

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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TUTORING PROGRAM IS SOLID

The Tutoring Program of Inspired Youth at the Bezazian Branch of the Chicago Public Library is packed, with many volunteers helping many students. This fall, 93 students (K-12) are being tutored by 83 adult volunteers and 51 8th grade tutors from Wilmette Jr. High at Margate Park, for a total of 1786 tutoring hours. The 5th-12th grade section is calm; two 1st-4th grade days buzz with excitement; and Saturday tutoring is warm and productive -- a good experience for everyone.

On Wed., Dec. 1, the 1st-4th grade section had a particularly productive day. Valeria S. (2nd gr.), Fernando B. (2nd gr.), Jovanny S. (2nd gr.), and Darylmiah W. (1st gr.) each finished reading a different basal reader, and Jose L. (2nd gr.) read five small books. They were so proud. All 27 children that day worked really hard.

CHILDREN WRAP GIFTS

On Dec. 4, the children at Saturday tutoring got to wrap stuffed animals to give as gifts to preschool children in Head Start. The toys came from Enid Young in Iowa. The children loved wrapping the gifts. They wrapped 182 gifts in half an hour. Girl Scouts also wrapped 50 gifts. We gave the toys to Hull House, 4848 N. Winthrop, and the ABC Head Start Program.

GIFTS FROM KINGSWOOD UMC

Members of Kingswood UMC in Buffalo Grove, IL made Christmas brighter for 51 children of Inspired Youth. Presents came to Inspired Youth the 2nd week in December.

The next day at the tutoring program, four 2nd grade girls with dancing brown eyes buzzed happily about talking about the presents. They hadn't opened them yet, but the presents looked so beautiful, and the children were grateful. A 2nd grade boy, Fernando, had asked for a winter coat. Up to then, even in the cold weather, he just wore his "hoodie" sweatshirt. The day after the presents came, he wore his new, warm jacket, scarf, and gloves -- perfect Christmas presents.

GIVING TO SENIOR CITIZENS

This year 72 Inspired Youth, kindergarten through high school, along with some of the tutors, wrote holiday letters or made holiday cards for senior citizens. Inspired Youth took 107 letters and home-made cards to seniors at the Covenant-Methodist Home (Foster and Glenwood), Mid-America Convalescent Center (Kenmore and Argyle), and Lake Shore Health Care (7200 N. Sheridan). Inspired Youth sponsors this project every year so the children will have a chance to give during the holiday season. Here are three of the letters:

From Mario D. ("M"). (5th gr.): "Dear friend: Merry Christmas! In school, I am in 5th grade. I do math because I love math & I do reading & draw. My favorite sport is hockey & soccer, but I like school because we learn. I do work and other things. In the tutoring program, I am happy in tutoring because in 4th grade I loved my tutor Mike because he helped me to learn reading and helped me learn math, because I like math and in school I do math. Happy Holidays! Mario"

From: Hirut N. (10th gr.): "I started coming to the tutoring program in the 6th grade. It is the best place to get help for homework and whatever you need help in school. I love the tutoring program. ... It has helped me speak English very well and my writing is much better. I am really thankful for having a tutor that helps me with my school work. I am so inspired by this program that when I grow up I want to help other people. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Hirut"

From Sarah (8th gr. tutor from Wilmette Jr. High): "Dear Friend, I hope you have a wonderful holiday. This year in school, I get to tutor in a Chicago program. The kids are so eager to learn, and it is a privilege to help them, like you contributed to our education. Happy Holidays! Sarah"

NEWS OF TUTORING GRADS Marniece M. is living in Iowa. Linda M. is a junior in high school. Jacki R. is a sophomore at DePaul University. Tony (Marco) S. is a sophomore at Amundsen H.S. in the International Baccalaureate program. His

sister Sandy S. is a manager at McDonald's. Their mother Reyna, who works at the Covenant Methodist Home, is very proud. (For news of other tutoring grads see past newsletters on IY's website.)

TUTORS TRAVEL

Pamela L. took a trip to Antarctica this fall! David B. took a trip to Hong Kong this fall. Patricia L. will spend next semester in Chile. Aleena L. and Anna H. will spend next semester in Rome. Celeste M. will spend next semester in Italy. Daniel F. spent this semester in Rome.

INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS GIVE SIX CHRISTMAS CONCERTS

On Dec. 3 twenty-six youth with ten parents and directors took the L to downtown Chicago to sing in the lobby of the Harold Washington Library. It is a huge space, with polished marble floors and walls, a mosaic mural of the life of Harold Washington, several balconies, and an opening (oculus) to look down to the lower level.

The choir sang from 12-1 pm, during people's lunch hour. Many people were seated in the lobby to watch, others stood on the balconies, and others passed through, stopping to listen for a few moments.

The children sang 25 songs, mostly Christmas carols with a few Disney songs. Selected verses were in French, German, Spanish, Latin, and Zulu. The music echoed in the cavernous lobby. When a song was finished, the sound kept echoing.

The children were poised, and sang out. Their behavior was top-notch; their singing was excellent. A link to a medley from the concert is on www.facebook.com/inspiredyouth.

Two weeks before the concert at the Harold Washington Library, the choir gave two practice concerts of the entire repertoire at the Alden-Lakeland and Mid-America Convalescent Center. The children did well at both concerts.

On Dec. 19 children traveled to Morton Grove, IL to sing seven songs in a worship service at the Bethany Terrace Nursing Home. The children sang well, and the seniors loved seeing the children. One of the chaperones who hadn't heard the children for almost a year exclaimed, "The children's singing has really improved!" After the worship service the children shook hands and talked with the residents. (See action photo on Inspired

Youth's Facebook page.) The highlight of the day was 6-year old Jennifer R. talking with a resident. While they were talking and shaking hands, the woman lowered her head and started crying. Little Jennifer stood there holding the woman's hand, and then reached over and gently stroked the woman's white hair to comfort her. At the end of the visit, Bethany Terrace gave each of the children a gift certificate to McDonald's to thank them for coming.

On Dec. 21 the children took the CTA bus to sing at LakeShore Health Care, for our former co-director, Eleanor Bilby. Eleanor was so excited about the visit that she talked of nothing else for five days beforehand. When the children started singing, Eleanor joined right in, and then moved her chair so she was in line with the children and facing the audience. On the song "Amen," she gestured the audience to sing along, just like she used to as co-director. Several residents in the audience sang along on the familiar carols. Everyone enjoyed the children singing.

On Dec. 27, the children's families came to Edgewater Presbyterian Church for a concert just for them. Parents brought homemade egg rolls, crinkly pasta, and decorated sugar cookies. After the meal, the children put on a concert of their Christmas music. Some of the parents hadn't heard the children singing before, and everyone enjoyed it. The security guard at the end of the hall said, "Their voices were clear. Their singing was so clear! It was beautiful."

On Dec. 19 the Inspired Youth Singers sang at Goudy School for the memorial service of long-time teacher, Mr. "Z" (Edward Zienkowicz). The idea of Inspired Youth singing was suggested by choir member David R. (6th gr.). The choir sang, "Blessed Be Your Name."

DONATIONS WELCOME

Inspired Youth 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.

Contributions to Inspired Youth can be made through PayPal on the Donations page of the website: www.inspiredyouthchicago.org; or checks may be sent to *Inspired Youth, 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660*.