

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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25TH ANNUAL YOUTH CHOIR FEST

The 25th Annual Youth Choir Fest in March was a splendid event, hosted by Inspired Youth and Edgewater Presbyterian Church. 150 people came from Granville Ave. UMC, Rogers Park Baptist Church, Humboldt Park UMC, Olivet UMC from the West Side, and Inspired Youth from Uptown/Edgewater. Five children's choirs sang songs of praise as a combined choir and as individual choirs. Students from each of the choirs formed Praise Teams to lead some of the songs. Praise team leaders from Inspired Youth were Ilse Dominguez, Andrew Anderson, and Clara Dotton. They were excited to use a microphone and lead one of the songs. Inspired Youth's two songs were "The King of Glory Comes," with the piano played by student Jacqueline Montalvo, and "Precious Lord," led by student Johnesha Jones.

The first Youth Choir Fest was organized in 1981 by Beth Palmer and Margaret Hoover after a conference of city church leaders challenged people to do something beautiful for the children of the city. The Choir Fest has encouraged children's music ministries in many churches over the years. Now original participants have started their own children's choirs, and children of early participants are singing in youth choirs.

One young man, Kurt Tims, who sang in a Youth Choir in the early 1990's recently asked Beth Palmer, "Do you still have that song, 'The Potter'?" I'd like a copy of it. I know every word: 'If there's a mountain that I can't seem to climb, Give me the strength and with my all and all I'll try.'" This was one of the songs selected for the combined choirs to sing this year. Another choir member from the 1990's, Amilia Barnes, came to this year's concert because of the art exhibit. When the choirs sang "The Potter," she sang, too.

After the concert the Girl Scout Troup led by Eva Schwinge served dinner. A team of scouts, including Cecily Noble, Rebecca Larson, Jasmine Tripp, and Raquel Mixon, cooked sloppy joes from scratch. Everybody enjoyed the meal and talking with friends.

LARRY WHITE HOLDS ART EXHIBIT

Larry White exhibited his works of art March 12, 2006, at the Edgewater Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with the 25th Annual Youth Choir Fest. The exhibit included 30 still-life drawings and 2-dimensional designs by Larry White, a painting his brother Tyree Head, and 3 paintings by another artist. Larry's still-life pictures were pencil drawings of simple subjects; the drawings showed care, detail, and flourish. His 2-dimensional designs were interesting shapes in contrasting colors.

Larry has always been interested in art. In taking art courses at Truman College along with his academic studies, Larry rediscovered his interest in art and would like to go into some aspect of art or design as a secondary career along with football.

As soon as the date for the art exhibit was confirmed, Larry began promoting it among his acquaintances and network of relationships. He visited teachers and staff at Goudy, Peirce, and UpLift (Arai). He went to Margate, Clarendon, and Pottawattomie Parks. He talked to fellow students at Truman College and customers and staff at Panera Bread in Lincolnwood Mall, where he works. As Larry said, "I'm at a point in my life where it's time for me to pull the community and old faces back together. I want to do it the right way ... where everybody gets together and enjoys them-selves. I'm going to do it in a positive way."

Among the people who came to the Art Exhibit were Mr. Malone, the assistant principal of Peirce, the art teacher from Peirce, the principal of Arai, customers he knows from Panera, friends from Truman College, people from Epworth Church, family members--his partner Dianna, their son Jacob, Dianna's mother, Larry's sister LaMonica and her daughter, his brother Lorenzo and his son-- and many graduates of the Tutoring Program and friends who used to live in the Uptown/Edgewater neighborhood. People came and stayed to talk and didn't want to leave. One friend, Amilia Barnes, summed it up by saying, "I was really impressed by Larry and happy for him and for the Youth Choir."

MORE ABOUT LARRY WHITE

Larry White, his brother Lorenzo, and his sister LaMonica enrolled in the Tutoring Program and Youth Choir in the early 1990's when they were in early elementary school. Their mother Gigi Head began volunteering as a tutor, an assistant Girl Scout leader, and a chaperone. For over four years, Larry, Lorenzo, and LaMonica, along with Gigi, were at the Tutoring Center five days every week, with tutoring, choir practice, and the worship service at Epworth Church. They became close to many tutors and participated in all the activities of the program. Larry's tutor Roger Tenney worked with him for several years. All the children frequently went to the home of one of the tutors, Lorraine Swanson, helped her with chores, and ate lunch with her. The whole family went on many field trips with the Tutoring Program and their mother chaperoned. The Tutoring Program was very important in the life of the whole family.

Larry and Lorenzo were particularly good at athletics. They could do back flips that astounded people. The two brothers accompanied one of the songs of the Youth Choir with a series of back flips that wowed audiences. The Tutoring Program sponsored Larry, Lorenzo, and LaMonica, along with other students, to attend the summer day camp at Margate Park. While still in elementary school, Larry and Lorenzo were on the Margate Park football team which was runner up for the city championship of the Park District and got to play at Soldier Field. Several families from the Tutoring Program attended the game at Soldier Field.

In January 2006 Larry enrolled in Truman College, and hopes to transfer later to a four-year university where he can play football. While at Truman, Larry has been studying art with Mr. Armir Nour, a famous artist from Africa. For over two years Larry has also been in a committed relationship with Dianna Balan; they have a son Jacob, born in July 2006. LaMonica and her daughter live in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Lorenzo is going to school at Joliet Jr. College. He is one of the stars of the football team, and several articles about him appeared in the newspaper.

REFLECTIONS FROM LARRY WHITE

January 2006

"Basically it's like this. I have two sides to me. I have a good side and a bad side. My bad side was when I was younger when I chose the wrong path to go down. I got respect from the wrong path that I chose, because although I did wrong, I did wrong and righteousness together and it evened out.

"So I have respect from that aspect, from Uptown, Edgewater, Rogers Park, throughout all these high schools. I graduated from grammar school in '98, and I had ups and downs, got incarcerated for 2 years, got out, got my life back together, and I'm still respected by the younger generations because of the stuff I did when I was younger. My name is still ringing, but in a good way.

"My other half is being show-cased through my athletic ability and my inner strengths, with me growing up playing sports, flipping, playing in basketball tournaments at Margate Park, Clarendon, the Boys & Girls Club, Loyola Park, Pottawattomie Park, Horner Park, I touched many lives -- with me playing chargers football, high school football for Senn, and at Margate Park, and playing at Soldier Field three years in a row, at a young age -- me, I'm 10 years old playing at Soldier Field! Most people would never be able to play there in their life! Some people know me just for that alone.

"Another strength is my mom. She did a lot of things for the community. She is in a better place, but before she went, all the good things she did and instilled into us are showing right now, are blossoming, like a flower, and a lot of her is within me.

"This is why, at this point in my life, I'm giving so much to the community and to people and to whoever I can give to because you have to give in order to receive, and I understand that and I realize that. I'm at a point in my life where it's time for me to pull the community and old faces back together, and I know I have the power within me to do this. At the same token, I want to do it the right way. I don't want it to be because of a funeral, where everybody gets together and enjoys themselves. I'm going to do it in a positive way. I have the power to do it, so it's going to be done."

WE MISS DONNA TIMS

Donna Tims and her brother Kurt, her sister Barbara, and her cousins Kimberly and Shana,

were part of the tutoring program, youth choir, and Epworth Church in the first half of the 1990's. Donna and her siblings lived with their aunt in foster care; but when their aunt could no longer keep them, they went to different foster homes. Donna was adopted by a family who were members of Epworth Church, Ken and Paula Otto, who were part of the Institute of Cultural Affairs. Later Donna moved to Nebraska, and then decided she wanted a complete change, and moved to Arizona, where she had a job and met a young man, Jeff O'Daniels, whom she married. They had a son JR. Donna died January 2006 from a massive stroke. Donna's favorite quote was "Everything is all right in the end. If it is not all right then it is not the end."

DONNA TIMS: A EULOGY,

by her former tutor, Lorraine Swanson

I was Donna's tutor at the Epworth Tutoring Program from 1992 through 1997. I kept track of Donna through Beth Palmer, and occasionally Donna and I corresponded through e-mail.

I met Donna when she was 14. Like the African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," Donna very much belonged to the Edgewater neighborhood. Beth Palmer told me how Donna showed up one day at the Epworth Tutoring Program. The next day, she brought her brother, sister and cousins to the program. I always think of Donna as rescuing herself from a tumultuous childhood full of abuse and neglect. I think that Beth Palmer played a huge role in building Donna's confidence and giving her hope. I never knew Donna to be without hope or dreams.

Donna was full of charm and charisma. She was a popular girl, loved to have fun, and I never heard any of our other students say a bad word about her. The Donna I knew was a hard worker and tough as nails. She had every reason to mistrust adults and surrender to the temptations of the streets. She wanted an education very badly but had to work extra hard because of learning disabilities. She never gave up on herself.

Donna carried the weight of the world on her shoulders, worried about her brother and sisters, yet she could delight in being a child. I remember inviting Donna over to my house with her cousin Kimberly and LaMonica White for a "slumber party." The girls watched the Tina Turner movie, "What's Love Got to Do With It," and made brownies. Donna bragged about that for a long time.

Donna made me laugh all the time. Although I was only in my thirties, like all teenagers, she regarded me as being "extremely old." When the kids rode in my car, I'd let them listen to WGCI as a compromise so I wouldn't have to listen to any awful rap stations. Donna always cranked up the bass on my car stereo until the car was literally vibrating. I remember her turning to the other kids and saying, "Lorraine doesn't know about bass." I turned to her and said, "Kid, my generation invented bass."

When Donna turned sixteen, she decided to throw herself a Sweet 16 party at the church. Martha Stewart would have been proud of Donna and her friend Danielle, who overlooked no small detail in their party planning. I remember Pastor Bettye Mixon was somewhat apprehensive about the party which was to take place in the church gym, until I volunteered to chaperone. I drove Donna and Danielle to Aldi's to buy food for the party. The girls bought baloney and bread, and somehow Donna convinced all the boys to pay for the baloney sandwiches at her own party. I remember thinking how wonderfully life affirming that party was. Donna was celebrating and embracing her life.

The first year we started the high school study group, Donna was the glue that held that group together despite a rough start and my own inexperience handling rambunctious teenagers. Donna was the reason why kids and tutors kept coming back. Whenever I wanted to find out what one of the other kids was up to, I could always count on Donna to sing like a canary. The kids squabbled like puppies at the beginning, but by the end of the year they were all friends. We celebrated by going to the Art Institute. The kids had a great time but I think the security guards were glad to see us leave. Afterward, we went to the ExChequer Lounge on Wabash Street for pizza. The kids played old Motown on the juke box and Donna got everyone up slow dancing. The yuppies in the restaurant even sent over pitchers of Coke to our table. They liked our little group. I remember Donna telling everyone afterward, "Lorraine took us to a bar!"

When Donna and her siblings were released back into the DCFS system, I went over to the Columbus-Maryville on Montrose Street, and somehow managed to talk my way into seeing them. I wasn't going to leave until I saw each of the Tims **Donna Tims: a Eulogy, by Lorraine Swanson**

(Continued)

children. Independently, Beth Palmer and Gigi Head

– God rest her soul – also showed up. I think the social workers were amazed that three people from the neighborhood came to check up on the children.

Donna blossomed from a needy, thumb-sucking kid into a beautiful young woman, thanks to the wonderful Ken and Paula Otto who took her in as a foster child. Paula deserves a lot of credit for how well Donna turned out. But that was how Donna was, you couldn't help loving her or wanting to help her achieve her goals and dreams. She loved living at the Institute of Cultural Affairs. I used to tell Beth that Donna was cramming in 16 years of a lost childhood living with Paula and her girls. Donna found a mother in Paula.

Occasionally I am asked who I admire most, and I always tell people Donna Tims. I often think of famous people who went on to do great things with their lives after suffering horrible childhoods. Donna found a way out of poverty and was breaking the cycle of abuse with her own son. She was a success story. Perhaps the reason why she lived every day to the fullest was because God knew he'd be calling her home at 27. He placed her on the path of my own life journey, to teach me about courage and love. Donna was, and always will be, my hero.

STUDENTS LOVE TO READ

Inspired Youth Tutoring is enjoying its location at Bezazian Library. Several students have gotten library cards, many take out books.

Fourth grader Odalis Barrientos joined the Tutoring Program in Oct. 2004, not knowing a word of English. One year later, 11/10/05, she wrote this: "I was excited about getting my library card. And then when they give me the library card I was very happy. I jump like a monkey, and I take out a book of monsters. Now I am going to take out a book of Jokes and Riddles."

Third grader Brenda Hernandez (student in the Tutoring Program whose mother was also a graduate of the Tutoring Program) has read 21 books in *The Magic Tree House* series. She wrote: "I like *The Magic Tree House* books because in every book you get to know information from different kinds of countries. How did they find the tree house? Annie believed in magic and the tree house is magic. The magic tree house was invisible. That's how she seen it. Jack, he worked in the magic tree house because he likes books and the tree house is filled with books. They met the person in the Magic Tree

House Four. Her name was Morgan le Fay. Morgan le Fay, she was magic. That is how the magic tree house is magic. The magic tree house was in Frog Creek, Pennsylvania. The book I'm reading now is *Magic Tree House 15, Viking Ships at Sunrise*. Now I'm on Magic Tree House 16."

BOOKS AND A LOVE OF READING

This email was sent to Beth Palmer from Rev. Patrick McNally, who was pastor of Epworth Church in 1985, just before the Tutoring Program started: "Beth, That is wonderful news [that the Tutoring program was nominated for the Much Shelist Founders' Award]. As a parent and pastor, time for other matters is scarce. I have a very long personal to-do list [3 weeks before Christmas], but your e-mail has shocked me into action. You will hear from me soon."

In a letter which followed, Rev. Patrick McNally wrote that he was enclosing a gift for the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program in honor of the work done with neighborhood youth through the years. He wrote that part of the gift came from his parents' estate; each of their children was to give a gift to an organization they deemed worthy. The other part of the gift was from him and his daughter. His daughter loved to read, and he knew that many people began to love to read because of the Tutoring Program.

GIVING A SPEECH FOR MAYOR DALEY

written by Fabricio, 6th grader

I gave a speech at downtown to Mayor Richard Daley and other kind of people. What I said there is that I thanked the mayor for letting us be in the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program, and I said, "Thank you, Mr. Daley, for being cool with us." I was kind of nervous when I spoke because you see when I went there I saw many people that I haven't met before, and I was nervous of saying the speech in front of everybody, so that made me be kind of nervous, but when I said my speech I wasn't nervous at all. I just felt like I knew all of the people that were with me and I wasn't nervous after all that happened. But Jasmine was a little bit nervous, but I told her, "You don't have to be nervous because there is nothing to be scared of."

SATURDAY TUTORING

In all kinds of weather kids come to Saturday Tutoring at the Margate Park Field House. Some walk 1½ miles to get there.

The Chicago children love working with their 8th grade tutors from Wilmette. This year they made "slime"; they made ice cream in plastic bags; they made toy cars from plastic building pieces; they made quiz games with electrical circuits so that light bulbs lit up when the student touched the correct answer with a wire. They played soccer, kickball, steal the bacon, Pictionary, and bingo (they chose their own numbers for the card). They wrote poetry, heard stories, and had training conflict resolution.

Every session each child read a book with their tutor and worked on math. For some of the children, this was the only time all week when they actually read a book and when someone explained math to them. A 2nd grade boy said one week, "I can't believe I read the whole book!" A 5th grade boy with low math skills has gradually been improving during the year. 1st graders are learning to speak and read English. A 3rd grade girl is learning to write sentences in English. A 6th grade girl is reading better and better because of Saturday tutoring.

The 8th grade tutors are patient and fantastically creative. One tutor wrote out questions for a story so her student could write answers for them. The tutors figure out how to explain math to their tutees. They have a wonderful relationship with the younger children. The children admire their tutors and ask about them during the week.

STUDENTS MOVE

More students have moved away this year than in any other year in the past. During the year students moved to Kentucky-3, Cicero-1, farther north in Chicago-3, farther west in Chicago-4, Puerto Rico-1, and Minnesota-3. Some families moved because of upward mobility, some because of family reasons, and some because gentrification forced them out. We could see that the students benefitted from being in the Tutoring Program and the Youth Choir. The tutors and other students miss them. New students took their places, but they will be particularly missed in the Youth Choir. We had trained their voices for 1, 2, or 10 years, and they were quite good singers. Now new students are being trained. Urban sociologists say this is a function of the city: to train people who then go to new locations with the new skills. We hope that what the students

learned in the Tutoring Program and Youth Choir will serve them well wherever they are.

STUDENTS GET EYEGLASSES

Dr. John Walsh has given free eye exams to students from the Tutoring Program since 1988, and the Lions Club of Wilmette paid for their glasses. This year he examined 6 children; four of them needed glasses and received them through a fund from the Lions Club.

In March 2006 Dr. Walsh retired. During the past 19 years he has examined over 200 students from the Tutoring Program and provided glasses for 100-150. This has been very important to the students for their education. Inspired Youth appreciates what Dr. Walsh has done for children of Chicago's Uptown/Edgewater neighborhoods.

INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS GIVE CONCERTS at the ALDEN-LAKELAND NURSING HOME

Fourteen students sang Christmas songs at the Alden-Lakeland during Christmas vacation. On February 13, twenty-six Inspired Youth Singers and Girl Scouts sang a Valentine's concert at the Alden-Lakeland, and the Girl Scouts passed out 160 valentines to the residents. On both days, the students sang two half-hour concerts, one on the 2nd floor and the same concert on the 4th floor. Some of the residents were unresponsive because of Alzheimer's, but most of the residents smiled, sang along, and clapped. It was a treat for them. Grandparents of three of the students were recent residents there.

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

FIELD TRIP TO A LAW FIRM AND A VISIT WITH A FEDERAL DISTRICT JUDGE

With details by Shonesha, 5th grade
Former tutor Lisa Johnson, a lawyer with the firm Holland & Knight LLP, hosted four students from Inspired Youth, January 4, 2006 --Shonesha, Khadijah, Johnesha, and Deirdre, along with Beth Palmer. Lisa gave them a tour

of the law firm. They saw several sections of the library with big law books. They saw a computer room that people use to find evidence so that they can catch people and send them to court. They saw Lisa's office which she said was smaller than that of some other lawyers. Lisa had post-it notes covering her computer to remind her of things. She used her computer a lot.

Lisa invited 7 attorneys to meet with the students to talk about the experience they had in becoming lawyers and what kind of law they practiced. One was a tax lawyer. Another dealt with music and copyrights. The managing partner of the firm involved the girls in a discussion about the Bill of Rights and then about suing, for example, over a moldy donut or faulty tires on a van. The lawyers stressed that if any of the girls wanted to become a lawyer, they should work their hardest and that they could do whatever they put their minds to. It was a stimulating discussion and a rare opportunity to talk with so many good lawyers.

That experience was matched by the next. After the conference discussion Lisa took the girls to meet another partner in the firm, Victor Henderson, who is the president-elect of the Chicago Bar Association for 2007. Mr. Henderson got on the phone and called Federal District Judge David Coar, whose office is in the Federal Court building across the street. The secretary said we could come to visit. In the Federal Court building we were ID'd by security.

Judge Coar's court was not in session, so the secretary and Mr. Henderson showed us the court room and gave us books about what judges do, the hierarchy, and books about crimes, such as kids dying because they were murdered by older people. We saw the lock-up at the side of the court room where

prisoners were held until the judge was ready. The students were surprised to see a toilet in the small lock-up. When they scowled, Mr. Henderson said, "This is a clean lock-up. Most of them smell!"

Federal Judge David Coar came into the court room to talk with the students. Mr. Henderson asked him about the sign on the inside of the lock-up door: "Please remove

foot-irons and hand-cuffs." The judge said that foot-irons and hand-cuffs were not allowed in his court room unless there were exceptional problems. He said that the law presumed that people were innocent until proven guilty.

The students went into the judge's private chambers, a large suite of offices with beautiful paintings, where he could talk with lawyers. After we visited him, we went home.

It was a rare treat to meet Federal District Judge David Coar and to see his court room and chambers and to talk with Victor Henderson and other attorneys from Holland & Knight. Thank you, Lisa, for setting up such a memorable visit.

GOOD NEWS OF STUDENTS

Fermin (6th) is starting to bring his school homework to the tutoring session. Freddy (6th) says the Tutoring Program is helping him study better. Ambar (5th) studied the multiplication tables on her own. Dulce (5th) doesn't balk at doing work any more. Uriel (5th) studied during the tutoring session. Brenda (3rd) has gotten better at math. Leslie (3rd) has improved tremendously in math and reading. Itzell and Yulisa (3rd) and Daisy (6th) have learned to read and speak English. Steve (2nd) wrote a long, long story for our magazine.

Johnesha (7th) wrote several articles for the Goudy School newspaper, *Cougar Times*. She also edited several of the articles.

Fabiola (2nd) was one of the children we took to the Shedd Aquarium in July 2004, just before Fabiola entered 1st grade. Two years later, in second grade, when her class was naming sources of light, Fabiola said, "Jellyfish! I saw them."

A LONG WAY TO GO

It takes a lot of patience to work with Yaron, a 5th grade boy, but gradually he is making progress. Since he entered the Tutoring Program in September 2005, he has done something bad just about every week. At a choir rehearsal he sang loudly and purposely off-key; he loudly screeched while walking to and from the tutoring sessions; at a Saturday tutoring session, he stayed outside the whole time instead of coming in to work with his tutor; he brought 6 condoms to Saturday tutoring

one day; he was play fighting in the library before and at the end of a tutoring session; at the tutoring session after a special event at Goudy School, he refused to open a book or do any work; one day he and his younger brother brought **fermecelli spaghetti** and squirted it on other children, the sidewalk, and trees; another day they had water balloons and threw them out the window on people who came to their apartment building; at the end of a tutoring session, Yaron stood in front of a tutor's car as she was driving out of the library parking lot; another day he mimicked and taunted a student, thus provoking a fight between two families. All these actions resulted in many visits and discussions with Yaron and his parents. Finally he stayed out of the program for a few weeks. Last week (one week) he didn't do anything untoward. We hope Yaron gains from being in the Tutoring Program. We still have hope.