



HORIZON HIGH SCHOOL

Wisconsin's only Recovery High School

Helping teens succeed in sobriety and in life since 2005

Newsletter Fall 2020

Horizon's Strange Journey into 2020:

By John Fournelle, HHS Board President

Dear Friends:

Operating a recovery high school is, in the best of times, not easy, but when we had to cease in-person operation in mid-March due to the Covid19 pandemic, the challenges to both staff and students increased significantly. A critical aspect of a recovery school is dealing, daily, with mental health issues of our students. So going to "online" schooling put a real crimp in being able to have the in-person counseling and support that most all of the students need. Virtual on-line one to one learning with occasional physically distanced outdoor contact replaced our classroom and community learning model.

As you know, we have had a collaborative relationship with MMSD since 2011 (with funding that covers ~40% of what Horizon provides our students, no funding for counseling, which is critical). With the pandemic, however, MMSD requested that we expand our rolls to more than the original agreement of 15 students, and so from March through the end of June we had a total of 20 students, 19 from MMSD and 1 from Middleton Cross Plains Area School District. And with the critical mental health needs of our students, we ran summer school pretty much all summer, with 15 students.

Our 15th Anniversary was this past January and in February we were in the midst of planning a celebration at the Madison Club in late April—but we had to cancel it. This event would have been a major fundraiser, so the cancellation placed some stress on our budget. However, our treasurer Ken Klinzing was able to submit a successful application to the government's Payroll Protection Plan, which provided 8 weeks of pay and benefits to our staff.

Horizon has been operating in small spaces in various buildings at Whitney Way & University for about a dozen years, and for over a

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Update From Director Traci Goll 11/7/20

Horizon went online in March. The Horizon staff works hard every day to connect with our students and meet their individual needs. Each day, a staff member zooms with between 1-6 students for 1-3 hours. During that time, each student works on curriculum with assistance and oversight from a teacher.

The online curriculum includes Math, English, Civics, Art, Science and Life Skills. Math is implemented through the online program Aleks, for English, the students read and discuss the book *The 57 Bus* with classmates and a teacher. The students study Civics using the 100 question Civics Test (that the state requires for graduation), and for Science credit they are working individually on a wide range of Science courses offered through the online program of Cengage. For Art, the students have been given sketchbooks and pencils, and are instructed on doing an art project once a week.

Throughout the weeks, other activities are completed in order to fill life skill credits due to the absence of volunteering in the community. These activities include but are not limited to psychology, resumes, personal finance, practicing interviewing skills, working on mental health coping skills, communication, ukulele skills, and advocacy of needs, what healthy relationships look like, healthy eating habits and exercise routines.

Many students' families are struggling economically. We also continue to supply food to eleven of our students and their families through a program called Thea's Table.

In June, 4 students graduated with virtual and physically distanced (drive-by) ceremonies.

Earlier this fall, when the pandemic was more under control, we socially distance walked with students, with masks on – these young people are isolated and need human connections -- and exercise while it was still warm outside!

Virtual learning is hard for our students but we are all working together to make it the best experience possible and meet the needs of each student.

We look forward to continuing our online schedule for the remainder of the semester (and probably the rest of the school year) and are excited for the new space to be renovated!

year we had been contemplating a move to a larger space, if one could be found at a reasonable cost. For example, having one bathroom for 15 students and 4 staff doesn't work well. So we had started looking at a larger nearby vacant space, under the former Taco Bell, where there had been 2 multi-office units—but they had suffered water damage when the 2018 flooding happened. It would have been costly to do the remediation and then remodeling (but it had 4 bathrooms!).

This summer, our Director Traci Goll learned of an opportunity, a call for proposals from the CG Schmidt construction company, to provide funding for a non-profit which required some remodeling. Wow! Just what we needed. So we applied, and were thrilled to learn we'd been selected as one of the two successful applicants! Obviously, this would be great – in the long run, once we are past the pandemic. But also, could this be useful in the short term? Maybe...Our staffs' thinking was that given the intense need for some in-person contact particularly for our most vulnerable, isolated students, we might safely have 2 students in the significantly larger school at a time with 2 staff, with masks, distancing and plastic barriers. The remodeling was to have commenced in September but surprise! The remodeling permit ended up in City of Madison Site Plan Verification purgatory. We thank Alder Keith Furman for kickstarting the stalled process in early November. So now have learned that the City is making this process even more complicated.

We are currently investigating the possibility of funding for an additional mental health staff member, which research on recovery schools and our staff have identified as an important need.

We look forward to having our delayed celebration (16 years not 15!) at our new remodeled school, sometime in maybe later 2021!

Please consider an end-of-year contribution to Horizon, if you are in a position to do so. Also, Horizon is one of the possible recipients which you can designate in the "Partners in Giving" **Combined Campaign of Dane County. We are #1264.**

We rely on our generous donors for over half of our budget in order to meet the needs of our students as they work on academics and recovery. Thank you for your generosity.

A rare day this fall at the zoo, a chance for our students and staff to safely connect in person



Horizon vice-president Paul Moberg is a national expert on recovery schools and recently compiled a short evaluation of the initial experience of operating a recovery school virtually.

Recovery High Schools and the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Paul Moberg and the Horizon HS Staff

Abstract: Recent research has demonstrated that Recovery High Schools (RHSs) are an effective educational alternative for students in recovery from substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health disorders. Student substance use is significantly lower, and high school graduation rates higher, for RHS students relative to similar comparison students. Geographic dispersion of students in recovery limits the reach of the RHS model. Experience in one RHS, Horizon High School in Madison, WI, demonstrates that it is feasible (although not optimal) to provide a Recovery High School program virtually, which may provide a means to expand the reach of the RHS model.

This short report is posted on the horizonhs.org website.

Horizon High School is one of over 44 currently operating recovery high schools in the US.

Horizon High School of Madison, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization and all contributions are fully tax deductible. Our EIN: 20-1240272

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Hold the Presses! Last Minute News!

**We have just received a great offer –
All donations from individuals -- up to \$10,000 --
received by December 31st
will be matched by a supporter of Horizon High School!**

→So your donation will be doubled!

I would like to support Horizon High School:

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