

AN UPDATE

HORIZONS AT NOTRE DAME



Horizons at Notre Dame High School (HND) began in the Summer of 2019. Horizons Bridgeport's AmeriCorps VISTA, Victoria Draper, recently spoke with the Director of the program about his experience and how Horizons has influenced him. Frank Skawinski, Executive Director, shared many thoughtful reflections on his second year. The shift to virtual programming required the new program to adapt quickly, but with the support of Horizons' tight-knit community, HND met the challenge. Frank looks back fondly on this past summer's supply distribution days, where his team of teachers, staff, and volunteers put together home and school supplies for families to pick up and share a brief greeting with familiar faces. Frank recalls the amusing memory of one student who couldn't contain his excitement when he spotted his Horizons teachers. "I remember getting set with our bags. There was one kid—he got out the car and sees us, and he just came running up to me and he hugged me." Frank was hesitant at first, minding social-distancing practices, but when he saw the "pure joy" on his student's face, he couldn't help but give in. The moment created the perfect opportunity for a picture (shown here).

This year's remote learning posed great challenges to students—especially those in the primary grades. Despite how well children adapted, "their true, genuine nature is to embrace human relationships," Frank said, speaking from his experience with a 6 and 3-year-old at home. Virtual learning only highlighted the importance of parents and their involvement in children's education. Horizons maintains strong connections with our families to equip our students with a community of support that enables them to do their best. "Horizons sought me out, and I'm glad I said 'yes.'"

In starting a program, Frank gave great appreciation to the help he received from his "big brothers and sisters" at the Horizons Bridgeport affiliate sites and his strong team of dedicated teachers: "I think we hit the jackpot with the teachers we brought in; they were the lifeblood of the program that first summer and they kept coming back." Frank embraces Horizons' integration of social-emotional learning with the academic curriculum. He believes schools share a responsibility with parents to educate the whole child and help them gain skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Horizons programs strengthen students' abilities to identify, communicate, and manage feelings in healthy ways. This demonstrates one of the many reasons why we support Horizons.

Why does Frank support Horizons? His answer was simple: "To make a better tomorrow."

To learn how you can help the Notre Dame Horizons Program, please [click here](#).

