

TUTORING NEWS: EPWORTH TUTORING PROGRAM

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SEPTEMBER PARENTS' NIGHT

This fall we opened with a Parents' Night on September 30 to introduce the families to the new guidelines of the Tutoring Program. People kept coming and coming. 125 people came. It was so crowded in the parlor that people could hardly walk between tables of people eating a huge potluck spread of delicious food. Mothers with babies in strollers kept coming in. Instead of coming in cars, people walked in with babies in strollers. Someone said, "You can park the stroller here," and then realized they would want their baby with them. "On second thought, take the stroller with you over there."

When the parents came, they filled out registration forms for their children, and everyone ate and ate. The Senior High Girl Scout troop served the meal and cleaned up afterwards.

After the potluck supper, everyone went to Epworth's large sanctuary. The Youth Choir sang some songs, accompanied by Monique Smith on piano and Johnesha Jones on the keyboard. Pastor Joseph Johnson introduced the main part of the program, telling the families about the new guidelines of the tutoring program. Joan Sheffield and Ernestine Sansone, members of Epworth's Staff Parish Committee, read the guidelines and explained them to the families. Gerardo Martinez, a new tutor and student at Loyola, translated everything into Spanish so the parents who spoke only Spanish could understand them.

It was a worth while Family Night, and the parents learned more about the program.

CROP WALKATHON

Epworth has gone on the CROP Walkathon every year since 1983. This year 19 youth and 6 adults went to UIC on the el to walk 10 kilometers and raise money to alleviate world hunger. Epworth raised \$2005 this year, the most ever for Epworth, with John Sansone again raising the most money.

Last year 9-year old Johnny Nichols was the last person from Epworth to finish the walk. His feet hurt him so much that he was hobbling by the end of the walk, but he made it. This year the adults on the walk wondered if Johnny should go and if he could make it. The day before the Walk his parents bought new shoes for him and his two sisters, and they were ready to go. On the Walk,

they stuck together as a family, Tiffany, Stephanie, and Johnny. Not only did they (including Johnny) make it all the way. They were among the first people from Epworth to finish! God isn't through with us yet!

FALL TUTORING IS BEAUTIFUL

All the sections of the Tutoring Program are bulging this year, with a waiting list for all sections. On Tues./Weds. afternoons 32 1st-4th graders come. On Mon. evenings 35 5th-8th graders come. On Wed. evenings, a pool of 12 high school students come. 12 preschoolers and 5 kindergarten children come on Saturdays. 16 additional children come on alternate Saturdays. This is a total of 112 children engaged in homework and extra school subjects with a tutor/mentor to guide them. Among the children are 13 new families.

A total of seventy tutors help the children learn. 23 college students from Loyola University and St. Joseph Seminary help the children learn during the week. 13 of these students tutor as Work Study, part of their college scholarship, some coming 2-3 times a week, working with different children each session. Among the tutors are also 12 high school students from St. Scholastica, Senn, North Side Prep, St. Gregory's, and Whitney Young, earning Service Learning credits through weekly tutoring. There are 35 other adult tutors, many of whom have tutored before and form a cadre of leadership. In addition, 85 eighth graders from Wilmette Jr. High School tutor at Epworth on alternate Saturdays. The first 85 students who signed up at WJHS were accepted to come; 35 were turned away, because the teachers felt that 85 was enough.

GRACE-FILLED

Raymond Wentworth, a new choir member at Epworth Church, recently visited the Tutoring Program and helped 8-year old Ambar with reading. Later he shared with the Epworth Church members that he felt the Tutoring Program was a grace-filled program, a jewel in Epworth's midst.

5TH-8TH GRADERS' PARENTS' NIGHT: WARM

On a dark, rainy, blustery November evening, over 90 people came to the Family Night of the 5th-8th

graders. As families walked into the Epworth parlors, and looked at pictures from the Tutoring Program and read articles the students had written, there was a warm, calm atmosphere of friends gathering.

After a potluck supper, everyone gathered in the chapel to sing songs led by the Community Youth Choir and to hear Rev. Kathy Taylor, a Baptist pastor in Maywood, IL, and co-founder of the Epworth Tutoring Program 19 years ago. Kathy spoke of beginning the Tutoring Program, of the mediation program with the high schools in Maywood she is involved with, and of her own journey of being a single mother and going back to school to get her degrees. She also challenged the students to think of career possibilities and the kinds of activities they could do now to prepare for that.

Among the families were three mothers whose children were in the Tutoring Program 18 years ago, and whose younger children were now in the 5th-8th grade section.

The parents were very enthusiastic about the Parents' Night, with every parents enjoying different things about the program.. Linda Smith said, "Oh my goodness! It was so beautiful! The speaker was so beautiful!" Darla Robinson was so proud of her children leading the singing that she couldn't stop talking about it when she got home. When Norma Jones got home she quizzed her daughters about what the speaker said. She particularly liked the opportunities that Kathy Taylor mentioned; she enjoyed her view point and said we should have more evenings like this where the students get to hear different view points. She also felt the speaker was a good role model for her children.

Reyna Delgado couldn't get over the fact that the Tutoring Program had been going on for 19 years. "Think of all the students who have been helped during these 19 years. I'm so glad my children are a part of this." She also couldn't get over the fact that a resident in the nursing home where she works was in one of the pictures when the students went to give a recital on the keyboards last summer. She was impressed at the connections the Tutoring Program had.

Ms. Tripp said the program was "interesting." She had never seen a woman pastor before and felt that was not what the Bible wanted. Vivian Eludinni enjoyed the students' stories in the magazine, and particularly her son's story. She also liked the song the Youth Choir sang with motions. She said she was impressed at

seeing the tutors who bring everything they can to helping the students. Her son loves his tutor, and she feels the program is wonderful for her son.

TUTORING PROGRAM CREATES LASTING FRIENDSHIPS

Shopanny, who had been in the Tutoring Program from 3rd-8th grades, is now a senior at Loyola Academy in Wilmette. Naomi, who had been in the Tutoring Program from 2nd-8th grades, is a junior in Rolling Meadows. They had been tutoring partners in 7th and 8th grades (with tutor Diane Walker), and they are still close friends, keeping in touch on the phone.

Other close friends are Amilia, Shaton, and Loresa. Amilia was in the Tutoring Program in 1st-8th grades, Shaton in 4th-8th grades, and Loresa in 4th and 5th grades. They went to different high schools (Amilia and Shaton hope to graduate this year); they moved frequently; but through all the changes, they have kept in touch and are still good friends.

"NEW" BATHROOMS

For over five years we have been wanting to refurbish the two bathrooms in the basement of Epworth where the Tutoring Center is. Once they were so spooky we thought a bat might fly out or there might be a witch in the corner of one of them. People from the church were reluctant to have visitors use the bathrooms because they were so ashamed of them.

The Tutoring Program received a gift from the Springboard Foundation to partially refurbish the bathrooms. This fall we put ceramic tiles on the floors of both bathrooms (which had been concrete), got new partitions and two new toilets for the men's bathroom (they were in a decrepit state), got a new window for the men's bathroom (it had been broken into and was patched and wired shut) and re-plastered and painted the walls of both bathrooms (which had inch-wide cracks in them). With new "candy box," salmon pink walls and marbled ceramic tiles on the floors, they're beautiful.

REMARKABLE!

We keep being amazed at the progress of the children. Sometimes these are "miracles."

In Sept. 2002, first grader **Enrique** could not recognize or write any letters in the alphabet.

He could not add or subtract. He was at the preschool level. His tutor, Bev Shneider worked very hard with him on preschool-level work to teach him as much as she could, and his loving smile got to her heart.

In mid-December Enrique moved back to Texas to be with his mother, but in August he moved back to live with his aunt, "for good."

In the Fall of 2003, Enrique is in 2nd grade! He is learning to read English and Spanish, he can write a little, and he is adding and subtracting 2-digit numbers. The hard and thorough work Bev Shneider did with Enrique gave him the foundation to begin to learn, and now he is going forward. His progress is "a miracle."

In 2002-2003 8-year old **José** did not want to concentrate. He gave his tutors a hard time and did not want to do his homework. Toward the end of the school year, he started to do some of his homework. This year he is working hard. He reads, does his spelling homework, and knows most of the multiplication facts. We are proud of José.

In February 2003, as a 2nd grader, 8-year old **Edgar** could not read English or Spanish. In our Saturday tutoring program, with pre-primer 1st grade books, we began to teach him to read. In September 2003, as a 3rd grader, he still could not read and refused to do his school work. Here are the comments of his tutors:

Sept. 27: "Difficult at 1st, but got better. Has trouble reading and w/ his letters."

Oct. 1: "Edgar does not want to study. He is unfocused and lazy. He pretends he does not know how to spell, but he actually can. He likes to joke around."

Oct 7: "Edgar is going to become a better reader."

Oct. 8: "Edgar loves math. He is enthusiastic about it and is fast. Please fill his folder w/ more sheets."

Oct. 15: "Edgar has really turned around! He does his HW w/o complaints and is now following directions clearer."

Through hard work on the part of many people, a change has occurred with Edgar. This is a miracle.

Six-year old **Myanna** is the daughter of Jennifer, who was in the Tutoring Program as a first grader 18 years ago. Myanna went to the Saturday preschool of the Tutoring Program from the age of 2, and had been in a good preschool during the week. As a first grader, Myanna is doing well in school and in the Tutoring Program.

In our conflict resolution session, none of the other first graders would volunteer to get up in front of the group and do a role play. But Myanna wanted to do one, and she was poised and articulate. She said later that it was very easy. We are proud of Myanna.

This is the first year in the Tutoring Program for 13-year old **Annie**. She has been in many schools, and is starting to do really well this year. This is also the first year in the program for 13-year old **DeAndre**, one of the top students in his classroom at school and a joy to work with. We are also proud of 13-year olds **Monique, Carly,** and **LaDonna**, who have been in our program for several years and are all top students

NADINE SMITH DIES

Nadine Smith, whose children, grandchildren, nieces, great-nieces, and great-nephews have been in the Tutoring Program for 17 years, died on Christmas Eve of a heart attack. Her funeral the following Sunday was very sad. Nadine was the head of a very large family, a matriarch, keeping all her children, nieces, and grand-children in line. Many people in the community had also known Nadine. She is a person of whom one wonders, "How can they get along without her?" Many people will miss Nadine.

SPRINGBOARD FOUNDATION GIVES GRANT

In October the Epworth Tutoring Program was pleased to accept a grant from the Springboard Foundation Fund, a donor's group of the Chicago Community Trust. This is the fourth award given the Epworth Tutoring Program by the Springboard Foundation, and because of their guidelines, this will be the last.

Now the Tutoring Program is looking for other sources of funding to serve the children and families of Uptown/Edgewater. If you know of organizations or people willing to sponsor the Epworth Tutoring Program, contact us by phone (773-561-4759), email (epworthtutoring@ameritech.net), or US mail (5253 N. Kenmore, Chicago, IL 60640).

SHAWN BLAND'S FUNERAL

Late one night Beth Palmer got a call from a tutoring mother who was hysterical. Shawn Bland, 22 years old, had been shot, Tues., Nov. 18.

Shawn had been in the Tutoring program as an 8th grader. He came every Monday evening and practiced typing in the computer lab. He didn't

cause any trouble; he just practiced typing. After high school, he went into the Job Corps and studied electrical engineering, which he enjoyed.

Shawn's sister Cassie had been in the Tutoring Program during 4th and 5th grades, and their brother Cory had been in the Tutoring Program during 6th and 7th grades. Later they moved to Evanston.

The whole family attended Epworth Church every Easter. All the members of the family came, taking up a whole pew, the same pew every year.

Two days after Shawn was shot, his brother Earl came to Epworth Church to ask if they could hold the funeral there. His uncle was going to preach; all they needed was the sanctuary. The Epworth trustees said it would be fine.

Apparently there were several different accounts of what had happened. Some people said there was an argument earlier in the day involving other people. When Shawn got off work, he went to a restaurant, and when he came out, someone in a white car shot him and a friend. Earl and his mother, Cathy, were called immediately and got to the scene in three minutes, just when the police arrived. Cathy saw her son lying dead in the street and saw the police put his body into a body bag. The other fellow was taken to the hospital and died the next day. No one was in custody.

Cathy said the police had found people who had been in the white car, but surveillance cameras at the scene showed nothing, and no one had any proof. Cathy didn't want to lock up someone who didn't do it, because she knew how bad the person and his parents would feel.

Cathy was glad the funeral was going to be held in Epworth Church. "I don't want Shawn prayed over in a funeral home; I want him prayed over in a church. When I heard the funeral would be held at Epworth, it brought peace to my heart. Epworth Church is where my whole family comes together."

The day of the funeral was a fresh, grey Tuesday morning. Family, friends, relatives, and friends of relatives came to view Shawn one last time. Relatives came from San Diego to say good-bye. People wore T-shirts with Shawn's picture; people wore somber clothing or regular clothes; young men, young women, senior citizens, toddlers. There were so many people, that the ushers ran out of Obituary programs with Shawn's picture. Over 300 people came, an interwoven community, all deeply horrified at what had happened, all reverent. They couldn't stop

crying.

After beautiful gospel soul music, Shawn's uncle, Pastor Love of Pickens Memorial Temple, said: "This funeral is not about Shawn. It's about us. One of us in this room is going to be the next one to die. All of us will die. One of us will be the next one. The question is, will we be ready to meet our Maker? How are we living our lives?"

"I know you're mad. All of us in this room are mad. Who are you mad at? Are you mad at the boy who pulled the trigger? That won't do any good. If we retaliate, it should be against the devil, against Satan. That's who caused it. If you retaliate against the boy who pulled the trigger, Satan will just be glad. No, get back at Satan instead. How can you get back at Satan? Give your life to Christ. If you give your life to Christ, that is what will make Satan mad. That will take Satan's power away.

"There's going to be a happening here today at Shawn's funeral, greater than at any funeral before, greater than at Kennedy's funeral, greater than at any president's or king's or queen's funeral. We are going to show Satan.

"People here today are going to give their lives to Christ. Everyone who wants to give their life to Christ, I want you to come up here. Today 30 people are going to give their lives to Christ. 30 people are going to say NO to the hold Satan has on their lives; and Satan will have no hold over them. If you want to say NO to Satan, and YES to Jesus, come up to the front now. 30 people are going to show that Satan has no hold on them any more."

As he spoke, one by one people started to come forward, walking up to the front. More and more people came. At least 50 people went forward, giving their lives to Christ. The front of Epworth was crowded with people coming from all sides of the church. It was really a sign. The pastor called for 30 people to come forward to show they were changing their lives, and over 50 people went up front. It was momentous, a celebration of Shawn Bland's life.

GOD IS GOOD

Gearldine Williams, the lady with the fancy hats in the Epworth worship service, is part of the Scrap Mettle Soul acting troupe at Margate Park. Last January she went with the troupe to Scotland in a drama exchange.

During the summer Gearldine was in two evening Bible study groups. She also came every day to practice the keyboard as part of the

Summer Music Institute. She had always wanted to learn to play the keyboard, and this was her chance. When it came to looking ahead to the three trips where the piano students played for nursing homes, Gearldine said, "I'm going to do the whole tour."

Gearldine is always on time, but one evening she was half an hour late to evening Bible study. She walked into Epworth intoning, "God is good. God is good," which she always said. Later we found out why Gearldine was late. An hour before, while she was at home reading the Bible, a fire broke out in the room next to hers in her apartment building. Her apartment filled with smoke, and the fire fighters came. They knocked in her door and hosed water on everything. Gearldine, in a daze, intoned, "God is good, God is good." She started to clean up and noticed her keyboard didn't work very well having been sprayed with water. Then she remembered Bible study, and walked off, still in a daze, intoning, "God is good. God is good."

That evening after Bible study, when she got back to the building, she didn't know if she could get into her apartment or where she would sleep. She finally got to go into her own "messed up" apartment and got some sleep.

So if you are in a difficult situation you can't understand, just remember Gearldine, being interrupted in her meditations by a fire in the room next door, smoke filling the room, the fire fighters coming, and Gearldine saying, "God is good. God is good."