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Georgia Southern graduate, Business Innovation Group member helps improve education of low-income children in Statesboro

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Shunda Marie Williams

Sometimes you never know where your degree – and resulting career – will take you. If you're Shunda (Marie) Williams ('08), one day you're studying graphic design at Georgia Southern, the next, you're working to organize conventions and seminars for the University's Continuing Education program, and from there, you're inspired to start your own business, Williams Events. Though that seems like enough twists and turns for one person, Williams' journey doesn't stop there.

Inspired by her own son, who Williams noticed was struggling academically, this accomplished entrepreneur decided to use her education and experience to help improve academic outcomes for children, primarily those of low-income families, throughout Statesboro.

An extension of her parent company, Williams Events, W.E. Move! is Statesboro's first traveling tutoring camp and summer fun program for students ages 6 to 12. Rooted in the motto, "We Move Up! We Move Forward! We Move Around!" the camp recently completed its first summer session. The response was so tremendous, Williams had to close registration.

"I'm really thinking about how [I can] develop W.E. Move! to be a year-round source for parents and children who have academic areas of need," Williams said.

According to the 2016 U.S. Census, more than 50 percent of the Statesboro population is below the poverty line, which puts many elementary school students in Statesboro at risk for falling below the national academic standard. For concerned parents, W.E. Move! was able to provide customized tutoring services to help children improve in challenging areas while also taking steps to ensure they retained what they learned in the previous school year. The program has been approved by the Georgia Department of Early Care and for qualification for the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program.

For a small fee, with reduced rates for qualified low-income families, children who participated in the W.E. Move! summer session enjoyed structured and fun learning from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., including STEM, art, online learning, character building, free play and seven field trips to locations throughout Statesboro and Savannah.

Like her event-planning business, W.E. Move! is also part of the Georgia Southern Business Innovation Group (BIG), an Innovation Incubator that offers dedicated space and business-development guidance to 20-plus local entrepreneurs at City Campus in downtown Statesboro. The W.E. Move! summer program was largely operated from BIG's FABLAB and classroom and was led by student volunteers who provided instructional teaching based on curriculums designed by Williams and her former assistant.

With the help of generous donors, the first session of W.E. Move! was a huge success, and Williams has her sights set on continued growth in the months to come to help as many Statesboro students as possible. If you'd like to help, or to find out more, please visit the W.E. Move! Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WEMOVE2018/>.

Marie Williams is the administrative assistant in the Georgia Southern College of Business Office of Development and Alumni Affairs.

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