

# TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

5346 N. Kenmore, Chicago, IL 60640, 773-561-4759

www.geocities.com/inspiredyouthchicago

inspiredyouth2@yahoo.com

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## STUDENTS IN INSPIRED YOUTH TUTORING

The Fall of 2006 saw many good things happen in the Tutoring Program. Since the beginning of Inspired Youth in 2004, the number of students and tutors is growing.

	Students	Tutors + WJHS tutors
<b>2004/5 Total</b>	61	43 + 41
<b>2005/6 Total</b>	103	88 + 56
<b>2006/7 Fall</b>	94	73 + 50

Here are the people who have been involved in the tutoring sessions in Fall 2006/2007:

2006/7	Students	Tutors + WJHS tutors
Mon. HS	8	8
Tues. 5th-8th	24	28
Wed. 1st-7th	23	19
Thurs. "		16
Sat. 1st-7th	29*	4 + 50
Sat. 2 yr.- 5 yrs.	10	4
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Singing	29	4

*\*Students not in another section.  
43 Sat. elem. total.*

Many exciting things happen in Inspired Youth, but the heart of the program is the relationship between the tutor/mentors and their tutees. It is beautiful to watch the tutors and students taking each other seriously. They focus on the schoolwork, and the students apply themselves and think. This is the heart of the program. The bonding and trust that takes place is the reward for all involved.

## GOOD NEWS OF TUTORING STUDENTS

At least 3 first grade boys learned to read this fall in the Tutoring Program. Lamarr S. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) said he couldn't read. We showed him how to read our pre-primer 'Tip' books. He read them and re-read them. Then he took out his sheet from school where he was supposed to keep track of how many pages he read. We recorded all the little books. He kept reading more and more of our pre-primer books. This happened for 3-4 sessions. His tutor said, "You'll need a new sheet." Lamarr replied, "I can't get a new sheet until this one is all filled out." His tutor said, "This sheet is all filled out." Lamarr's eyes got big. His mother had brought him to the tutoring program because Lamarr's teacher kept telling her how

poorly he was doing in class and that he couldn't read. He is doing better now. He wrote on a drawing he made on his school notebook, "I like to go to Tutoring."

At the beginning of the year we had a hard time working out with Mario's (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) family how to have him come to tutoring regularly. By November he was coming regularly. He was on detention (!) a few days at school. One day he had to write in Spanish, "I will behave well in school." In tutoring he played around with another boy and wouldn't concentrate. It was very difficult for him to read the Spanish lessons that were part of his homework. We decided to work with him on reading our English pre-primer "Tip." He read the first half of "Tip I" the first time he tried! (It uses 4 words.) The next day he read all of "Tip I." The next week he re-read Tip I and began Tip II. He was so proud, his face beamed! Now he can read Tip I, II, and III. Every time he reads one of the little books he is proud. Then with his tutor's help, he wrote a Christmas letter to a senior citizen. He wrote on the front and back of the page and drew a picture of a dinosaur. He was very proud of his letter.

Brayant S. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) had gone to a special preschool and we didn't know how he would do as a regular student at Goudy School and as part of the tutoring program. It turns out he is doing fine. His tutor, Kyra, is patient with him and speaks in English and Spanish. Just before winter vacation, Brayant read Tip II! We were elated.

**LETTERS TO SENIOR CITIZENS:** 67 students of Inspired Youth wrote holiday letters to 67 senior citizens at the Methodist Home, 1415 W. Foster. For several, this was the first letter they had ever written. They enjoyed writing the letters and drawing a picture to accompany the letter. The children were proud to be writing a letter.

**TUTORING GRADS:** Shuron Johnson is at National Lewis University. Her brother Deron Birks is at UIC. Shenika Johnson is a home care assistant. Alex Harris is a senior at DePaul University.

## HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

"How was your holiday?" "We celebrated the

holidays all during December!" "What?" "Yes. This is what the holidays are all about. Listen!"

### **SATURDAY TUTORING**

Saturday, December 2, was a great day. During the tutoring time, 31 children wrote holiday letters to residents of the Methodist Home. In group time Stephanie Rubenstein read a story about Hanukkah, Vivian Eludinni told about the seven days of Kwanzaa, and Beth Palmer told the Christmas story. While the 1st-3rd graders played kickball, the 4th-7th graders, along with their 8<sup>th</sup> grade tutors, wrapped stuffed animals to give to preschool children in Uptown. They wrapped the stuffed animals from six gigantic boxes. Many kids had never wrapped presents before.

### **CHOIR CONCERTS**

The Inspired Youth Singers sang in four concerts in December.

On Sunday, December 3, they sang at the Christmas Sing-along at the **7<sup>th</sup> Christian Science Church** at 5308 N. Kenmore. It was a sparkling, beautiful day. There had been an ice storm two days before, and the sun shone through the ice on the trees making everything shine. Nine girls from Inspired Youth sang a repertoire of seven songs. For three of the girls, this was their first concert. Two came from Wicker Park to sing – their mother had been in the Tutoring Program as a youth. All the girls were shy, but they sang well and they looked beautiful. Three parents came; everyone was proud. In the last part of the concert everyone sang Christmas carols together. It was a beautiful day and a beautiful concert. Inspired Youth was happy to be invited to participate.

On December 10, the choir went to **Bethany Terrace in Morton Grove**. This was the 17<sup>th</sup> year the choir had been invited to sing there. Two cars and a rented van took the 16 children and 9 adults on the trip.

The chaplain, Rev. MJ Leewis-Kirk, wanted the choir to sing Advent songs, so we chose five songs of peace and had been practicing them since October. The choir sang and behaved as well as any group of students we have taken there. The audience's favorite song was "Neath Vine and Fig Tree," which we sang while doing an Israeli/Iraqi dance. We spread out the whole length of the room (on the wheel-chair path), and did the dance and sang. The audience beamed the whole time. The chaplain said that when the residents heard the children were coming, everyone wanted to come to the worship service.

Twice as many people were there as usual, she said.

This was a multi-faceted trip for the kids. On the way there, the children in the van saw the "woods." They didn't know Chicago had any woods. Perhaps we will be able to take them for a field trip to walk in the woods in the spring. When we got to Bethany Terrace, the children were excited to find their way around the circular layout of the Terrace. They particularly enjoyed seeing live birds in a cage in the lounge. The center of the trip was the singing, and all the children who practiced the songs of peace got a lot out of it. Singing the songs for a large room full of people in wheel chairs, people with Alzheimer's, was another good experience. After the worship service the children greeted the residents of the Terrace.

When the choir left the large room, they went to a smaller room with tables of mounds of cookies. Some cookies had been freshly baked minutes before. The children were also treated to a gift sack, containing a toy and a gift certificate to McDonald's. This was a real treat for them. Thank you, Bethany Terrace, for inviting the Inspired Youth Singers to participate in such a wonderful event.

On December 17 the choir sang at **Grace Baptist Church**, at 5253 N. Kenmore. Fourteen children were there, plus several parents. The children sang four songs of peace, directed by Dorie Burrell, and they joined in singing three songs with the congregation. The children enjoyed the worship service, and everyone enjoyed the children singing.

**NEWS OF TUTORS:** Jessica Cañas, who tutored in 2003-04 and again this year, has applied to go into the Peace Corps. She would like to go to Cameroon. Celia Arguello has been tutoring since 2005-06. She is applying for Teach for America. She would like to teach in New Mexico, South Dakota, or Chicago. Liliana Rivera will be studying in Spain in Spring 2007. She plans to teach in high school. Nicole Roach has been working for the Army Corps of Engineers and is currently attending National Lewis University. She plans to teach science in high school. In Spring 2007 she will be student teaching a course in geology at Lane Tech High School.

### **INSPIRED YOUTH RECEIVES MUCH SHELIST FOUNDERS' AWARD**

For the second year in a row, Inspired Youth received the Much Shelist Founders' Award

through the Lend-a-Hand program of the Chicago Bar Association, an award given for a new tutor/mentor program less than 5 years old. Inspired Youth also received an additional award from the Lend-a-Hand program.

The awards ceremony was held Monday, December 18, in downtown Chicago at the Much Shelist law firm. Inspired Youth was invited to bring 5 children from the Tutoring Program who could sing at the awards ceremony.

Five children got an early dismissal from school to go downtown for the ceremony at 3 pm. Before leaving, some of the children sang their two songs for the office staff and an assistant principal and teacher at the school. When the children sang "Let There Be Peace on Earth," the assistant principal said, "You sing like angels. There are tears in my eyes." When they sang "Neath Vine and Fig Tree" and did the Israeli/Iraqi dance in the office, a teacher joined in with an Israeli song and dance that went right with it.

The children took the CTA train downtown and walked to the large office building on N. Wacker where the Much Shelist law firm was located. When they reached the building they started warming up their voices. But it was quite cold outside, so they went into building. As the children proceeded into the formal lobby with its high ceilings, security guards, and row upon row of poinsettias, they kept singing: "Let There Be Peace on Earth." Upstairs the children received name-tags and put on their red vests. Their song was first on the program: "Let There Be Peace on Earth."

When Inspired Youth received the award from Lend-a-Hand, two children spoke about how the Tutoring Program had influenced them. Brenda H., age 9, said that it helped her love to read, and that she has read over 20 *Magic Tree House* books. Shonesha J., age 11, said that she hadn't been getting very good grades in science. Recently her tutor, Pam Loose, helped her study science, and she got an A+ on her science test.

When Inspired Youth received the Much Shelist Founders' Award, it was a complete surprise to tutoring director Beth Palmer. She said everyone at Inspired Youth was very grateful for the award and that the heart of the program was the relation between the tutors and the children.

At the close of the ceremony the children from Inspired Youth sang "Neath Vine and Fig Tree." Shonesha J. invited the people to join them in singing and doing the dance. People joined on each end of the line. Everyone enjoyed the song.

Afterwards there were refreshments, which the children loved -- especially the small, individual quiche hors d'oeuvres. Some children were discovering quiche for the first time. Cortez Y., age 10, asked if he could take two pieces of quiche home, and he was given a large plastic container chock full of quiches. Other children took food home, with the permission of Karina Ayala-Bermejo of Lend-a-Hand.

In supporting tutor/mentor programs throughout the city, Much Shelist and Lend-a-Hand of the Chicago Bar Association are undergirding the human infrastructure of the city. Other firms and professional associations should follow their example.

### ***PRESENTS FOR CHILDREN***

Kingswood United Methodist Church in Buffalo Grove generously sponsored 88 children, giving them beautiful Christmas gifts. Coordinated by Ms. Jean Forsythe, church members of Kingswood UMC selected names of children under 12 years from Inspired Youth and bought Christmas gifts for them. The gifts meant a lot to the children. One girl said, "I remember what you gave me last year: these gloves that I'm wearing right now." She held up her hands. Other children asked, "When are the presents coming?" The children were very excited. The parents were grateful when they picked up the presents. Some were beaming. One mother walked over a mile in the rain to pick up the gifts for her two sons. When people ask, "How was your holiday?" we say, "Wonderful," because of Kingswood UMC.

Enid Young from Dysart, Iowa sent gigantic box upon gigantic box of reconditioned stuffed animals and small toys for us to wrap and give to young children in Uptown. The elementary students in the Saturday Tutoring Program wrapped half of them. Eleanor Bilby, a former tutor, wrapped 2-3 boxes worth. At least 3 sections of Girl Scouts wrapped all the rest. We gave 105 wrapped toys to the Hull House Head Start at the Edgewater Presbyterian Church. We gave 77 wrapped toys to the Head Start at 4848 N. Winthrop. We gave 233 wrapped toys to the younger children in preschool and primary grades at Stewart Elementary School (Kenmore and

### ***Presents continued***

Sunnyside). We also gave beautiful, large dolls to some of the girls in the Tutoring Program. We know the children are enjoying these toys.

In November, just before Thanksgiving, the 8<sup>th</sup>

grade tutors from Wilmette Junior High School gave a turkey to each of the 28 families in the Saturday tutoring program. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders had raised money for the turkeys through bake sales and candy sales. The tutoring families really appreciated the turkeys.

### ***BRAVE CHILDREN***

Before tutoring one evening, 3 boys were riding their bikes close to home. An older boy rode up to one and blocked his path. He made the boy get off the bike. The other two boys started yelling. One went home to get his big brother. Then a second boy's bike was blocked. Finally all boys got their bikes back, with a big scare. They didn't come to tutoring that evening.

A student's mother's foot was ulcerated and the infection was spreading. She had had two toes amputated previously and she didn't want to go into the hospital because she didn't know what would happen to her daughter. The daughter also had to help take care of her sister's youngest babies.

A 9-year old boy was behind the chalkboard near the end of the tutoring session. His tutor said he shouldn't be back there and asked him what he was doing. He said he was taking some art supplies from the library. His tutor said, "That's stealing." The boy said, "No, it's not. They don't need it. Besides, it was my birthday last week and I didn't get any presents." (The week before he had said it was his birthday and he was going home and get presents for his birthday.)

An 8-year old girl and her 13-year old brother moved farther west in Chicago, to Albany Park, in late November. They don't want to transfer to another school this year, so they take two trains to get to school.

### ***CONFLICT RESOLUTION***

At the end of November we had our first training session in conflict resolution in the Tues. evening, 5th-8th grade, tutoring session. The theme was empathy. We divided into four groups. The tutors who led the groups engaged the students very well.

Afterwards Andrea Egger, one of the tutors, said that empathy was timely topic. It seems that during the evening, her student Xavier was very "hyper." He didn't focus on his work. He kept talking about another student, using derogatory language. Andrea kept telling him he should be more considerate, that he should think of how the other student felt. She said she was surprised

when the conflict resolution theme was exactly what she had been trying to tell Xavier all evening. She hoped some of it would sink in.

Another tutor, David Bell, said he felt it was important to work with conflict resolution because seeds would be planted. A student he had worked with a few years ago for several years, Salvador, hadn't paid much attention during the conflict resolution sessions. But one day, several months later, Salvador brought up a point from one of the sessions. David was astounded, and he realized how important the sessions were.

### ***THE RIPPLE EFFECT***

Abel Castro was in the tutoring program 10 years ago while he was in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades. His older sisters were in the Youth Choir for a short time. This fall, Abel's sister, Sharina Shelton, enrolled her daughter Sophia (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) in the Tutoring Program. Beginning in November Sophia has come to Mon. choir rehearsal, Wed. and Thurs. afternoon tutoring, Sat. tutoring, and Sat. Girl Scouts. Sophia's brother Kyle (P4) has also come to Sat. tutoring. Sophia sang in 3 of the 4 concerts in December.

Last spring Larry White's girlfriend's mother was very worried because her youngest son (3<sup>rd</sup> gr.) had been retained once and was doing poorly in school. We said he would be welcome in the Tutoring Program if he could get from Budlong School to Bezazian Library. That didn't work out. But meanwhile, she gave her son extra help and he improved immensely.

### ***CONTINUING TUTOR/STUDENT RELATION***

Sally Franz worked with Patrick M. a few years ago but has not been able to tutor recently. She still invites Patrick to her home every so often. They make and decorate sugar cookies and talk.

**DONATIONS NEEDED:** Inspired Youth, Inc. is doing a lot with minimal funds. Your contributions are important for enriching the lives of children and families in Uptown in Chicago. Checks may be made to "Inspired Youth" and sent to *Inspired Youth, 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.*