Horizons GFA welcomed Erika Wesley as our new Executive Director this fall. During an extensive search process, Erika stood out as a proven non-profit leader with deep roots in Bridgeport. Erika possesses passion and commitment for youth, education and expanding opportunity for all students. Erika is ready to support the HGFA community and collaborate to ensure student, program, and organizational success.

“Erika has built strong relationships with many key stakeholders in Bridgeport, with which she shares a personal and professional connection,” Horizons stated in its summer newsletter. “We are thrilled to welcome her strong leadership, strategic planning, and fiscal managerial skills, all of which will be essential to the continued success of Horizons GFA.

“Over the next few months, I plan to develop relationships with key stakeholders and begin a strategic planning process with our board that will allow us to identify Horizons GFA’s organizational strengths while assessing areas of opportunity and growth. I will work to expand the community partnership accessible to the Horizons program, and I am eager to begin fostering relationships with the faculty, students, and staff at GFA.”

“I am excited to be part of the Horizons GFA program and am delighted to have the opportunity to lead such a great organization whose mission connects to advancing the social and academic outcomes of students who come from a community I care deeply about, not only as a resident but as a graduate of Bridgeport Public Schools.”

– Erika Wesley
In June 2021, students returned to the GFA campus for in-person learning. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students academically and socially was evident and led our staff to increase support for struggling and below grade level learners, provide emotional support for fearful or anxious students, and ramp up social emotional skills practice.

Classrooms were split into two pods to successfully adhere to COVID-19 safety measures. The smaller classroom sizes gave students an opportunity to focus on their academics with highly individualized attention. Smaller classroom sizes also created a safe space for students to work through their feelings in a productive way.

In the afternoons, pods merged by grade for outdoor enrichment to allow students to increase their social interaction in a familiar environment while renewing their relationships with classmates in a controlled setting. For many students, the Horizons GFA summer session served as invaluable preparation for their return to the classroom after 18 months of virtual learning.

“High School Program

"One thing that makes the Horizon High School and College Success Program so effective is the ownership of success shared between students, families and staff. All parties make a commitment of time and effort toward a common objective, high school graduation and post-secondary education.”
– Ms. Elizabeth, Horizons HS Coach

2020-21 High School Program Accomplishments

• Enrollment of 83 Students
• 2300 Virtual Coaching Sessions
• 8 High School Skills Workshops for 9th Graders
• 10 Career Exploration Workshops for 10th Graders
• 12 SAT Prep Sessions for 11th & 12th Graders
• Financial Aid Form Workshop for Seniors & Families
• 100% On-time Graduation
• 100% Post-Secondary Admission
• 100% Post-Secondary Enrollment

PreK-8 Program

"We had a student who was very shy, would not talk, and was below grade level in reading and in math. Throughout the weeks at Horizons, she gained so much confidence! She was beyond excited to work hard and made amazing growth in reading and in math!"
– Mr. Angel, Horizons 2nd Grade Teacher

"It was wonderful to see the 6th graders return to some normalcy this summer after the pandemic. A few students started off very socially withdrawn and unsure of how to interact with classmates and staff. The SEL curriculum really gave them the tools they needed to readjust and it was amazing to watch as their comfort levels and confidence grew."
– Ms. Nicole, Horizons 6th Grade Teacher

Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate for High School Graduates
The Career Launch Program provides career readiness training and internship search support for students during college and post-graduation. Student participants receive guidance to apply for a paid internship with local partner companies during the summer before senior year, as well as guidance to search for full-time employment after college. Career Launch enables students to gain the experience needed to secure an entry level position within six months of receiving their degree. This year, 14 college juniors and seniors participated in Career Launch, with five securing internship placements over the summer. 100% of Horizons GFA college graduates who participated in Career Launch are currently employed or in graduate school!

“I think one of the most valuable skills I learned during my internship this summer was developing my professionalism. Throughout this summer I was able to see what to expect after college and how vital it is to really hone this skill. In the professional field I will need to carry myself in a more mature manner and being in an office with experienced workers showed me how to stand out through both my character and my work ethic.” — Joey, Horizons GFA College Senior

Schools Our Students Are Attending
- Albertus Magnus (2)
- Bentley University
- Berklee College of Music
- Central Connecticut State University
- Champlain College
- Elon University (2)
- Fairfield University
- Gateway Community College (2)
- Housatonic Community College (5)
- College of the Holy Cross
- Ithaca College
- Lafayette College
- Lincoln Tech
- Norwalk Community College (2)
- New York University
- Sacred Heart University
- Southern Connecticut State University (4)
- Southern New Hampshire University
- Trinity College
- Trumbull Transition Program
- University of Rochester
- University of Bridgeport
- University of Connecticut, Stamford (7)
- University of Connecticut, Storrs (6)
- University of New Haven
- Western Connecticut State University

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

Financials

Horizons GFA FY21 Revenues

Horizons GFA FY21 Operating Costs By Program

Horizons GFA FY21 Expense Breakdown

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.

The operations of Horizons GFA are entirely self-funded, with 100% of revenue coming from charitable giving by individuals, foundations, family trusts, community organizations and corporations. In addition, we receive, and greatly benefit from, the expertise and in-kind administrative services provided by GFA. Horizons GFA conducts an annual appeal and, with the help of dedicated volunteer committee members, holds two community fundraising events each year, the Horizons Open golf tournament and the Fall Gala.

In addition, we solicit funding from foundations and corporations that share our goal to improve the educational outcomes for our students. We continually strive to diversify our fundraising portfolio to ensure a stable funding base. We pursue new funding sources from foundations, community organizations, and individuals with the capacity to ensure multi-year sustainability.

We neither receive nor seek public funding. Our expense budget has grown proportionately with the program each year, and our development efforts have kept pace with our revenue growth to cover expenses and maintain program quality.
It’s Not Where You Start In Life, It’s Where You Go!

“With the challenges I’ve faced and everything I’ve gone through, I would say that Horizons has been my family. It’s the only consistency I’ve had for my entire life. And I think that’s what motivated me and brought me to where I am today. Horizons has been my home no matter what I needed, whenever I needed it. It’s been the only thing I could always rely on.”

– Arianna DeNitto, Horizons GFA student 2005-2021

ARIANNA DENITTO attended Horizons GFA from kindergarten through college. A first-generation college student, she graduated from UConn this year with a degree in business management and a minor in digital marketing & analytics! She is currently an operations analyst at a Westport investment firm.

Arianna’s life, however, hasn’t always been so stable. Growing up in Bridgeport, her parents separated and both struggling with addiction, Arianna cherished the haven Horizons provided. Her mother passed away when Arianna was in 5th grade and she was sent to live with her dad, but he got sick a few years later and died when she was a senior in high school. “Horizons was the only constant in my life growing up,” Arianna said. “It was my home no matter what and I learned that there were people in the world I could rely on.” The Horizons community was her safe place and while her home life was chaotic, her academics and attending Horizons “were the only things I could control.”

According to Arianna, the greatest gift Horizons gave to her was exposure to a wide variety of enrichment experiences. Whether it was dance, sports, survival training, tennis, gardening, science, “it was insane how much we got to do that I would have never experienced otherwise!” Arianna also spent time at the Island School in the Bahamas through Horizons, which was “the one of the greatest experiences of my life.”

Figuring out how to pay for college was challenging since neither of her parents had life insurance. The Horizons High School Program helped connect her to scholarships and her academic standing earned her many of those plus financial aid from UConn so she was able to graduate debt-free. The Horizons College Program’s Career Launch initiative steered her toward internships that gave her the skills and experiences to qualify for the job she now holds. “Where I am now is all because of Horizons,” she said.

Arianna is an incredibly bright, articulate young adult, who is not letting her past hold her back from her future. She had the foresight to take full advantage of the opportunities she received from and through Horizons, and it has paid off.

When asked what she would say to a Horizons GFA donor, Arianna said, “My Horizons story is really the story of my life, everything connects back to Horizons. A donor might think that their gift isn’t noticed on an individual level, but I’m here to tell you that the impact is larger than you’d ever realize.”

Hector Gonzalez entered Horizons GFA as a 1st grader. Fast-forward 11 years to the day during his senior year of high school when his cell phone rang and his world changed. The call was notifying him that he was the recipient of an Odyssey Scholarship at Elon University. Basically a full ride to college. He was ecstatic.

He packed up and left Bridgeport and everything he had ever known for the tiny town of Elon in central North Carolina. Upon his arrival at Elon, he connected with the new chapter of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity (LUL), which — ironically — was brought to Elon by another Horizons GFA student a few years ago. Hector immediately felt part of a community and felt motivated to join them in meeting the needs of Latino culture through cultural awareness and community service. The fraternity works with the community, hosts events, and facilitates networking within and outside the fraternity.

During his freshman year Hector heard about a summer internship at the world-renowned MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. He was hired and spent two months doing research in a breast cancer lab. As a biology major, this was a huge opportunity, one that has convinced him that basic research is his calling.

As a first-generation college student, the responsibility that comes with the opportunities he has been given is not lost on him. He has been supported by his family, by Horizons, now by his community of fraternity brothers. His goal is to continue to be respectful, kind, and a good person. He looks forward to the day in the future when he has a good job and can “write a check” to help Horizons students that will one day follow in his footsteps.
The individuals listed on these two pages have supported our students during Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021). It is through the generosity of our donors that we are able to serve our community of Bridgport students, guiding them toward a bright future.