

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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A GOOD YEAR

In 2004-2005, 63 elementary and high school students participated in the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program, with a core of 51 students. Working with them were 42 adult/high school volunteer tutors and 42 junior high tutors.

Inspired Youth, Inc. is a new not-for-profit corporation. The Tutoring Program began at Epworth Church in September 1985 as a response to the high drop-out rate in among in the city of Chicago. In August 2004, Epworth Church decided to go in a new direction for its tutoring/outreach ministry and said the Tutoring Program per se would no longer be possible there.

Several parents wanted the program to continue, so along with tutoring director Beth Palmer, they formed a new corporation and found new locations for the programs.

Tutoring began at the McCormick Boys & Girls Club in October 2004. At the end of February tutoring space was no longer available there. A permit had come through for major renovation (asbestos abatement). The second and third floors of the Club were closed off, and all programs had to be held on the first floor and the gym. There was no room for Inspired Youth.

As soon as we heard that space would not be available at the BGCC, we applied for space for tutoring at near-by Bezazian Branch Library. In mid-April the Acting Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library system granted permission for Inspired Youth to tutor at Bezazian. We began tutoring the next day.

STUDENT GAINS

Despite a late start (the end of October), a major disruption (seven weeks in March-April), and working out the logistics of two new locations, 2004-2005 has been a very good year. Students bonded with tutors, students and tutors took education seriously, and students gained academically.

Kenneth C. (4th grade) has been in the program since 1st grade. Each year he

concentrates more and more. Last year in 3rd grade, we had to convince him to do his homework, which was harder and more extensive than in 2nd grade. This year he began his homework right away. Last year in 3rd grade he made great strides in reading. This year his grandmother helped him memorize the multiplication tables.

Odalis B. (3rd gr.) came to the U.S. within the past year. When she entered our program in October, she couldn't understand, speak, or read English. She couldn't add or subtract above 10. By December, she could understand a little English, speak a few words, and add and subtract above 10. By May she could understand and read English, but she preferred to speak slowly in Spanish in order to be understood. Last fall, Odalis would not obey the tutors; she wouldn't even look in their direction when they spoke to her. She was always getting into trouble. She got into fights with one student after another. By spring she started obeying the tutors, and she began to get along with more and more students. This has been a year of learning for Odalis.

Tony S. (4th gr.) entered the program in 1st grade. He was mean to his tutor, but she kept working with him. Now in 4th grade he received almost all A's on his report card and his mother and we are very proud of him:

Alejandro S. (5th gr.) entered the program in 2nd gr. and **Daniel A.** (5th gr.) entered the program in 4th grade. This year they worked with Tom Walsh, a student at Loyola University Chicago. Tom worked with them on school homework, particularly math, science, and social studies. School work is not easy for either of them, but they are serious and study hard; they keep gaining. They both help their parents with their younger brothers and sisters. Both are very responsible.

Cecily N. (10th gr.) has been working hard on geometry during high school tutoring time. This spring, out of a possible average of **Student Gains**, *continued* 100, Cecily's average was 103! On the final

geometry exam, she received the highest grade out of all the geometry classes in Sullivan H.S. She received the third highest grade in her class on her history exam. Her mom is very proud of her, and so are we.

Jasmine T. (6th grade) has done more reading, writing, and arithmetic during the tutoring sessions than any other student. She enjoys the program and enjoys her tutor. She doesn't want the evening to end.

A... entered the program two years ago. All last year, **A...** never smiled. Now at the end of the 2nd year in the program, **A...** laughs and smiles.

Andrew T. (8th gr.) has never liked math. He entered the program in kindergarten, was away for a couple of years, and then came back. This year, all of a sudden, he likes math. He says, "Give me more math!"

The Gonzalez family has gained a lot this year, their first year in the program. In the fall **Xiomara** (6th grade) would hardly say a word and hardly do her work. By May she was doing her work, and she said we should have more choir concerts!

In March **Zuleyka** (5th gr.) said it was a punishment when we put books in her tutoring folder for her to read. Her tutor visited Zuleyka and her mother and together they talked about the importance of reading. A short time later Zuleyka reported that her reading teacher at school was proud of her because she always raised her hand in class and always made a good contribution.

In November **Emilio** (3rd gr.) could hardly read and hardly do math. He was very dependent on the adults in the program. Gradually during the year he learned how to read and do math, and he became more independent and began to enjoy being with the other children. On the way to and from tutoring, he liked to look at interesting stones, insects, and plants on the ground. From the beginning he was very reflective and he made interesting comments on different situations. "What we learn in tutoring is how to get along with other people." "We can't see God, but he is everywhere." "I always have to leave people without getting to say 'good-bye.'" You can see why all the adults love Emilio.

We are trying to steer **Fabricio** (5th gr.) onto a right path. He entered the program last

year (4th gr.). He doesn't like to read; he wants to play. We have had a few arguments about whether he will come to the tutoring sessions. He says he's not coming, but we know his parents want him to come. In May he had his First Communion in his church. It was an important time. That weekend he helped set up the chairs for Saturday tutoring and helped collect the folders in evening tutoring. Fabricio's story isn't over.

We are very happy with **Latrice's** (7th gr.) work. For the past couple of years she hasn't liked reading, but this year she read more and more difficult articles.

Anayeli A. (5th) did very well on the Iowa Tests..

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Of the students for whom we obtained results of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills last year and this year, this is how they improved: **Improved more than 2 yrs. in reading:** Alejandro (5th). **Improved 1.5-1.9 yrs. in reading:** Ambar (4th), Edgar (4th), Shonesha (4th), Daniel (5th), Jennyfer (5th), LilRita (7th). **Improved 1.0-1.4 yrs. in reading:** Lawanda (4th), Marco (4th), Lucas (5th), Fermin (5th), Jose (5th), Linda (5th), Tyrone (6th), Ramiro (6th). **Improved over 2 yrs. in math:** Meliyah (4th), Lucas (5th), Tyrone (6th). **Improved 1.5-1.9 yrs. in math:** Shonesha (4th), Daniel (5th), Jennyfer (5th). **Improved 1.0-1.4 yrs. in math:** Malori (4th), Edgar (4th), Lawanda (4th), Khadijah (5th), Linda (5th), LilRita (7th).

SCHOOL AWARDS: Student Council: Marco, Edgar, Shonesha, Zuleyka, Jennyfer. History Fair: Jennyfer. Perfect Attendance: Odalis, Shonesha, Linda, Khadijah, Anayeli B. Honor Roll: Esther, Marco, Jennyfer, Anayeli B., Andrew, Latrice, Jasmine T., Andre. Most Improved: Emilio, Melissa, Lucas, Xiomara, Cesar G.

"TAG, YOU'RE IT!"

Walking to the tutoring sessions was part of the total experience of the program in '04-'05. We walked the children from school or their

homes to the Boys & Girls Club, Margate Park, or Bezazian Library. While walking, the children got to know each other, tried to resolve differences, and had a great time.

Sometimes the kids played tag along the way – regular tag, color tag, race for a color. Five girls would hold hands across the sidewalk; sometimes singing as they walked. The boys liked bouncing balls. In the spring the children looked at flowers and smelled them; they looked at leaves and noticed birds and insects. In the winter they had a glorious time with the wonderland of the first snowfall. They spotted and collected icicles underneath cars. They pried up chunks of snow left over from shoveling. A chunk of snow with icicles made a wonderful birthday cake. In an area where most of the children aren't allowed to play outside with friends, the children had a chance to play – walking to and from tutoring.

PARENTS' NIGHT: BIG SUCCESS

Parents' Night in June for families of the 1st-8th graders of the Tutoring Program was wonderful. Held at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, 84 people came, including 30 students, 17 tutors, and parents and brothers and sisters and friends from over 18 families.

We had a potluck supper served by the tutors. We passed out magazines of the children's writings, which the parents and everyone enjoyed. When the Youth Choir sang some songs, one guest was so taken with it she said, "That was so beautiful, you should make a tape of them singing." Afterwards each student recited a poem by memory. We didn't know how the sound would be, since that was the first time we had been in that location, but the sound was very clear. The children said their poems very well, better than many other years. Tutor Liz Gawne took photos of the families. Everyone had a wonderful time. The Parents' Night was a big success.

SATURDAY TUTORING

Many good things happened in the Saturday program this year. Christian (1st gr.) learned to read. Esther (2nd gr.) said she didn't like to

read, but one Saturday she found out she did! Ashton (3rd gr.) learned how to multiply. For some 5th and 6th graders, this was the only time during the week they actually read.

The children loved the crafts projects. They made colorful turkeys out of pine cones and snow people out of socks. They made red long-stemmed roses and green origami frogs.

One Saturday each child made a real kaleidoscope using microscope slides, plexiglass tubing, and colored beads. The children were excited to see the beautiful designs in their kaleidoscope. While walking the 3/4 mile home, they held up their kaleidoscopes, marveled at the unique patterns, and carefully passed the kaleidoscope to a friend, being careful not to jostle the beads. It was a glorious day.

The eighth grade tutors were wonderful. They were patient with the children. They engaged them and encouraged them. It was beautiful to watch. One eighth grader helped a 6th grade boy with a learning disability with reading and math. He finally began to improve.

The children loved to be with the tutors. After one Saturday session Esther (2nd gr.) said, "I miss my tutor." (The tutors had just left ten minutes earlier.) Emilio (3rd gr.) called the tutoring program a "Field Trip." He wrote this in his folder about his two Saturday tutors: "Please don't go [away] next year because I'm going to miss you." One of his tutors wrote this couplet about the Saturday Tutoring Program:

"Amazing, interesting, and fun.

I would trade this experience for none." The Chicago children and the Wilmette youth enjoyed the Saturday program, and we hope it created bridges within the larger community.

TUTORING PROGRAM RECEIVES A GRIPP GRANT

In January Inspired Youth received a Gripp Grant from the District 39 Educational Foundation in Wilmette. This was for renting space at Margate Park for the Saturday Tutoring Program. We were happy to receive the grant.

INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS:

From Scratchy Voices to Choral Tone

We could never have imagined all the blessings that would come through the Inspired

Youth Singers.

In September a few youth from the previous Youth Choir and several new children began rehearsing in the Palmer's small living room. After 2 rehearsals Eleanor Bilby invited them to practice in her small living room. Can you imagine 15-16 children singing in Eleanor's small living room? In December we began having weekly rehearsals at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, with occasional special rehearsals at Eleanor's. We also worked with some high school girls. Occasions kept coming up for us to sing at. We sang in two concerts in December, and concerts in February, March, April, and May – at three nursing homes, a Youth Choir Festival, a Senior Connections concert in Evanston, and a neighborhood concert for parents and friends at Edgewater Presbyterian Church. We plan to sing at Jefferson Park Lutheran Church in July. Over 50 children and youth rehearsed and sang in concerts during the year.

This takes a lot of work. Many of the students had never sung before September. During the year they learned to sing. They began with scratchy voices with no tone. Some could not control which octave they were singing in or where their voices were. Gradually they developed tone and control of their voice. Most of the children do not have "big" voices, but most can match pitch.

Besides working on tone, we developed repertoire from scratch. The children learned and sang around 47 songs during the year.

The hardest thing we had to work on was race relations. The Latino and African American students each blamed the other for misbehavior during rehearsals. The African American students said Beth Palmer was racist. We tried to create better relations among the students in many ways.

As trouble first began we asked one student, Khadijah, to bring a Bible verse every week for the students to memorize. She brought one verse and in succeeding weeks led the other children in learning other verses.

We asked people from several churches to pray for the choir, for the children to get along – people from Jefferson Park Lutheran Ch., Edgewater Presbyterian Ch., Grace Baptist Ch., Epworth United Methodist Ch., All Saints Ch. in Brookline, MA, and others. A lot of people prayed for the children, and we told

the children and their parents that people from many churches were praying for them.

We talked with children and parents individually, asking for their suggestions as to how we could be a better choir and how all the children could get along. Parents and children came up with many good ideas. Johnesha's mother said on the job differences were laid aside. Deirdre's mother suggested a choir tea where parents could meet each other. This, along with a suggestion from Rev. Barbara Cathey of Edgewater Presbyterian Church, resulted in the May neighborhood concert.

We asked various pairs of children to help put away the equipment and reset the chairs. We also revised some of the seating.

Gradually things began to change. Children began talking with other children while walking to and from singing. One day a student said, "I miss _____" (someone from another ethnic group). When asked "Will you sit here?" (next to someone who wasn't their friend), a student replied, "It's no big thing," meaning "That is all right." The Tripp children were wonderful bridges between the groups.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work with the children, to hear them singing songs of praise, and to be part of their sharing their enthusiasm with many people.

SUMMER PIANO INSTITUTE We will offer free piano lessons to students of Inspired Youth at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, June 20 through July 28, Mon./ Wed. and Tues./ Thurs., 1-4 pm, and Mon./Tues., 6-8 pm. We are looking for volunteer piano tutors with beginning-intermediate skills to help the students. To help, contact Beth, 773-561-4759, inspiredyouth2@yahoo.com

FORMER STUDENTS **Herbert Mejia** works as an analyst for Bank One, in the Merchandise Mart. **Gerardo Mejia** is at DePaul University. **Shopanny Mejia** finished her freshman year at U of I Urbana. **Shenika Johnson** is studying at Malcolm X College. **Dwayne Johnson** is looking for a job. **Quiana Johnson** works for the police department as a dispatcher for 911. **Larry White** and **Lorenzo Head** will attend Joliet Jr. College in September.

PROFILE OF A TUTOR: LISA JOHNSON, MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE INSPIRED YOUTH TUTORING PROGRAM

The Chicago Bar Foundation/Chicago

Bar Association requested nominations of lawyers who have made a significant contribution to a tutoring program. Inspired Youth is nominating Lisa Johnson, a commercial litigator with the firm Holland and Knight, for the "Making a Difference Award." We are grateful to the CBF/CBA because from 1995 through 2003, its Lend-a-Hand Fund donated gifts to the Epworth Tutoring Program, the antecedent organization of Inspired Youth.

In September 2004 we met Lisa Johnson at Borders Books on N. Michigan Avenue at the recruitment fair, "What a Difference a Day Makes." In October 2004 she came to tutor with Inspired Youth.

Lisa has been an innovator in Inspired Youth from the beginning. In the opening meeting with the director of the Boys and Girls Club, our location in October 2004, Lisa wanted a tour of the facility and wanted to know about all the other programs there.

In the first session of tutoring, Lisa discovered that her new tutee, Linda, a fifth grader, didn't know the multiplication tables, so Lisa bought her a set of flash cards. After one month, Linda was promoted to the next level in reading and she started to memorize the multiplication tables.

When all the students were supposed to type something they had written, Lisa was the first tutor to take her student to the computer lab and have her type it. Other tutors followed her example.

When we asked for tutors who could lead small groups in conflict resolution training, Lisa was the first to volunteer.

In the spring, as part of email correspondence, Lisa wrote that she would like to give a donation to the Tutoring Program, perhaps sponsoring a special trip for students as a reward. This led to a summer program of small groups of students visiting tutors at their jobs or university, which we are organizing.

As a young African American woman, Lisa relates well to the students. They all like her and want to talk with her. Lisa has a sharp mind and sees the whole picture of our organization and what we are trying to do. She understands the students and requires of her tutee what should be expected of all children that age.

Lisa Johnson is invaluable in the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program. She is

making a difference to her tutee and the program as a whole. We are very glad to have Lisa as part of Inspired Youth.

WEB SITE PICKED UP BY GOOGLE!

The Inspired Youth web site, www.geocities.com/inspiredyouthchicago, has been picked up by the major search engines, google.com and yahoo.com. Hurray! We had been waiting for this to happen. Now people can find our web site through a search. Thank you to Pat Zukosky for designing the web site and keeping it updated.

THANK YOU, BOARD MEMBERS

The Board members of Inspired Youth, Inc. are Pat Charles, Norma Jones, and Jack Jacobson. They, along with Advisory Board members Darnell Bradley and Frank Palmer, created the idea of Inspired Youth, found the locations for tutoring and the children's choir, and helped raise money for expenses. Without them, there would not be an Inspired Youth Tutoring Program or the Inspired Youth Singers. Thank you, Board members!

**Inspired Youth needs funds for rent, photocopying, supplies, family nights, and director's stipend. To support Inspired Youth, make a check to Inspired Youth and send it to
Inspired Youth
5715 N. Ridge
Chicago, IL 60660.**

(We trust this message from last Christmas is still meaningful.)

Greetings from the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program, Christmas 2004

***When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home, When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, To heal the broken, To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations, To bring peace to earth, To make music in the heart.***

I thought of this poem by Howard Thurman, the African American theologian and writer, after we found a new location for the Tutoring Program this fall at the Boys & Girls Club. In August the pastor of Epworth said the church was going in a new direction in tutoring/outreach and would not be able to host the tutoring program per se. Some parents and I formed a new program, Inspired Youth, and found new locations -- the Boys & Girls Club and Margate Park Field House. Then began the work of Christmas.

The work of Christmas: In September 2003, M., age 12, would not speak to her tutor, due to language and personality. She came to the Tutoring Program every session, never missing a day. Many days she came early, to play on the computers. As the year went on she spoke more and more, but in a group, she froze. We found out at the end of the year she had just been diagnosed as EMH, Educably Mentally Handicapped. This year we began to notice that M. was speaking more and more, and that she was doing better and better in her studies. We finally realized, "M. is bright!" She is not EMH!

The work of Christmas: Last year Leslie, a stocky, quiet, first grader, often had tears in her eyes. Her skills were preschool level. Several tutors worked with her patiently all year. During the summer she worked with Eleanor Bilby, slowly, patiently. We gave Leslie some Spanish books to read at home. When she brought them back, her brother said, "Leslie read all these books! We helped her." This year she is working with Eleanor again. Leslie read a short section of a Spanish beginning reader and beamed, "I worked hard!" One day as my husband and I were walking the afternoon tutoring children from school to the Boys & Girls Club, guess who held the door open for everyone? Leslie! She had a giant, radiant smile. She was so proud to be serving.

The work of Christmas: "Hey! Hey! Wait!" There was a faint sound a block away. Then it was audible. "Hey! Wait!" A tall, neat young man crossed the street and caught up with me. He introduced himself, Caprice, who had been in the Tutoring Program as a second grader in 1986. Caprice never concentrated in the tutoring program and gave his tutor, Don Heldt, a hard time. We took him to Dr. Walsh to get eyeglasses. He came sporadically in third and fourth grades and then dropped out of our program and high school. He said he kept asking his mother about me. Now he finally caught up with me to say hello. I noticed the McDonald's insignia on his shirt and was excited that he had a job. He said, "I'm going to college!" I asked him how long he had worked at McDonald's. He said three months, and then said he loved college. Notice: I was interested that he had a job at McDonald's. He wanted me to know that he was going to college! He said he had finished the remedial classes and was all caught up and going forward. He was doing well. He said, "I enjoy it!" and he was proud. He had a book in his hand that he had been reading, a book about the African American experience. He said he was working on getting himself together so he could make it on his own. I said, "You have a fantastic mother." He said, "I agree." Caprice had made a 180° turn-around and was going strong.

The work of Christmas: Can you imagine 15-18 children singing in Eleanor Bilby's living room? Many of them have never sung before. The new Inspired Youth Singers sang joyously for two nursing homes in December. Now we are planning concerts for February, March and April, involving around 40 children and youth. The Inspired Youth Singers love to sing.

— *Blessings from Beth Palmer*

INSPIRED YOUTH TUTORING PROGRAM, 2004-2005: STUDENTS

FIRST GRADERS: Daniela Arriaga, Fabiola Garcia, Christian Jones, Steve Pena

SECOND GRADERS: Leslie Arvidez, Laura Gutierrez, Brenda Hernandez, Michelle Martinez, Esther Sanchez, Myanna Smith

THIRD GRADERS: Odalis Barrientos, Ashton Brown, Emilio Fuentes

FOURTH GRADERS: Miguel Arriaga, Ambar Arvidez, Kenneth Carter, Ean Cooper, Malori Dean, Edgar Gomez, Meliyah Harris, Shonesha Jones, Marco Tony Suarez, Gustavo Valencia

FIFTH GRADERS: Anayeli Aguilar, *Alexis Anaya*, Zuleyka Arroyo, Andre Anderson, Daniel Arvidez, *Anayeli Bautista*, Khadijah Bradley, Lucas Delacruz, Fermin Estrada, *Kayla Jackson*, Jose Lugarda, Linda Macedo, Fabricio Salazar, Alejandro Soto, Denzell Steele, Janelle Williams

SIXTH GRADERS: *Betzave Acevedo*, *Cindy Anaya*, Jasmine Anderson, Xiomara Arroyo, Tyrone Banks, Deirdre Clark, Martin DeLa Cruz, Oluremi Eludinni, *Sarai Fernandez*, Cesar Garcia, Johnesha Jones, Ramiro Lugarda, *MaryAn Memone*, Johnny Nichols, Danielle Steele, Joshua Thomas, Jasmine Williams

SEVENTH GRADERS: Latrice Anderson, Maria Estrada, Tabia Hurst, *LilRita Mangrum*, *Shanese Watts*

EIGHTH GRADERS: Andrew Anderson, *Iris Crawford*, Antonio DeLa Cruz, Veronica Estrada Stephanie Nichols, *Jasmine Wheatley*

HIGH SCHOOL: Arlene Bell, Carly Hope, Monique Smith, Michelle Flores, Yesenia Miranda, Tiffany Nichols, Cecily Noble

Students involved only in Inspired Youth Singers are in italics.

INSPIRED YOUTH TUTORING PROGRAM: 2004-2005, TUTORS

MONDAY EVE. TUTORS OF HS STUDY GROUP: Dan Bartels, James Conlon, Beth Palmer, Heather Thome

TUESDAY NIGHT TUTORS OF 5th-8th GRADERS: Kristen Adams, David Bell, Dan Blagojevich, Mary Carravallah, Mike Cumming, Jennifer Cumming, Matthew Dallman, Brian Duhn, Julie Duhn, Mike Fehlman, Liz Gawne, Lisbeth Goble, Edilberto Gutierrez, Olga Ilagan, Sue Kenny, Pam Loose, Lisa Johnson, Beth Palmer, Frank Palmer, Danielle Scarola, Stefanie Shanebrook, Avrom Simon, Adam VanDerWoerdt, Christine VanDerWoerdt, Jerome Williams, Erin Wittkowski, Paul Wittkowski

WEDNESDAY/THURSDAY AFTERNOON TUTORS OF 1st-4th GRADERS: Rik Adamski, Grace Bialecki, Eleanor Bilby, Mike Delaney, Mike Fehlman, Filmona Gabreab, Nita Keating, Sheldon Landy, Emily Matson, Susan Mattison, Devonne Mitchell, Lien Nguyen, Beth Palmer, Frank Palmer, Marty Stewart, Tom Walsh

SATURDAY ADULT AND HIGH SCHOOL TUTORS OF THE ELEMENTARY SECTION: Michele de St. Aubin, Bonnie Frame, Stephanie Frent, Jeannie Gans, Susan Lorch, Beth Palmer, Stephanie Combs, Vadan Gottlieb, Tiffani Jackson, Maria Selas, Kriselle Oribello, Annie Kulik.

SATURDAY ELEMENTARY TUTORS FROM WILMETTE JR HS: Jessica Atlas, Tara Berglund, Mojdeh Bowers, Alexander Chen, Tess Clabby, Andrew Clinkman, Jessica Delmonaco, Hannah Deutsch, Valerie Deutsch, Deanne Downer, Amanda Eaton, Adam Freeman, Brian Gruezo, Wendi Gu, Chloe Hansen, Erica Hori, Logan Johnson, Nikhil Kalathil, Julia Kohn, Nicole Kukulka, Gwen Ledford, Mary Lin, Stephanie Mackevich, Carson McKinlay, Claire Nelson, David Reiff, Xavier Richards, Natalie Rothstein, Allison Ruggirello, Eric Samuels, Lauren Shepherd, Molly Spence, Rebecca Schiff, Jessica Schonberg, Kate Stahl, Emily Swann, Elizabeth Swenk, Diana Vesselinovitch, Taylor White, Abby Wiscomb, Alexa Wong