

## **The South Carolina Maritime Foundation Media Kit: Backgrounder**

The South Carolina Maritime Foundation (SCMF) was founded as a public nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in August 2000 by a group with passionate maritime interests. Its mission is to create opportunities for life-changing experiences through shipboard and land-based programming that would train leaders for tomorrow's communities. Since beginning programming in the summer of 2007, SCMF has provided 279 educational programs to over 9,500 students from 14 school districts and 77 schools in South Carolina. To date, more than 50 percent of the students served attend Title I schools in South Carolina.

In 2007 the Foundation completed construction and launched the *Spirit of South Carolina* (Tall Ships) and began programming to fulfill its mission. That fall, the "Sea Spray Scouts" day sail program was launched. This five-hour program provided teachers the opportunity to bring their class aboard the *Spirit* where a professional crew of 10 educators delivered standards-based curriculum utilizing the ship platform. SCMF provided supporting curriculum to teachers for use before and after the sail for a more seamless integration into the scope and sequence of the academic year.

In 2008 programming was expanded to include multi-day character education and leadership programs. These opportunities were offered to the public either as an open-enrollment summer program called "Spirit Ocean Adventure" or through a partnering school such as Ashley Hall School, Colgate University, Charleston Collegiate, Seeds of Peace, or Porter Gaud School. Given the high cost of operating a ship, however, tuition for such programs can be prohibitive for lower-income families. Although SCMF is priced competitively with other experiential education providers across the country and underwrites nearly 80% of the cost for these experiences, the high level of operating costs for ship operations relative to this non-profit organization's restricted cash flow is and remains a drain on capital and has been difficult to manage.

Dissatisfied with the number of low-wealth South Carolina families that could be reached through multi-day programs, SCMF conducted a needs assessment to determine how to best serve this population. This led the organization to examine the drop-out epidemic facing the Charleston area. According to a 2005 study, Charleston County's four-year graduation rate was only 46.7 percent. This harsh reality became the motivation for a major shift in focus and broadening of programming for SCMF. Originally borne of a love of the sea and a desire to challenge youth through on-the-water maritime experiences, the foundation has come to realize that there are more immediate and legitimate on- shore needs and has sought to broaden land-side offerings.

In 2009, SCMF committed resources to addressing the costly drop-out epidemic by launching an ambitious summer enrichment program termed 21<sup>st</sup> Century Spirit Ocean Adventure. This program offered 40 rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from Title I Charleston County School District (CCSD) offers a rigorous seven-week summer enrichment program at no cost. This program has been offered to students each summer since 2009.

In each year students have made improvements in academic content, reading and self efficacy. Average percentage gains for 2009, 2010, and 2011, respectively, were 48%, 76%, 69% for academic content; 14.4%, 17%, 11% for reading achievement; and 5%, 10%, 5% for self efficacy.

The success of the summer enrichment program spurred SCMF to continue to expand its shore-based programming, which led to the launch of the Horizons afterschool program at Sanders-Clyde Elementary/Middle School in the 2010-2011 school year. This afterschool program takes place for 32 weeks during the school year and provides students with 18 additional academic hours weekly. Horizons is an academically-focused program that is committed to preparing youth for higher education, employment, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century problem solving through applied learning experiences in the after school hours. During Horizons' inaugural year (2010-2011), SCMF experienced tremendous success, both behaviorally, with 62% fewer referrals and 28% fewer suspensions among participants; and academically, as well, with participating students scoring 44% higher in reading and 62% higher in math vs. their peers in MAP tests.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, SCMF extended its program offerings to include two new school-based sites, Cainhoy Elementary/Middle School and Goodwin Elementary School, and one community site, Shaw Community Center. These sites, formerly run by the Boys and Girls Club of the Trident Area, were left with voids in after school programming upon their closing July 31<sup>st</sup>. The foundation was approached by Trident United Way and the City of Charleston to extend services to these sites. Currently, SCMF serves as the Integrated Service Provider in Trident United Way's Links to Success Program at Sanders-Clyde Elementary/Middle School, Goodwin Elementary School, and Cainhoy Elementary/Middle School. Horizons Extended Day Learning Program is offered to a minimum of 50 students at Sanders-Clyde Elementary/Middle School, Cainhoy Elementary/Middle School, and the Shaw Community Center.

The Foundation firmly believes that all students are capable of graduating from high school, obtaining secure employment, leading fulfilling lives and lending a hand in creating stronger communities. Unfortunately, many students are simply born into circumstances that inhibit their ability to succeed. It is because of this that SCMF remains excited about the opportunity to expand programs, even in these tough economic times, in order to continue to provide quality programs for at-risk and other challenged youth in this community. In order to continue such programming, SCMF relies heavily on support from donors, state grants and federal funds, which have been drastically cut.

Given the high cost of operating the ship and the associated debt, SCMF recently approved the option of selling the Spirit of South Carolina. The foundation is in the process of completing a listing agreement with a broker. The goal is to find a home for the ship in the coming months and move forward with the shore-based programs.

The foundation remains committed to exposing students to the maritime world, creating educational enhancement opportunities, and challenging youth to become tomorrow's leaders. SCMF continues to seek donations, grants and other funds to help it stay the

course on its mission to cultivate tomorrow's leaders. More information is available at [SCmaritime.org](http://SCmaritime.org).

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