

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES, DECEMBER 2007

SATURDAY TUTORING

The 8th graders from Wilmette Jr. High didn't come on Sat., Dec. 1, because there was a mix-up in ordering the bus. So we "made do." The 4th - 6th graders worked with the K- 3rd graders. They took it seriously and knew what to do because the tutors had modeled it for them. A few mothers and fathers helped. The children wrote holiday letters to senior citizens. Stephanie Rubenstein, a teacher at WJHS, talked about Hannukah, and the kids played Dreidel with M&M's. Beth Palmer told the Christmas story and 7 children from the Youth Choir sang Christmas songs. The children wrapped five boxes of stuffed animals which Enid Young sent for preschoolers in Uptown. It snowed as the children walked home and some of the children made snow angels. Another beautiful day.

YOUTH CHOIR SINGS FOUR CONCERTS

The Inspired Youth Singers performed in four concerts in December. 22 youth (12-15 at each concert) performed in all. Before every concert, the students ate at McDonald's or Tedino's Pizza. (They sing and behave better when they've eaten first.) The weather on the trips was a challenge on the four weekends--rain, ice, white-out snow, and a hurricane wind.

The choir was fantastic on every trip. Everyone was proud of them. Dorie Burrell conducted the choir at every concert. Jacki Calabrese, Clara's mother, helped with logistics. The choir wore white shirts and dark pants; the girls also wore red-plaid silk vests. For the kids who did not have a white shirt, we bought 13 white turtle-necks at Unique Thrift Shop for \$22. The choir looked great.

In the Community Christmas Concert at the **Christian Science Church**, the Inspired Youth Singers sang eight songs. Their strong sound echoed joyously through the sanctuary. The choir joined the audience in singing Christmas carols.

At **Bethany Terrace in Morton Grove**, the youth sang five songs. Pastor Mary Jane Leewis-Kirk asked the choir to sing "A la nanita nana" a second time. She said, "The residents were asking about your coming, and when I received an email saying you could come in December the residents were excited. Look at all the people here today. Everyone wanted to come to see you. They'll be talking about this for weeks.

You are our hope." After the service, the children shook hands with the seniors. Yulisa and Brenda (both 5th gr.) talked with residents for 10 minutes. Everyone got to eat delicious eclairs and cookies along with hot chocolate. "This is the best hot chocolate I've ever had," Clara (5th gr.) said. As a thank-you the Terrace gave the youth certificates for McDonald's and pairs of warm gloves. The kids put their gloves on right away and held up their fingers. One of the children said, "These gloves are really warm." Abie, the mother of Nubia (1st gr.) and Wudassie (4 yrs. old) said, "I'm so happy about my girls singing with the choir. Everything was so beautiful." On the way home Tony (kind.) and Cortez (6th gr.) ran and skidded on the ice! Tony shouted, "Look! I'm ice skating!"

To take the kids to sing in the **Multi-Cultural Children's Choir Concert at Hemenway UMC in Evanston**, we rented a 15-passenger van. Steve Rish, teacher at Wilmette Jr High and co-coordinator of the Saturday Tutoring Program, drove the van. It was snowing heavily, and when we got to the church, we had to walk around to the back door. All 21 people (including a mother carrying a baby) traipsed to the end of the city block, walked around the corner to the alley, waded through the snow in the dark, and tried to guess which building the church was and which door to go in. Getting there was an adventure in the near-blizzard, but all the children and parents finally got inside the church.

The concert was magnificent. Our choir sang 2 songs, and everyone was proud of them. For the last piece of the evening, our choir and the MCC choir both went on stage and sang "Come Let Us Adore Him." Dorie Burrell conducted all the children.

Tamara Clark, grandmother of Karah (2nd gr), couldn't get over the choir. "I'm your biggest fan," she said. "The children sounded like angels. It brought tears to my eyes. The baby was even clapping to the music and dancing. I'm so glad Karah is singing in the choir." Others said, "The Inspired Youth were singing harmony!" "The kids wanted to sing well, and the music just flowed."

Before singing at **Grace Baptist Church** (located in the 2nd floor chapel of Edgewater Presbyterian Church), the choir ate pizza at

Tedino's. 24 people sat at a long table. Clara (5th gr.) said, "We should have a toast!" Irene (8th gr.) replied, "We're not royalty!" "Yes, we are!" We made a toast to children and then to the holiday. Clara's mother remarked, "They just want to clink their glasses!" Then the pizza came.

Walking the three blocks to the church was another adventure. It was very, very cold, and it was later reported that the wind was almost a Level 1 hurricane. We walked a few feet along Sheridan Rd. and got to the lakefront hi-rise everyone calls "the big black building" and were almost blown into the busy street. Everyone was laughing and screaming. Beth Palmer, who was in front, grabbed a light pole so as not to be blown into the street, and everyone grabbed onto her and each other, laughing and screaming. When the light changed, everyone let go, and the wind blew them across the street and half-way down the next block. Raymona and Dorie were holding the hands of 3-year old "Poo-man," and all of a sudden the wind lifted him into the air. Raymona said later, "If I hadn't been holding my son's hand, he would have blown away like a little piece of tumbleweed."

The worship service at Grace Baptist Church was meaningful. Fourteen children, four parents, two choir directors, and six siblings and cousins were there with the GBC congregation. The children's four songs reverberated in the small chapel, and everyone was joyous. The leader of the worship service turned the lights down and read a Christmas story about three trees. Everyone listened. It was a beautiful Christmas celebration. Members of GBC drove the children home in the inclement weather.

DIFFICULT TIMES

The father of three of the children went to Mexico in August because his father was very ill. He has not come back yet because of the tight border control. The children are sad not to have their father at home.

One of our students lives in a shelter on the South Side and commutes to Uptown every day, never missing a day of tutoring.

The mother of one of the children had a large tumor removed in August. We hope she will be all right.

PRESENTS FROM KINGSWOOD UMC (in BUFFALO GROVE)

50 children under age 12 in families in the

Tutoring Program received large bags of gifts from members of Kingswood United Methodist Church in Buffalo Grove. Jean Forsythe coordinated this, and we are very grateful for their generosity. Two sisters received warm winter coats with hoods and started wearing them the day they received them. Another boy received a warm winter coat with a hood. The coats fit perfectly. A baby received winter outfits in a perfect size and toys with sound makers and a toy that says the alphabet. One mother called on Christmas day and in the background all of her children shouted, "THANK YOU!" All the families appreciate the generosity and thoughtfulness of the members of Kingswood UMC in Buffalo Grove. This is the 21st year they have given presents to the tutoring children.

PRESENTS FROM ENID YOUNG (From Iowa)

Enid Young collects stuffed animals and toys in Iowa, cleans and dresses them up, and sends them to Inspired Youth. We wrap them and give them to preschool children in Uptown. This year the children in the Saturday Tutoring Program and Girl Scouts wrapped them. Another wrapper was "Elfeanor" Bilby. This year we gave gifts to 340 children – at the Head Start at 4848 N. Winthrop, at the Hull House Head Start at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, and to children in the preschool and primary grades at Stewart School. Enid Young was a small child in England during World War II, and she doesn't want any child to be without a toy to love. We know these children will love these toys.

STUDENT PROGRESS

Cortez and Asia (6th gr.), Cordell and Kimberly (4th gr.) all improved in reading during the year.

One night after the tutoring session, Latrice (10th gr.) remarked, "I got educated tonight, thanks to my tutor, Ms. Pam! All four of us [siblings] went to her apartment last Saturday and made pasta."

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. Inspired Youth Inc. is a 501(c)(3) corporation with the IRS, so donations are tax-deductible. Checks may be made to "Inspired Youth" and sent to *Inspired Youth, 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.*