOOST Grant Purpose:
Expand access
Reduce barriers
Increase quality

OST Government Funding Sources:
BOOST Grant

Website:
https://www.horizonssavannah.org/

HORIZONS® SAVANNAH

Expanded Access and Capacity

BOOST funding has been critical to the sustainability and expansion of the program. Horizons Savannah has been able to expand popular clubs and experiences to reach all their students across all sites. Between 2023 and 2024, the program was able to increase their student serving capacity by 30 students (10%) through hiring teachers and support staff.

BOOST funding has also helped Horizons develop more partnerships with local Savannah professional development programs and enhance the program's offerings to students in subjects such as financial education, drama, photography, and sports. By expanding access, the program has been able to improve academic outcomes and provide a safe supportive environment for youth to thrive.

Horizons Savannah addresses two crucial community needs: reading competency and academic support for students. Reading and math specialists at Horizons use a curriculum aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence and utilize benchmark STAR testing to tailor classroom instruction. **As a result, 75% of students across both the afterschool and summer learning programs made gains in reading and math as measured by STAR testing.**

Building a Strong Literacy Foundation

Horizons Savannah's early literacy program for first-graders employs a variety of dynamic methods to foster reading skills, especially for children with learning differences like dyslexia. Faculty are trained in the Orton-Gillingham appraoch, which emphasizes tactile, hands-on techniques. Students engage with letter tiles to form words and trace letters in shaving cream, making reading, writing, and spelling both multisensory and memorable. Through these engaging activities, children have fun while strengthening their retention and foundational literacy skills.

Horizons Savannah's early literacy program meets children where they are and utilizes various techniques and physical learning tools to enhance the classroom experience. Students foster a love of learning and build the emotional confidence to successfully tackle future academic challenges.

Supporting the Whole Child

Students have opportunities to grow their love of learning and apply their literacy skills through engaging with various program offerings at Horizons Savannah. In addition to reading and math, students can also take highly engaging lessons in music, sports, arts and crafts, and STEAM. They learn how to swim and receive volunteer and work opportunities in the field of youth development and aquatics. Youth at Horizons Savannah are prepared for future success via college counseling, career readiness assistance, and necessary life skills such as financial and digital literacy.

> **Students have the chance to learn valuable life skills such as swimming, playing an instrument, and even picking up a new language – experiences that are often beyond their reach in a traditional classroom setting.**
>
> **– Horizons Savannah staff**

Horizons Savannah has seen substantial positive impact for youth and families. Students report improved self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Parents are also satisfied with Horizons' ability to meet the needs of their children, with many re-enrolling their children over multiple summers. **Youth participating in the program have experienced improved academics, a decrease in chronic absenteeism, and less disciplinary incidents.**

Future Horizons

While BOOST funding has helped Horizons Savannah expand to meet the needs of its current students, the program's youth applications received outpace enrollment capacity annually. Christy Edwards, Executive Director of Horizons Savannah, expressed her hopes for the program, "I would make Horizons big enough for every kid that wants to come to be able to join us and be a part of the Horizons Community." With an unwavering commitment to community, she believes that Horizons can create a brighter future, where every child has the opportunity to thrive.