



Good News from Inspired Youth 2006

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.*

In the early 1980's I was active in the peace movement. A summer study showed me that *shalom*, peace, was wholeness, and that shalom was needed in all parts of society. Thus, a few of us started the Tutoring Program, which still serves neighborhood children in Chicago's Uptown/Edgewater communities. This fall 94 children and youth are working with 73 adult tutor/mentors and 50 8th grade peer tutors from suburban Wilmette. Shalom is happening.

With God our creator, children all are we.

"Ariel" first came to the program as a 10-year old in Sept. 2005. Every tutoring session he did something egregious: bringing 6 condoms, continuously screaming while walking home at 8 pm, standing in front of a tutor's car while she was trying to come out of a parking lot, yelling purposely off-key at singing practice, refusing to study or even sit at a table, taunting another student, spraying string spaghetti while walking to tutoring. Over and over again I visited his family to talk with his parents (in Spanish). Despite all these problems, Ariel's tutor worked patiently with him. This fall Ariel's mother took her 5 children and moved in with her sister, leaving her husband. Ariel has come to the tutoring sessions only a few times this year, but he seems to be calmer. He said the Tutoring Program has helped him a lot with math.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Last spring all the Latino families went to downtown Chicago to walk in the two large celebrational immigration marches. Parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, teenagers, toddlers--everyone went. I wanted to take some kids from the Tutoring Program to the 2nd march, but when I asked around, everyone was already going. "Lizzy," a bright 12-year old new to Chicago, had gone downtown to the first march by herself!

In April a group at Loyola University sponsored a "March to College" day, inviting youth from the Tutoring Program to visit Loyola. During the trip I told Lizzy, "I know you're going to college!" She said, "No, I'm not." "Not going to college?! Why?" "I'm Mexican." "Mexican? What does that have to do with going to college or not going to college?" "Haven't you heard?" I was dumbfounded. This November Lizzy transferred out of public school to commute to a Bible school in Hammond, IN.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now. With every step I take, Let this be my solemn vow:

In 2003 Maria, a 5th grader, always fooled around in class and was behind in all her studies. Her teacher recommended our tutoring program. In September 2003 Maria's mother brought Maria and two other children to our program. Maria as a 6th grader hardly missed a day of the program, but she was so shy she never spoke to her tutor. She did a little work, but was still very far behind. Gradually she became less shy and her English improved. The three siblings continued in the program, hardly missing a day. They frequently called me up to ask me about the tutoring program. (Few students ever call.) At 8th grade graduation, Maria was excited about all the activities, and she looked forward to going to high school. Then she said she was afraid to go to the three-day orientation for in-coming high school students that summer. I told her I would go with her; I didn't want her to follow her sister and drop out after 8th grade. This fall Maria loves high school. She is in a special ed. classroom and is on the honor roll. She was selected as one of six students-of-the-month for September out of the whole large high school. She is doing community service (she went with others to do beach clean-up and she served in a soup kitchen). She has joined the bowling team, and she is aware of "dropping out" vs. "staying in school." She wants to stay in school.

To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.

Last March Inspired Youth and Edgewater Presbyterian Church hosted the 25th annual Youth Choir Fest. Five children's choirs -- from Rogers Park, Humboldt Park, the West Side, and Uptown -- sang songs of praise together and special songs as individual choirs. Around 150 people came. Afterwards the Girl Scout troop (formed 14 years ago for girls in the Tutoring Program) served supper to all the guests. At the same time, people at the concert were treated to an art exhibit of art works by Larry White, a tutoring grad. 65 of Larry's drawings, paintings, and designs lined the hallways and alcoves in the church. Old and new friends came. Former choir members sang along from the back of the sanctuary on a favorite song from when they were in the choir: "The Potter." It was a glorious day which we didn't want to end.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

Today in our global relations we need ideas and examples of creating peace, shalom. We need to brainstorm, try out, and publicize methods of bringing about peace in all our relations.

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