

TUTORING NEWS: EPWORTH TUTORING PROGRAM

5253 N. Kenmore, Chicago, IL 60640-2405, 773-561-4759, Fax 773-561-6419

www.geocities.com/epworthtutoring EpworthTutoring@aol.com

Volume 11, Number 2, March 2002

Banner Year for Epworth Teen Study Group By Ingrid Perlongo, Coordinator

2001-2002 has been a banner year for the Epworth Teen Study Group. Our core group of students has grown to include several families as well as other students who attend regularly. We have a core group of caring, committed tutors: Doug Davis, Rita Johnston, Chang Qin Su, and Bradley Hicks.

In addition to providing academic tutoring and mentoring, we have sponsored several social outings this school year: a Halloween pizza party, a Christmas party, and a March chess night/pizza party. Christmas presents were donated by Lorraine Swanson, founder of the teen program, and her employer.

In December, we went on a special field trip, sponsored by my boss Kelly Hughes of DeChant-Hughes & Associates, Inc. Public Relations, to attend a Northwestern University basketball game. Proceeds from our tickets went to benefit the Ricky Byrdsong Foundation and their work in providing enrichment activities for young people and confronting violence and racism. We were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of the field house and a talk by Mrs. Sherialyn Byrdsong. I will be nonimating several students from our program to attend the Byrdsong Foundation's summer camp.

This spring, Gerald Boyce, a star student, will help organize an end of the year event for our program. Last year, Gerald did a spectacular job in organizing a concert featuring local Christian hip-hop group Alaiyo and spoken word-artist Naomi Banda. This year, we will invite 8th graders from Monday nights to introduce them to our program.

This summer, we are planning enrichment activities such as a math relay race and a pop culture unit encompassing English, social studies, and critical thinking skills.

Hopefully with the efforts of our students, tutors,

friends, and the Epworth community, we will continue our success this summer and fall.

Tutoring By Bharathi Jayarum

This is my first year tutoring with the Epworth Tutoring Program. I am a clinical social worker who works mainly with adult women. I read about the tutoring program in the *Reader*. I had wanted to return to working with children in some way, and tutoring seemed like a great opportunity. I had not tutored in some time, and I was rather nervous at the beginning of the year. The return tutors, Beth and Nona were very helpful with hints and ideas about how to work with the students.

I have been working with Sasha since I started tutoring last September. She is a 5th grade student at Goudy Elementary School. Sasha has been working on her reading skills throughout the year. We have read many books together, working on reading slowly, understanding the meaning of new words and understanding the story. One of the best stories Sasha read this year was *Sir Cumference and the Great Knight of Angleland*. This book teaches its readers about geometry and angles – right angles, obtuse angles and sharp angles – through a great adventure story. Sasha learned how to use a protractor and how to identify the different types of angles (and I had to quickly remember some basic geometry – not easy to do!).

Sasha has put a lot of work into her reading and writing, and has improved a lot, and I am very proud of her! Sasha also continues to improve on her math skills – she's had to do a lot of story problems, and is now learning about fractions. Sasha has a lot of energy and a great sense of humor and it has been a joy to work with her.

My experience with the Epworth Tutoring program has been incredibly positive -- Beth, Nona and the other volunteers put a lot of time and energy into the program. However, what I or the other volunteers get out of the experience is not what is most important. It's what Sasha and the other students get from the program that matters the most. They also give a lot of time and energy, keep coming week after week, and work very

hard, and we should be very proud of them.

Where She Is

By Nona P. Martin, Intern, Tutoring Program

[written after the death of Nona's grandmother]

It hasn't snowed yet

But there's crispness in the air – it will soon.

This city so big, so cavernous, it once frightened me.

Today it offers a familiar impersonality.

Today, Chicago embraces me as I grieved.

I look out the window of the train

The darkness hides the city to reveal my visage.

Can I see her there?

I look for some recognizable imprint of her.

Nothing.

I look for her in the hobble of the aged

She is not there.

I look for her in the miasma of the masses

She is not there.

I search the face of all those who board

Nothing.

I have been riding this train for 2 hours

Riding to my stop and beyond.

I cannot get off.

I cannot get off

Maybe it will take me to a place where I will feel her presence again.

It doesn't

I've got to get off.

They will be waiting for me.

I walk without hat, or gloves

Coat unzipped

Immune to the cold

Why hasn't it snowed yet?

They are waiting.

I feel arms around me

I look down and

The brilliant eyes of innocence look up.

Questioning, unsure, understanding.

"Don't be sad Miss Nona, I love you."

I see her

I am suddenly utterly blinded by images of her

In the urchin youth of the city

I see her.

"I love you"

They see her too

Her imprint is on my soul

If I am lovable

They must see her in me.

"Mss Nona... teacher, I love you"

If I am respected

If I have achieved

If I have learned

If I have loved

I then live in her image

As she lived in His

Tears come

The train roars by –

Its din makes my heart beat faster

In that heart beat, I call her name

And in the snow, she answers

CURRENT STUDENTS

A year ago (Jan. 2001) as a third grader, Melissa Andrecillo refused to speak English and could hardly read Spanish (her first language) or do math. Now in March 2002 Melissa speaks English non-stop, she loves to read easy stories, she flies through math, and she is proud of her grades in social studies, science and all subjects. Her favorite tutor, Kim Stanley, says, "Melissa couldn't read anything before. Now she loves to read. She was timid before, and now she has a different attitude. Her math and spelling are awesome, and she has an enthusiasm for learning." Melissa always looks forward to "Ms. Kim" coming, eager to see what small things and snack food she'll bring—exciting motivation for a 9-year old whose parents are in Mexico.

Seventh grader Djuan Beasley has been in the program since third grade. He has worked hard with his tutors (particularly in reading), but in the last two years he has participated less and less. He wants to be with his friends and play basketball. Last year his school grades dropped. After a dismal report card in November 2001, the basketball coach at school told him he couldn't play on the team unless his grades improved. Immediately his grades shot up. In January he got 3 A's, 6 B's, and 1 C on his report card. He is still doing well. His mother says the tutoring program helped him a lot; it gave him the skills and foundation to be able to apply himself to his school work. Djuan still enjoys the subscription to *Sports Illustrated for Kids* which his tutor Doug Lowery got for him. (His mother Marilyn enjoys it, too.) Djuan and some of his friends spend time at the Boys and Girls Club after school. We hope they do well.

NEWS OF FORMER STUDENTS

Barbara Smith was in the program when she was in 2nd and 3rd grades. She couldn't read or do math, but she loved to listen to her tutor read stories. She wanted to hear *A Christmas Carol* over and over. Now as a sophomore in high school, she is in honors classes.

Abel Castor was in the program as a 2nd grader. Now he is a freshman in high school and doing community service as a tutor in our program. He said that as a child he always looked forward to coming to our program.

Latonya Reynolds was in the program during 2nd and 3rd grades before she moved away. Now she is a senior in high school and has chosen to do community service with our program, tutoring 5th-8th graders and 1st-4th graders. After she began to tutor, Latonya didn't come for a couple of sessions, and when we asked why, she said, "My mother doesn't have bus fare." The tutoring program gave Latonya an el card, but when we were going to add money to the card, Latonya was uncomfortable. She said, "My advisor said our community service had to be for a nonprofit organization, and we couldn't be paid." We explained to her that we were nonprofit, and that bus fare was not payment. We are impressed by Latonya's integrity. She is applying to Robert Morris College for the fall.

Christine was in the program from 1st grade through 5th grade and continued in Girl Scouts during the last years of elementary school. She dropped out of high school when her first baby was born. Now at 22 she has three children. During the weekdays her children are in a fine preschool, and on Saturdays she brings the two older children to the Tutoring Preschool. This year she wanted to learn to type, so two tutors who took an interest in her began teaching her to type. Now she is coming to the adult computer literacy class sponsored by Epworth Church and the Tutoring Program. She recently got a job and is working to pass the GED.

COMPUTER LITERACY CLASS FOR ADULTS

In February Kirsten and Jason Shanley started a beginning computer class for adults. So far seven adults are taking advantage of this opportunity to begin developing computer skills. The adults are parents of the tutoring program and other adults in the neighborhood. The class, held on Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 pm, began as a pilot program, but is so successful it is going to continue.

Comment from a long-time tutor: "I was a drudge and you made me somebody."

UPDATES ON OTHER FORMER STUDENTS

Formerly many girls in the neighborhood became pregnant while in high school, and many boys became involved in gangs and quit school. We are pleased that so many of these students are still in high school or have already graduated.

Lamonica White (4th-10th grades, March 1992-May 1998) worked at McDonalds during high school, graduated from Senn H.S. in June 2000, went one year to Northeastern University, is working in a bank, and is now pregnant with her first child.

Larry White (her brother) (3rd-8th grades, Sept. 1992-March 1998) is at Sullivan H.S. He would like to try to pass the G.E.D.

Lorenzo Head (their brother) (2nd-7th grades, Sept. 1992-March 1998) is a junior at Sullivan H.S.

Amilia Barnes (1st-8th grades, Sept. 1991-1999) is a junior at Sullivan H.S.

Latonya Reynolds (2nd-3rd grades, Sept. 1991-May 1993) is a senior at Sullivan H.S., and doing community service at the Epworth Tutoring Program.

Carlos Martinez (5th-9th grades, Sept. 1994-May 1999) graduated from eighth grade late (Summer 1998), but is now a senior at Senn H.S. and is determined to graduate with his high school class this June.

Bobby Dixon (7th-8th grades, Nov. 1995-March 1997) passed the GED.

Woody Dixon (his cousin) (kindergarten-8th grades, Oct. 1989-March 1998) is at Prologue Alternative H.S. and is working on the G.E.D.

Tanisha Winston (their cousin) (1st-8th grades, Sept. 1989-May 1997) graduated from Lane H.S. in June 2001 with a 4.5 GPA and is attending Chicago State University.

Solanna Bullette (4th-8th grades, Sept. 1993-May 1998) is a senior at Lane H.S. and plans to go to Chicago State University.

Shiana Beasley (7th-8th grades, Sept. 1996-May 1998) is a senior at Lane H.S. and plans to join the Navy.

Rashad Foye (2nd-8th grades, Sept. 1991-May 1998, is a senior at Lane H.S. and plans to go to Northern Illinois University.

Roy Erlin Pinnix (Rashad's brother) (3rd-8th grades, Sept. 1991-May 1997) graduated from Mather H.S. in June 2001.

Abel Castro (2nd gr, Sept. 1996-June 1997) is a freshman at Senn and doing community service by

tutoring with the Epworth Tutoring Program.

PARENTS' NIGHT FOR 1ST-4TH GRADERS

The February Parents' Night for families of 1st-4th graders was wonderful. 29 1st-4th graders came along with 27 adults from 18 families, 14 siblings, and 11 tutors. The new lighting and sound tiling lent a cheery atmosphere to the supper. Everyone was smiling!

The children sang songs for the parents and gave a presentation about trees, the theme of our science work this year. Each student said a short poem they had written or gave information about trees. Tutor Leona Lee even brought an actual rubber tree plant to illustrate the song "High Hopes" ("Just what makes that little old ant think he'll move that rubber tree plant? Anyone knows an ant can't move a rubber tree plant. But he's got High Hopes!")

A CURRENT STUDENT

Lino Orrellana (age 9) entered the program this year as a fourth grader. We were told he had a speech defect, but we also found he couldn't read nor do arithmetic over 10.

Lino is a very affectionate boy and enjoys his tutors. In December his mother was happy about the program because she said previous to this Lino had not talked with anyone outside the family. Now he was talking with many people.

He began reading our beginning 1st grade books and doing 1st grade math sheets, but he soon became very discouraged. He got angry and refused to try. We knew we would have to try new strategies.

After Christmas vacation Lino looked at the assignment slip in his folder and said something like, "What is this? Here it says I have computer today, and there it says I don't. Which is right?" Lino was reading! He was analyzing information and he was communicating!

The next day a tutor wanted to talk with a Spanish-speaking parent, and Lino was the only one near who could speak Spanish and a little English, so we asked him to translate. He stood there like a pro, translating from English into Spanish and Spanish into English!

The next week in a conflict resolution session who was the star of the small group? Lino! He had ideas for the brainstorm, and he spoke up.

Lino is still reading at the early first grade level. He is working on addition and subtraction above 10. He is learning that he can write simple sentences using

specific words. Now he is trying. He has come a long way.

PRESCHOOL THRIVING

Last summer several families with preschool children moved away, and the Saturday preschool was very small. We asked our families if they had friends or relatives with preschool children, and gradually the preschool got more and more children. On a recent Saturday in March 10 children came ages 2-4, 5 children ages 5-6, and 12 helpers including parents, tutors and Girl Scout helpers. Now we have to get more chairs!

Eva Schwinge, the coordinator of the preschool, calls it "school" to help the children get ready for school. Each week the children read books with the tutors, have a circle time with stories and songs, do a crafts project (always messy, which children love) based on the theme of the day, and have a snack. Sometimes they play with educational toys, and sometimes they go for a walk to the park a block away. The experience develops the children's language and social skills and prepares them for reading and thinking. The children love the Saturday "school."

YOUTH CHOIR FEST

On March 17, 24 children from the Neighborhood Youth Choir along with 14 parents and other chaperons went to Granville Ave. United Methodist Church for an afternoon of singing. Six of the lead singers from Epworth did not come, but that was made up by five new children who decided the day before to come and who had practiced the music, and who had wonderful voices!

Groups from five churches participated, each singing two songs as individual choirs, along with 6 songs as a combined choir. The music of the total group was accompanied by a band: electric guitar, electronic synthesizer, and drums. Four flutes added to three of the pieces could hardly be heard in the rock/hip hop style of the music.

After the concert the people at Granville served a chicken dinner. They planned for 100 people, but 150 came! Everyone had enough food.

Some people felt the concert was too short. Children wanted to know when the next concert would be. One mother said, "I didn't know it was going to be so wonderful!" Another mother said, "My children loved it!"

GIRL SCOUTS SENIORS TAKE TRIP TO

CAVES

In March the Girl Scout Seniors (8th grade through high school) took a trip to caves in Wisconsin. The trip had been planned for a year because of accommodations and cave conditions. The girls had a wonderful time.