

# TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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July 2008: End-of-Year Report

## 47 Kids Recite Poems at June Family Night

"There are more people here than ever before!" Over 110 people came to the June Family Night at Edgewater Presbyterian Church – young children and teens, parents from 22 families, and tutors. The Fellowship Hall was full!

The highlight of the evening was 47 students each reciting a poem! The children lined up 12 at a time, came to the microphone as Cortez or Shonesha announced their name, and recited their poem for the families. Everyone did a wonderful job. (An 11-year old girl cried and ran out of the room; she couldn't say her poem.) During all these poems, the audience was remarkably quiet and respectful. It was amazing. Each child had his/her picture taken and received a certificate of recognition from the Tutoring Program.

At the beginning of the evening, people shared heaps of food, including a chocolate cake from Sam's (7<sup>th</sup> gr.) mother that said in red letters, "Thank you, Ms. Beth." Everyone noticed it. Ms. Young exclaimed, "I've had that cake before. It's delicious!"

The woman watching the door for the church said, "Does the alderman know about your program? It's great what you're doing for the neighborhood."

Daniel (8<sup>th</sup> gr.) said with a big smile when he first came in, "I have good news!" Ms. Beth said, "What is it?" "I passed eighth grade and I'm going to high school next year." "Congratulations!" Then he said, "It's because of the Tutoring Program." Ms. Beth was proud of Daniel and gave him a big hug.

## 2007-2008 Was a Good Year

Here are the numbers of students and tutors who participated this year in the five sections of the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program, the Inspired Youth Singers, and the Summer Piano Program:

	STUDENTS	TUTORS	WJHS
Mon. HS	8	14	
Tues. 5th-8th	27	33	
Wed./Thurs. 1st-4th	28	51	
Sat. K-7th	53*	6	49
Choir, K-HS	41**	7	
Piano Program	33***	18	

(\*37 Sat. students were not in another tutoring section)

(\*\* 17 Choir members were not in regular Tutoring Program)

(\*\*\* 19 Piano students were not in regular Tutoring Program)

**TOTAL 136 110 49**

The **2008-2009 tutoring year** will start the week of September 15-18, 2008, with tutors' meetings. Students will come beginning the week of September 22-25.

To sign up, call 773-561-4759 or email inspiredyouth2@yahoo.com.

## Good News of Students

Tony (kind.) could hardly talk in 2006 as a four-year old, and he had very little self-discipline. He began coming to weekly Youth Choir rehearsals in June 2007 and going on all the choir trips. By Spring 2008 he was talking clearly. In May 2008 he could read a few words in one of the choir songs, "Go Now in Peace." In June 2008, he couldn't wait to go to the Hilltop Restaurant where the Youth Choir was going to sing for the Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood. He had heard about the gigantic hamburgers and all the good food, and he kept talking about "going to the Hilltop." In Summer 2008 Tony came to the Summer Piano Program to learn to play the piano. In walking to the Piano Program, he initiated the game, "I spy with my little eye," which he had learned at school. He concentrated very well at playing the piano and learned quickly. As a break in practicing the piano, he began to learn to tell time. We hope Tony will do well in first grade in September.

Jonathan D. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) and Christopher Z. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) were in the kindergarten section of the Tutoring Program in 2006-2007, and both read at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level this year. Jonathan D. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.), Nubia (1<sup>st</sup> gr.), and Kedus (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) all got straight A's on their report cards this year, from three different teachers.

Joshua (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) went up from F to D to C in reading on his school report card.

Marleni (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) went up in all subjects on her report card and is learning to read.

Summone (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) worked hard all during the year. By the end of the year she was able to write the week's 12 spelling words five times each in only a few minutes. Summone was also a big help with Yamile (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.), encouraging Yamile when Yamile was overwhelmed.

Jenny (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) went up from a D to a B in reading on her school report card.

Brayant (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) didn't talk at the beginning of the year. All during 2006-2007, as a 1<sup>st</sup> grader, he hardly said a word. In 2007-2008, he started talking. This year he read our three pre-primer series, *Tip*, *Bears*, and *Work and Play*.

## **Good News of Students, cont.**

Keily (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) went up in all subjects on her report card. At the beginning of second grade she couldn't read a word. She knew no letters of the alphabet and no sounds. In the afternoon tutoring sessions, she started trying. By the end of the year, she was still a non-reader, but she could our first pre-primers, "Tip I, II, and III." She was trying.

Kimberly (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) has been in the Saturday program for two years. In 2006/7 she didn't like to read and had a hard time reading. In 2007/8 she was reading at grade level! Her brother Edwin (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) is also reading at grade level! Their older brother Luis (7<sup>th</sup> gr.) likes to draw.

Oscar (5<sup>th</sup> gr.) began learning how to read this past Sept. 2007, starting with our first pre-primer, "Tip I." At first he brought no homework to the tutoring sessions, but he hardly missed a day. He started bring one assignment from school a few times. Then he asked about coming to the Saturday tutoring session as well. Then he asked if his nephew Brandon (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) could come to Saturday tutoring. Then Oscar began to bring his school homework to the tutoring session almost every Tuesday. By the end of the year, Oscar read the whole book, *The Cat in the Hat*, fluently! On the last day, he did his homework without one complaint!

Cortez (6<sup>th</sup>) came to a concert of the Youth Choir in March 2006 and started singing with the group shortly after that. In the past two years he has consistently participated in the evening tutoring program, the Youth Choir, and the Summer Piano Program, and has gone on almost every choir trip and all the other field trips.

When Cortez started in the Tutoring Program in September 2006, he had low reading skills and very low grades on his school report card. After two years in the program, his grades have risen significantly. Following a trip to the Much Shelist law firm where the Youth Choir sang when Inspired Youth got an award, Cortez said he wanted to be a lawyer. He joined the Young Authors Club at his elementary school. In May 2008 he went with Tutoring Director Beth Palmer to speak at a meeting of the Glenview United Methodist Women to tell about the Tutoring Program. We hope Cortez continues to participate in the program and do well.

Shonesha (7<sup>th</sup> gr.) got a bad report card 2<sup>nd</sup> marking period. The 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period she brought her grades up to all B's (except for a D in science).

Sam (7<sup>th</sup> gr.) studied parts of the Constitution on the last day of tutoring, reading a section in his social studies book. He paid attention the whole time. He understood what he was reading. He knew the answer

to every question his tutor asked him. This was a big change from two years ago, when he couldn't concentrate for over three minutes at a time.

Corzay (7<sup>th</sup>) repeated 6<sup>th</sup> grade in 2006-2007. He came to the evening tutoring program and a few Youth Choir rehearsals for part of that year. Nonetheless, he improved significantly on the standardized tests. In 2007-2008 he came to evening tutoring regularly and was concentrating and studying better.

In 2007/8 there was a complete change in Uriel (7<sup>th</sup>). In 2005/6 and 2006/7 he caused so much trouble in the Tutoring Program that we felt we couldn't handle him. In March 2008 he said he wanted to come back to the Tutoring Program. He mentioned it to the librarian who mentioned it to us. We talked with him and decided to give him a chance. Right then, he got up from the computer at the library and walked into the auditorium where the tutoring session was held, and started working. He worked the whole time, politely. Beth Palmer said, "I predicate my life on children changing, yet I didn't believe it was possible for this boy. But he did change. It was a miracle!"

Daniel (8<sup>th</sup> gr.) went up from F to C in math on his report card. He brought his math homework to Saturday tutoring, and the tutor helped him with it. Daniel's mother said, "The Saturday program has helped my son so much!" She was very grateful.

Latrice (10<sup>th</sup> gr.) enjoyed working with her tutor Pam. Latrice and her three siblings were invited to Pam's condo, once to make pasta and once to make cookies for the Family Night. In March Pam went to Mongolia for two weeks as part of her job. (Mongolia was supposed to be cold.) Latrice couldn't wait until Pam got back. When Pam got back, the two chatted all during the tutoring session.

## **Tutoring Grads**

Steve Hogan, got back in February 2008 from doing three tours of duty (four years) in the Air Force in Iraq and Kuwait. He plans to enroll in college and pursue a career in nursing. He still keeps in touch with a mentor who was his brother's mentor in the "I Have a Dream" program.

Demetrius Davis has a job as a bouncer. He has large biceps.

## **Difficult Friends**

The mother of a 10-year old girl doesn't want another 10-year old girl to visit her daughter any more because the other girl brought up sexually explicit topics and she also stole something from Walgreen's. Her mother couldn't be reached by phone.

I will talk with Riley about this when I see him.

### **Difficult Times**

From tutoring director Beth Palmer: "It was a hot summer night, almost nine o'clock, almost dark. I wanted to talk to a family, so I was in front of their building, a half-block from the Goudy School playground, when a little boy came running up screaming, "Derrick's going to whip me with a cord." I could not find out why Derrick, his step-father, was going to whip him. Six-year old "Riley" clutched at me and wouldn't let go. Derrick walked determinedly up, and the boy tried to hide behind my bike. He yelled, "Ms. Beth, take me to my grandma's [who lives next door to Riley's family]. I beg of you, help me. Save my life." He was screaming and screaming. People looked out their windows at the barefoot little boy, yelling and yelling, with pants half-way down because the clasp was broken.

I said, "Riley, you have to go home to bed." He clung to me. Derrick went to where he was and tried to pull him away by the other hand. Riley wound his arm around the chain of the bike and hung on for dear life. I said, "Let's walk home together, the three of us." The three of us started walking -- Derrick, the screaming boy, the bike and me. Riley screamed, "Ms. Beth, hold my other hand." We detoured at the playground asking people if they had seen the shoes. Riley's older sister wasn't there; she had already gone home. I asked Riley where his shoes were. In between cries, he murmured, "I don't remember."

We kept walking. Then Derrick started carrying Riley, who was kicking and screaming. At the corner, we turned to go down the alley, perhaps because it was easier to get in that way. When we got to the back of their building, the gate was locked. Derrick said, "Riley, go under the gate and open it." Riley went under the gate, and realized he was free. He just stood there, not opening the gate. "Riley, open the gate!" Riley said, "No," and backed away even further. Then Derrick ran the other direction, to go around to the front.

Riley asked me in a low voice, "Is he gone?" I said, "I think he's gone around to the front." Riley opened the gate, tiptoed out, and peered around a dumpster to see where Derrick was. "Is he gone?" he whispered again. When he didn't see him, he ran the other way down the alley and hid behind another dumpster.

I wheeled the bike home (the chain had come off the sprocket), and called Riley's grandmother's house. Riley was there. I talked to his sister and said, "Riley said Derrick was going to whip him with a cord." Riley's sister said, "You know about that?"

### **Difficult Times**

From Tutoring Director Beth Palmer: I called Sophia's mother Sharina on Thursday to see if Sophia (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) and Kyle (kind.) could go to Saturday tutoring. There was no answer. I called Sharina on Friday, and she said, "Uh, could you pick them up at my mom's? We're staying there temporarily."

I said, "Aren't you living at your place on Western?"

Sharina said, "It's not there."

I was confused. "Did the rest of your family members move, too?"

Sharina said, "Everyone moved. It burned down."

"What? When?"

"Yesterday. We lost everything except a few of my clothes and a few of my husband's clothes which were in the front. No one was home except one tenant, and that person got out. A cigarette started the fire."

I picked up Sophia and Kyle at their grandmother's on Saturday. Sophia had on a new blouse from Target and was carrying a few things in her mother's purse.

**Overheard:** Summone (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) said, "You're either black or Chinese. Ms. Beth isn't black, so she's Chinese." Wudassie (age 4) said, "Ms. Beth is white."

**Comments from Tutors:** *From Tom Walsh:* I thought we had a great year. I probably spent the largest amount of my time with Lamarr (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.), who is a fantastic kid. Sometimes, I had to run through the library to retrieve him, since he had too much energy to sit still for an hour and a half, but his behavior definitely improved over the last few weeks. He's really bright. He always has these clever ideas, and I think he's fully capable of getting straight A's if he put in the work.

I had an opportunity to meet several other great kids this year. Efrain (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) is funny and polite and a lot of fun to work with. Christopher Z. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) and Jonathan D. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) are hard workers; they never gave me any trouble. Even when I didn't get a chance to work with the other students on a regular basis, it was good to see them come in every day. They need a program like this, and any gradual improvement they make is priceless.

On Tuesday evenings, I continued working with Alex S. (7<sup>th</sup> gr.). He didn't come in every week, but when he did arrive, I think he learned a lot. I enjoyed teaching him things about science, and especially history. He had lots of social studies homework this

year. We had actual discussions about events in history, like the American Revolution and the Mexican War. It was great to see him take an interest in that.

### **Student Difficulties**

M. hardly said anything in 2006-2007 as a 1<sup>st</sup> grader. As a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader in 2007-2008 he mostly communicated by pointing his head instead of talking. During the tutoring time, he would run out of the room and hide in the stacks of the small Bezazian Library. The librarians were concerned about him, too.

In November we asked a new tutor, Sue Schwendener, if she would work with M. She said she would if she could establish specific rules with him, if she could give him some rewards (*Goosebumps*, computer time), and if we would talk with his parents.

We located M.'s mother and step-father and talked with them. Sue started working with M. He started reading our pre-primers and doing a little homework.

One day M. started drawing on a picture with gang symbols which a school classmate had drawn. 7-year old M. started talking about gangs. We had a long talk with M. about gangs, and how a student from the Tutoring Program had been shot in the back a few years ago because he was part of a gang. We asked if we could tear the picture up. M. nodded.

Another day we noticed huge welts on M.'s arms from insect bites. It seems they were from bugs in the bed. Two tutors and the librarian stood around M. talking with him about the bites. We tried to give him some suggestions about getting rid of the bed bugs.

Another day the strap of M.'s backpack broke. The next day we brought a needle and some thread and tutor Susan Mattison sewed it up in a few minutes (she is a professional seamstress).

Another day a student said that M. and B. had taken some chips from the store on the way to tutoring, and they didn't pay for them. While still at the store, we searched both backpacks and found two bags of chips in B.'s backpack and gave them back to the clerk. M. said that B. had told him to take the chips and put them in his backpack. We talked about stealing with the boys: in the store, on the way to tutoring, at the library, with M.'s uncle on the way home, and with B.'s mother after tutoring.

Sue S. was not able to continue tutoring, and M. began working with Peter Lukidis on Wednesdays and Nick Vecchione on Thursdays. During spring 2008, M. began reading more and more. Nick remarked, "M. is energized by reading!" On the last day, after M. finished his homework, his tutor wanted him to read *Happy Morning*, our fourth pre-primer, but he didn't

want to read. Beth Palmer came by M.'s table and remarked how much he had read a previous day. She suggested, "Why don't you read the next three chapters?" He was on p. 38. When Ms. Beth came back, she noticed M. was reading the last story in the book, on p. 69! She said, "No! I don't believe it!" His tutor said, "M. read the whole thing!" Five minutes later M. and his tutor brought the book to Ms. Beth to show her he had finished reading the whole book. M. was not running out of the room any more.

During the last week Ms. Beth asked M. to write a story for the student magazine. M. and Nick were trying to think of a topic, and one of them brought up Spider-Man. Ms. Beth thought that would be a wonderful topic, and they set to work. Nick and M. worked hard to write the story about Spider-Man. They painstakingly brainstormed one idea at a time. Nick asked M. to tell him about Spider-Man. M., who had hardly written anything all year, told Nick things that Spider-Man did and wrote them down, one by one. M.'s story was 11 lines long, in small printing. It was a miracle, made from hard work.

### **Comments from Tutors, May 2008**

**From Leah Rush:** "I am so glad I discovered Inspired Youth Tutoring Program in my quest for a place to volunteer my time. The students, fellow tutors, and Director Beth Palmer inspire me every week –with their dedication and strong work ethic. The program is a wonderful support to the Edgewater, Andersonville and Uptown communities. It connects children who need education support, along with their parents, with professionals and college students who want to help. Through this connection, Inspired Youth Tutoring Program fosters interaction and learning among neighbors.

**From Susan Mattison:** I have been involved with the tutoring program for about seven years. I think the Bezazian Library has been an excellent environment for the students. They seem less likely to "act out" in this setting. I think all the students gained in their social skills and in their use of language, both academically and socially. I think the relationships that develop between the students and their tutors are (or can be) an excellent base for these young learners. They can see that someone cares.

**From Sue Schwendener:** After working for years as a journalist, I enjoyed tutoring elementary-aged children one afternoon a week during the winter of 2007-2008. While we worked on math, writing and reading at each session, I particularly looked forward to helping the children learn how to read in English. I could almost see light bulbs going off in their heads as they recognized on paper words that they regularly spoke. Equally exciting, they celebrated when they learned how to read in English a word that they

had previously only known in Spanish. Since we worked at a library, the kids would often browse the book shelves before the lesson and arrive with books that they wanted to have read to them.

## **SATURDAY TUTORING**

It's Saturday morning. A shopping cart heavy with folders of reading/writing/arithmetic assignments for the children rolls along the sidewalks of Chicago. Children join the walk to Margate Park for peer tutoring with eighth graders from Wilmette Junior High School.

8:35 am, Ashton at the laundromat; 8:55, Sophia and Kyle at the Berwyn el station; 9:00, Myanna, Myreanna, and Christopher around the corner on Winthrop; 9:10, past the playground, Oscar and Yulisa in neighboring apartments; 9:15, Sam not at the corner, Jennifer not at the corner; 9:20, Jenny on the other side of Argyle; 9:25, Abigail and Arturo on Kenmore, also Edgar in their building; 9:30, Adrian, his first time, waiting outside just before Sheridan. Others come by bus, car, and walking, arriving at Margate Park just in time to set up the tables and chairs for the morning, before the eighth graders' bus arrives. Altogether 78 children and youth, four teachers from WJHS, and the coordinator from Inspired Youth gather on a Saturday morning, because education is important, and it's fun!

## **Saturday Eighth Grade Tutors from Wilmette Jr. Hi**

The eighth graders did a marvelous job this year of helping the Chicago children focus and work on basic skills. They were patient with the children and engaged and encouraging them. An eighth grade boy who worked with a first grade boy with a learning disability was an excellent tutor; the child did better and better every Saturday and continued to improve in his classroom at school. A tutor taught a seventh grade boy how to do long division at Saturday tutoring. Many of the children who have been in the program for two years are now reading at grade level!

The eighth graders' notes on the daily evaluation sheet show what good tutors they were. One eighth grader wrote on three successive sessions: "Really needs to focus on his work more, has the potential to do a lot more than he did." "More willing to work today, finished the reading worksheet." "Focused a lot better and was very productive." On the last day an eighth grader wrote about a kindergarten child: "She has really improved since when I first met her. She is starting to do stuff by herself. Wow." Another eighth grader wrote about a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade boy: "Edwin wrote a great poem. I'm going to miss him." Another eighth grader wrote about a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade boy: "Has improved so much. No longer needs number line...can do math facts mentally. No longer needs me to prompt him with

sentence writing. Kevin has come so far, he should be proud of himself. With his skills and love for learning, he's sure to go far!" An eighth grader wrote about a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade girl: "Better attitude about reading. TONS OF PROGRESS! Great job. I've seen her attitude about school changed greatly. Loves math, and she knows what she is doing! She's a pleasure!"

The parents of the eighth graders appreciated the experience their sons and daughters had. One parent wrote, "Thanks for helping my daughter learn to give. Jessica loved it!" The Chicago children and their parents also appreciated the tutors. The mother of a third grader said, "Can my daughter have the same tutor next time?" A fifth grade boy exclaimed, "This is the best tutor ever!"

## **Profile of Saturday Coordinator**

**Michele de St. Aubin** and four other faculty and staff at Wilmette Jr. High School (Stephanie Rubinstein, Stephanie Raue, Steve Rish, and Julie Nesheim) coordinate students from WJHS as they participate in the peer tutoring program with Inspired Youth Tutoring at Margate Park in Chicago. In this program 40-50 eighth graders from WJHS travel to Chicago two Saturday mornings each month to tutor 30-40 elementary students from Uptown in Chicago. Ms. de St. Aubin has been a coordinator of the program for 12 years, since 1996, taking over as the main coordinator in 2000 when the founder of the peer tutoring program, Jack Jacobson, retired. Since the program's inception in 1994, 1041 students from WJHS have participated in tutoring needy Chicago children.

Ms. de St. Aubin has been invaluable in coordinating the eighth graders from WJHS. Without her leadership, the program would not have been possible. Each fall Ms. de St. Aubin publicizes the program and recruits the eighth graders. She recruits other WJHS faculty and staff to help. Each August she meets with some of the other teachers and the Tutoring Director to plan the "curriculum," namely, a group activity, a crafts project, and a fitness activity for each session. During the group time on Saturdays Ms. deSt.Aubin has led countless sessions on conflict resolution and countless fitness activities and games. She coordinates with the eighth graders' parents and enlists their help in arranging car pools (formerly) or chaperones for bus transportation (currently). She initiates and coordinates fund-raising projects to pay for the supplies needed and the rent for the Saturday program. When the eighth graders have suggestions or complaints, she listens to them and deals with the situations.

Ms. de St. Aubin always has sound judgment about what would be good for all the youth and children involved in the program. She gives her opinion about what should be done in a certain situation, and she always has good ideas about the best thing to do.

The Saturday peer tutoring program could not have

happened all these years without Ms. de St. Aubin's leadership and active participation. She has given over one thousand Wilmette youth an opportunity to serve, and many, many Chicago children a window to a brighter future. Inspired Youth, Inc. appreciates Michele de St. Aubin.

## **CHILDREN'S CHOIR: INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS**

### **Valentine's Day at the Alden-Lakeland**

The Inspired Youth Singers and a Girl Scout troop from the area went to the Alden-Lakeland to celebrate Valentine's Day. 18 singers, 4 other Girl Scouts, 3 parents, 1 grandmother, 2 choir directors, and 1 infant visited the residents.

The Youth Choir sang 11 songs. After the choir sang, Shi-ann and Paris (both 3<sup>rd</sup> gr.) did a dance they had choreographed. Tamara Clark, Karah's [2<sup>nd</sup> gr.] grandmother, said, "It's wonderful to hear the beautiful tone the children get when they sing. To see them when they play around, it's hard to believe they can sing like that!" She added, "It's good for the kids to go some place and sing for residents of a nursing home. It gets them outside of themselves to do something for others."

The Girl Scouts and the Saturday tutoring students made over one hundred Valentines for the residents. The children gave each resident on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> floors a home-made Valentine. A staff member exclaimed, "The Valentines are the 'icing on the cake.' The residents don't get many Valentines." The Valentines cheered the people up.

The residents really enjoyed the program. One said, "You do good work with those children." Another said, "That was wonderful." A man asked for the "den mother" and gave Eva Schwinge two wrinkled one-dollar bills. Eva said, "Thank you. You keep that." Another man said someone took his picture with a girl. He was very proud of that. He said, "It made me happy. I am very happy." He stood tall.

### **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Choir Fest Humboldt Park UMC**

18 choir members and 8 adults went to Humboldt Park UMC to sing in the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Choir Fest in March. Five choirs were there from Chicago and Evanston. Each choir sang two songs by themselves and joined in six songs with all the choirs. The church was filled with joyous praise.

The climax of the concert was "Revelation 19," an ambitious, grand piece, which the five children's choirs sang together. The song has three long parts which are sung one at a time, and then all three parts are sung at the same time by three sections of the choir. The difficult piano part was played by Marina Ozaki from West Ridge UMC, with Judy Siaba from Humboldt Park turning the pages. All the other choir

directors led the three sections of children. The performance was phenomenal! It all came together. The choir repeated the final section several times, and everybody was stunned.

The following Saturday, Michele De St. Aubin, who drove part of the Inspired Youth Singers in her van, said, "It was so beautiful, I started crying. Because of being in that church and listening to the choir, I am going to church tomorrow. I haven't been to church for six months. I'm going to church tomorrow because of being in the church and listening to the children sing."

### **The Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation**

The Inspired Youth Singers sang at the new Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation Synagogue in Evanston in late April as part of the Interfaith Choral Festival. Eight choirs performed, with all the choirs, including a handbell choir, joining in the opening hymn and the finale. Inspired Youth and the Multi-Cultural Children's Choir of Evanston joined together as a large children's choir, singing three songs which both choirs knew.

Besides the beautiful choral and handbell music, which the children got to hear, the highlight of the day was just being in the new JRC synagogue. The building is ecologically "green." The sanctuary uses "natural" lighting, with huge windows which let in natural sunlight. The day was cloudy, yet the sanctuary was bright with natural light. The altar, a large cube shape, is made of metals of different colors. The effect was awe-inspiring.

Inspired Youth was honored to be part of the program.

### **The Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood at the Hilltop**

For weeks Tony (kindergarten) had been asking when we were going to the Hilltop. He had heard from his brothers about the huge hamburgers the choir had there, and he couldn't wait to go.

In mid-June, 9 choir members and 2 directors took the Foster bus to the Hilltop Restaurant to sing for the Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood. The children loved the food, and, directed by Dorie Burrell, they sang their songs with gusto.

It was an honor for the Inspired Youth Singers to sing for the Kiwanis Club meeting. The Kiwanians were interested in the children, and they were excited at looking at pictures of the Tutoring Program and Youth Choir, because they recognized several people.

After the program, three of the choir members who go to Mather HS got to talk with a Kiwanian who was a former Assistant Principal of Mather. Another Kiwanian, Roy Pantera, gave Beth Palmer suggestions

of family foundations which may be interested in supporting Inspired Youth, Inc. The Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood also gave Inspired Youth a gift for the Tutoring Program.

### **A Trip to Rockford, IL, to Sing at the Retirement Party of Pastor Bettye Mixon**

At the end of June, ten youth and five adults went to Rockford, IL to sing at the Retirement Party of Pastor Bettye Mixon, who had been a friend of the Youth Choir and the Tutoring Program for ten years when she was at Epworth Church.

The choir went in a 15-passenger van, and was lucky to have Mark Lane from Schaumburg drive the van. He was a tutor in the program 15 years ago.

The choir practiced in the van on the way to Rockford, ate at Burger King, and practiced again in a vacant driveway near the restaurant.

When they got to Rockford and Centennial Methodist Church, the room was full of people from the five churches Pastor Bettye had served. As part of a beautiful program, the Inspired Youth Singers sang four songs, directed by Dorie Burrell. The children got to sing *on a stage!* In between songs, Beth Palmer told how grateful the Youth Choir was for Pastor Bettye's encouragement of the Youth Choir and the Tutoring Program during the 10 years she was at Epworth.

When the choir sang its last song, "Holy Is the Lord," Pastor Bettye joined the choir in singing – and dancing. Afterwards, many people said how well the Youth Choir sang.

On the ride back to Chicago the children started singing by memory song after song from the choir's repertoire. Cordell (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) led the singing. He came infrequently to choir rehearsals and didn't always sing when he was there, but somehow he knew all the songs! When the kids finished one song, Cordell started another, and then another. The kids sang 20-30 songs on the way back to Chicago – all led by Cordell!

It was a good trip. *Thank you, Pastor Bettye.*

### **New Digital Voice Recorder**

For years Youth Choir director Beth Palmer made cassettes of the songs the Youth Choir would sing and duplicated the tapes for the children to take home to practice. Last fall the Youth Choir's tape recorder started to break down. By spring it was dead. It was difficult to find a replacement because few companies still make cassette recorders which record live and also can duplicate tapes. In addition, some of the children don't have cassette players at home, but only have CD players.

We finally found a "tape recorder" in Ohio – the kind that is used in schools! This tape recorder can record live music and also can duplicate cassettes.

We also purchased a hand-held "digital voice recorder." This device, the size of a candy-bar, 4 3/8" x 1 1/2" x 5/8", records live in digital form; then it can be connected by cable to a computer where CD's can be made. The songs can also be sent in digital form as an email. A new volunteer, Mike Milici, said he will make CD's for the children who need them. The web-master, Pat Zukosky, will put the songs on the web-site for the children to download as MP3 files.

### **SUMMER PIANO PROGRAM**

20 children played pieces in the final recital, having come 2-3 times each week for hour lessons the seven weeks of the program. Altogether 33 children were involved in the program, helped by 18 volunteer piano "tutors." This hands-on music-making is good for the mind, and everyone had a good time.

Lily Ann (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) was so happy at playing "Mary Had a Little Lamb" as a duet the first week that she smiled and jiggled her body all over. Her mother said Lily Ann cried every day during the school year because she didn't want to go to school. But this summer she always asked, "When are we going to piano lessons?"

LaMarr (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) was way better than last year, in his hands, his mind, and his concentration.

Valeria (Pre-K) played for only a short time during the first few lessons, and then we asked her to "make up her own piece." The last few weeks Valeria refused to play anything. For the recital, we scheduled "Her Own Piece," hoping she would play something. When her name was announced, she sat down at the keyboard, and the student book happened to be open to the first white key piece. After Valeria played four notes we realized she was playing the piece from the book—perfectly! The next day for her lesson, she played the whole hour, 8 pieces. The same the last day. It was a miracle.

Diana (11<sup>th</sup>) a double honors student at Lakeview HS, started playing the piano on June 24. On July 21, one week before the recital, she said she wanted to play "Clocks" by Coldplay for the recital. That was impossible! but we'd see what we could do. Jill Seidman, a tutor, got the notation from the internet. Beth Palmer arranged it in an easier key. Diana started working on it on July 22. On July 29 she played "Clocks" with its distinctive piano riff for the recital. Jill played the duet part. It was beautiful – real rock!

**DONATIONS NEEDED:** Inspired Youth, Inc. does a lot with minimal funds because of the many people who

volunteer. 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.*