

March 16, 2020

Dear Friends of Tamassee DAR School,

Greetings from the place of the sunlight of God. We are writing to share important decisions the Tamassee Board of Trustees has made for our school's future. For over one hundred years, the generous support of friends like you has enabled Tamassee to equip thousands of students to transcend poverty and adverse experiences and grow into exceptional citizens.

As Tamassee begins its second century of service, the needs of our community are changing. Due to South Carolina's Michelle H Class Action Lawsuit Settlement and the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, both our state and nation are putting tremendous effort and resources into placing children in need of out-of-home care with relatives or in community foster families as well as offering preventative services to at-risk families. Tamassee applauds these efforts because they are in the best interest of children.

To address the changing landscape of the child welfare system and plan for Tamassee's ongoing success, the Board contracted with expert consultants who specialize in the child welfare sector. Their research and input alongside our staff have been invaluable and pivotal in reaching these important decisions.

The changes brought on by the state lawsuit and federal legislation mean there is significantly reduced utilization of and funding for our residential program, both now and in the future. Therefore, the Tamassee Board has decided to sunset our residential program during 2020. We will do so in the most compassionate and trauma informed manner for the children who are currently in our care. We are grateful for our partners at the South Carolina Department of Social Services and their readiness to work with us over the coming weeks and months to transition children according to their care plan and into another high quality placement.

In recent months, we explored expanding our education and independent living programs to meet the needs of SC's youth aging out of foster care as well as our regional workforce development needs in manufacturing. While we have consistently received positive feedback on the design of our program, the Board has placed this initiative on hold for now due to insufficient public funding to sustain such a program. As SC DSS implements the new federal law and funding sources evolve to meet the needs of youth aging out of care, we will continue to evaluate support for this dynamic program possibility.

As we reviewed the needs of our community, we found there is great opportunity for Tamassee in supportive education programming. In Oconee County, where Tamassee is located, 23% of children live in poverty, and 12% of children live in a home where no caregiver has a high school diploma. Across South Carolina, 59% of 3rd graders are below grade level in reading. Children behind in reading at this pivotal grade are four time more likely to drop out of high school. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Therefore, we are excited to share that the Board has approved the expansion of our after school program. Serving elementary and middle school students, our program will be of the highest quality with evidence based academic tutoring in key subjects, multiple enrichment activities, citizenship development, and trauma informed care. From after school programming, we intend to expand into summer day and camp programs as well as family support services. A Summary Message and FAQs accompany this letter to provide further information. We are also looking to expand our early childhood learning program to meet the needs of families in our community.

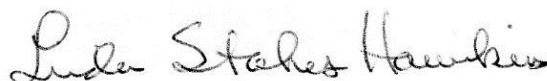
This is not Tamassee DAR School's first season of significant change. Fifty years ago the needs of our community evolved, and so we evolved to best serve the needs of young people. At that time, we transitioned from a private boarding school to a children's home. Today, we will evolve again – this time into education and family support services.

In light of the changes, we ask for your support – both to care for children who still call Tamassee home and to launch into our exciting new opportunities. With your help, we can and will continue to have a very positive impact in the lives of children. If you would like to discuss these developments further, contact us at 864-944-1390 or jholland@tdarschool.org. May the sunlight of God shine brightly on you.

Sincerely,



Rev. Jonathan M. Holland
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Tamassee DAR School



Mrs. Linda Stokes Hawkins
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Tamassee DAR School



Rev. David Lee Norris IV
President, Board of Trustees
Tamassee DAR School

Dr. W. Robin Howe, M.D.
Treasurer, Board of Trustees
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[Transition Summary](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)