



TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH



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SUMMER PIANO PROGRAM

"I want to come to piano lessons every day," Brianna (5th gr.) stated. "Cool!" exclaimed Cortez (4th gr.) at playing a duet with his piano tutor. "That's so sweet," whispered Khadijah (6th gr.) at playing a slow duet. Ckoryna (3rd gr.) had a grand time playing "Jolly Old St. Nicholas" over and over and over as a duet with her piano tutor. Asia (4th gr.) flew through Book A in the first week and kept going through Book B. Armon (entering 1st gr.) played three pieces for his grandmother after a couple of lessons. She didn't know he could play the piano! Clara (3rd gr.) beamed as she played a duet with her tutor, her face all smiles.

Thirty-three children took lessons in the 2006 Summer Piano Program sponsored by Inspired Youth, Inc. at Edgewater Presbyterian Church. 22 children came regularly for hour lessons, two, three, or four times a week for 6½ weeks. 14 of the 22 children had never played the piano before; 8 had participated in previous summers.

The children gained a lot from the lessons. Joam (2nd gr.) knew something didn't sound right, so he said, "Wait," and played it over again. That happened several times. One night he tried to play a three-note chord. At first his fingers couldn't do it, and he tried and tried. For over five minutes he kept trying and trying. Every once in a while he could play it, and he kept trying.

The children learned about practicing. Various children would say, "I already played that," and we said we didn't want them merely to turn the pages in the book, but to make the pieces beautiful.

After the first day tutor Carol C. Preston wrote, "As a volunteer teacher, I felt moved by these kids today, showing up to learn the piano. They were so enthused. Everyone had fun and learned. It's a fact that learning piano helps children's learning in general (to focus, to read, fractions, co-operation, social skills, enjoyment). This good investment for the children today = good citizens of tomorrow."

One year an eight-year old boy who couldn't read at school was in the summer piano program. As he learned to read music, he began to learn to

read words. Each note on the page meant something that he was supposed to do with his fingers, that when done in succession would make nice music. At the end of the summer the boy's mother happened to remark that the boy couldn't read. The boy said, "Yes I can!" and he read to her. This eight-year old boy showed us that through the piano lessons, children were learning extensively. "Right brain" and "left brain" were working together with "hands on" to create something beautiful. The students were making something beautiful themselves.

A few children had keyboards at home and practiced the pieces in between lessons. When Clara (3rd gr.) first started, she played very slowly, as in a dream. She kept coming to the lessons and her playing got better and better. Then she borrowed a keyboard from her grandfather and got to play all day at home. She was proud when she finished Book A and began to play Book B.

Sasu (3rd) came to Chicago from Nepal in March. She could hardly understand or speak English when she first started the piano lessons. She never spoke and she played very, very slowly. She practiced the pieces at home and began to gain. For the final recital she told her tutor she wanted to play just one piece (because she was so shy). On the night of the recital, she told her tutor she wanted to play two pieces (like the other students). Both pieces were beautiful.

Jhonesha (7th gr.) took lessons in previous summers. Now she reads notes and learns pieces on her own. This summer she learned all the pieces in Book D, and half of the pieces in Book II. She played parts of a pop song by ear.

Family situations made it difficult for some students to come to lessons. Lakeya's (3rd gr.) father went into the hospital, so she and her mother went to stay with a relative who lived further away. Finally Lakeya resumed lessons, and she played in the final recital. Anna's (4th gr.) mother had a baby the day before the first recital, so Anna couldn't play in it. Jose (6th gr.) and Cordell (2nd gr.) were at their grandmother's homes the week of the final recital, so they

couldn't play in it. Another family had transportation problems because of picking up their mother from work. One day two boys wanted to leave the lesson early. They had missed the city-sponsored breakfast and wanted to go to the city-sponsored lunch for a second time that day because they were still hungry.

Two families of cousins got together during the evening piano lessons. The children's parents, grandmother, uncle, younger brothers – all came. They listened or talked while the four children played the piano. A father flew paper airplanes for his preschool-aged son while his other son was playing the piano. Two mothers said they had always wanted to play the piano, so one tried. Everyone had a good time. What a nice place for a family reunion: piano lessons at a church!

Ten volunteer piano tutors helped the children this summer: Jolly Alexander, Eleanor Bilby, Jessica Cañas, Rob Christiansen, Jennifer Kelly, Susan Mattison, Judy Montalvo, Jodi Morton, Beth Palmer, Carol Preston, and Bridget Scherbringer. This is twice as many piano tutors as last summer. They were all wonderful.

The tutors gained a lot from working with the children. One said it was a "healing" experience. Another said, "My husband said I'm 'more with it' now that I've started tutoring and teaching piano in the program." One tutor didn't want to go home after a session because "this is relaxing. At home problems there are problems to deal with." One said, "I'm so happy I'm well enough to come. Last year I was sick. Now I'm glad I can come."

The tutors were serious about working with the children. Jennifer Kelly wanted to get a piano book for her student Sarah (3rd gr.). She went to a music store in Evanston, but found the store had moved further west. She went to the new location, but found they were out of the book. Then she went to a third store in Chicago where she found the book. When Sarah heard the account of what her tutor had done she kept saying, "That's so sweet." Sarah then found that her brother's keyboard "had no cords," so the program bought a new adaptor for it, and Sarah could practice.

Two Recitals

The fifth week of the program eleven students

went to the Alden-Lakeland Home to present a piano recital to the residents. Parents came along to hear their children play. Mothers, fathers, and grandparents were proud of the children. A couple of the children were nervous, but then started their pieces and played beautifully. Some of the residents were tapping their feet or conducting in the air while the students played. Afterwards one man said how much he liked the children playing. He said his daughter had taken piano lessons and this reminded him of her.

Fifteen students played in the final recital, the last week of the program. The night before was so hot that the electricity in the church went out. The students took lessons on pianos instead of keyboards that night. The day of the recital was just as hot, but the electricity stayed on! Fifty-four people (students, tutors, parents, siblings, relatives, and friends) came to celebrate the music of the beginning piano students -- 11 countries and ethnic groups were represented.

The students played firmly and confidently; their parents were proud. Courtney (6th gr.) and Johnesha (7th gr.) announced the program; Alejandro (6th gr.) took pictures. Alejandro's (6th gr.) piece, "Indian Song," was so striking that someone in the audience started laughing when he began playing. Shonesha (5th gr.) decided at the last minute to play in the recital and she played her two songs perfectly. During the recital a 5-year old begged her mother to be a part of it; her mother signed her up for next summer.

At the end of the recital people socialized over cookies and punch. They even got to eat Susan Mattison's famous chocolate chip cookies™, baked on a 98 degree day ("I have good air conditioning," she remarked). People brought so much there were platefuls for all.

Parent after parent expressed how grateful they were for this opportunity for their children to take piano lessons. They said it was a valuable experience and they were grateful. "It's a blessing," they said.

Lend-A-Hand Program
MY HERO AWARDS LUNCHEON
AT THE STANDARD CLUB

In July six students went with Beth Palmer to the exclusive Standard Club in downtown Chicago for the My Hero Awards & Volunteer Recognition Luncheon sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Marovitz Lend-a-Hand Program. Ms. Palmer was presenting the "Making a Difference Award" to the Much Shelist law firm for their gift to Lend-A-Hand of \$35,000 in celebration of their 35th anniversary.

The children were impressed by the Standard Club. One student said, "I like the candles" (the chandeliers). Another said, "I can tell [it's ritzy] by the food." One student thumped the cloth towels in the bathroom and liked the sound.

The children were puzzled by the number of forks at their places. The waitress spoke in Spanish and English and told them about the forks. They enjoyed drinking water from huge goblets, with lemon slices on the rim. They enjoyed the food—the salad, the rolls, the vegetables (artful, al dente), and the ... Was it fish? Was it chicken? The children debated. A couple of the children were so hungry (no school, so no hot lunches) that they ate everything they could.

They especially enjoyed the desert, angel food cake with whipped cream, with selected berries on the side. Esther (3rd gr.) somehow got whipped cream on her nose. She grinned, and the white whipped cream was very obvious on her olive skin. She wiped the whipped cream off with her napkin, which she had accidentally dragged across some whipped cream still on the plate, and so got whipped cream on her arm, too. After that was all cleaned up, she nibbled at the fruit of a desert not eaten, and then ate part of the extra angel food cake, resulting in more whipped cream on her nose. All this took place during the speeches, when everyone was supposed to be quiet. It was hard to stifle giggles.

The awards were presented while the people ate. All our students went on stage when the award was presented to Much Shelist. Esther (3rd) and Carla (10th) spoke into the microphone and told how the Tutoring Program was important for them. They spoke very well.

The students couldn't get over all the people that were there, between 150 and 200 people. Maria (8th gr.) called Beth Palmer the next day to thank her for being able to go on the trip. She said, "The

people there, eating dinner, were important people. I had a good time. Please invite me again when you go some place."

INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS SING AT JEFFERSON PARK LUTHERAN CHURCH

Seven children and four adults went to Jefferson Park Lutheran Church in July when the children's choir sang in the worship service. A child from the congregation joined with them. The children sang seven songs in addition to the hymns and responses. During the children's sermon each child received a multi-colored early American toy called a "Jacob's ladder."

The congregation thoroughly enjoyed the children visiting. "They were good. Even better than last year." "I really enjoyed the children." "It was so good to have the Inspired Youth Singers visit. Come back soon." These were comments people made. The church secretary said that everyone she talked with during the week mentioned how much they enjoyed the children. Even three weeks later a woman remarked how glad she was that the children came.

After the service, the children, chaperons, and the pastor's family went to McDonald's for lunch. They walked through a tunnel (under the Metra tracks) and over an expressway to get there. The children enjoyed the whole trip. One child said, "I'm glad I came. We had a good time."

The Inspired Youth Singers have performed at 14 events since October 2005 – at nursing homes, churches, Parents' Nights, a choir festival, a fund-raising event, piano recitals, and at City Hall. 36 students sang in these concerts during the past year.

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/Edgewater in Chicago. Checks may be made to "Inspired Youth" and sent to Inspired Youth, 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.