

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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CONTENTS

1. **HUGE, CALM FAMILY NIGHT**
2. **2009-2010 WAS A FULL YEAR**
3. **ABOUT THE STUDENTS: First Graders**
 4. **Other Students**
 5. **TUTORING AT THE LIBRARY**
6. **WRITING – SUNSHINE MAGAZINE**
7. **PIANO LESSONS ANTICIPATED**
8. **SATURDAY PROGRAM**
 9. **Comments From 8th Grade SaturdayTutors**
10. **DIFFICULTIES**
11. **TUTORING GRADS**
12. **TUTORS**
 13. **Reflections from Tutors' Meetings**
14. **YOUTH CHOIR CONCERTS:**
 - Alden-Lakeland, Feb. 11
 15. **Lake Shore HealthCare, Feb. 12**
 16. **Youth Choir Fest, Feb. 28**
 17. **Covenant-Methodist Home, April 30**
 18. **Northside Action For Justice, May 22**
19. **DVD OF INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS**
20. **CAREER DAY: Girl Movement 2010**
21. **A WORD OF THANKS**
22. **DONATIONS WELCOME**

1. HUGE, CALM FAMILY NIGHT

“The best thing about Family Night is that everyone gets to be together,” exclaimed the father of Lamarr and Summone about Family Night.

Family Night for the afternoon and evening tutoring sections was the last event of the season. Over 122 people came—parents, students, tutors, brothers, sisters, and friends. Tutors and parents got to talk, people enjoyed a bountiful potluck meal together, the Youth Choir sang, and *52 students each recited a poem!*

The students worked hard to memorize their poems. Nathaniel B.'s father noted that the younger children knew their poems better than many of the older students. Melissa D. (1st gr.) worked for an hour during tutoring time memorizing the four-line poem, “Rain, Rain Go Away.” She worked on it for 45 min. again the next day. On Family Night, Melissa wore a dress! When it was her turn to

recite a poem, she stepped on the riser, spoke into the microphone, and said her poem perfectly, with confidence. At the end of the poem she added, “Thank you.” She loved getting up in front of people, speaking into the mic, and reciting her poem.

Brayant S. (4th gr.) had a hard time memorizing his poem last year. At Family Night he had to have help with every word. Perhaps standing before all the people made his brain freeze. This year Brayant said his poem perfectly.

Lily Ann B. (6th gr.) worked for a whole tutoring session to memorize the poem, “This Happy Day.” She reviewed it at several sessions. At Family Night, she recited it loudly and distinctly.

Memorizing the poems is so good for the students. It teaches them English syntax as well as the meaning of the poem. It's good for the students to recite the poems for an audience of family and friends. The students had fun memorizing poems by Shel Silverstein, and they appreciated memorizing poems or parts of famous poems.

The two announcers for the program were Shonesha J. (9th gr.) and Jonathan D. (3rd gr.). They did an excellent job of announcing the names of the students and the poems.

The program concluded with Shonesha J. (9th gr.) reciting “Still I Rise,” by Maya Angelou. The audience was very quiet and nodded as Shonesha spoke each stanza.

The audience this year was one of the best ever. Everyone listened, even the young children.

The Inspired Youth Singers opened the program with two songs, which rang out in the Fellowship Hall. At the end they sang “We Are the World,” with 10 students singing solos. Summone S. (3rd gr.) said, “My grandmother really liked my solo.”

Afterwards, tutor Stanley Rutledge remarked that people these days don't often have a chance to be together with so many different kinds of people from a neighborhood, in a wholesome setting, without alcohol, where they are sharing a meal and listening to children recite poems and singing. Everyone was proud of the students. It was a beautiful evening.

2. 2009-2010 WAS A FULL YEAR

140 students, 154 tutors, and 51 junior tutors participated in the Tutoring Program, the Inspired Youth Singers, and the Summer Piano Program in 2009-2010. It was a full year.

	STUDENTS	TUTORS	WJHS
Mon. HS	14	52	
Mon. 5th-8th	26		
Wed./Thurs. 1 st -4 th	31	85	
Sat. K-10 th	59*	5	51
Choir, K-HS	37**	5	
Piano Program 2009	34***	28 + 3	
Total Individuals^x	140	154	51

(*33 Sat. students were not in the weekday Tut. Prog.)

(** 15 Choir members were not in the Tut. Prog.)

(*** 21 Piano students were not in the Tut. Prog.)

(^xSome tutors volunteered more than one day per week)

About 100 students were enrolled in the Tutoring Program in both 2008-09 and 2009-10, but in 2009-10 attendance was up by about 16%. Parents made sure their children came to the program.

The **2010-2011 tutoring year** will start with tutors' meetings on Sept. 13-16, 2010. Students come beginning Sept. 20-23. To volunteer, call 773-561-4759 or email inspiredyouth2@yahoo.com.

3. ABOUT THE STUDENTS: First Graders

Eleven (11!) children from one first grade class at Goudy School were in the Tutoring Program this year. Their teacher hugged Beth Palmer when she saw her at Goudy School one day. One girl moved to Mexico in December, and two boys dropped out. The other 8 children learned to speak English and were reading at least at the PP3 level by May. Valeria S., Fernando B., and Jaely E. read almost at grade level. Most of the children could write English sentences.

From another 1st gr. class, Lizbeth V.'s classroom teacher recommended our program to her because she was not progressing in reading. After a few weeks in our program, her reading level gained significantly.

In February, Nathaniel B., a first grader from another class, was assigned to write sentences using his spelling words. It was impossible. Every word in every sentence was a struggle. After a couple of weeks, when he came to tutoring, he took out his homework and began writing sentences *by himself!* Here is a letter Nathaniel wrote at school during the last week of school:

Dear Mrs. Beth thank you for working with me with my homework math and Phonice And Practice Book You are the Best thich eve.

*Sincerely
Nathaniel*

4. Other Students

Leoncio M. (2nd gr.) was very shy. He hardly said a word. Beth Palmer was surprised in May when he happened to tell her, "I liked that book in my folder." "Did you read it?" "Yes, I liked it."

In October 2009 Justin M. (4th gr.) struggled to read and could hardly write. Tantrums and tears were frequent. We worked and worked with him. By May he read easily, enjoyed writing (but needs help with spelling), and he concentrated. One tutor remarked, "Justin was a pleasure to work with." Toward the end of the year, on his own, he began collecting the folders and packing them up at the end of the session. We hope this progress continues.

Brayant S. (4th gr.) hardly said a word in our program in first grade. He began speaking in 2nd grade. By fourth grade he expressed sensitive observations. His tutor, Susan Mattison (trained in special education), encouraged him in reflection and in drawing, which he loves. For the final *Sunshine* magazine she helped him make a story map for an article about *Dr. Who*. This was a major step.

Jennifer S. (5th gr.) improved a lot in math. She became faster in long multiplication and long division.

Cordell Y. (6th gr.) is smart, but not consistent. He doesn't apply himself, but he can charm his tutor to while away the time—which is different from four years ago when he was always angry and couldn't concentrate at all.

Cordell still needs to work on reading comprehension. His tutor, Margaret Sullivan, pointed out to him that when he was reading aloud he should pause at the commas and stop at the periods. All of a sudden he started noting the punctuation more and more. His reading comprehension improved. He even told other students in his class about the trick he had learned—to stop at the periods!

Anahi M. (6th gr.) worked hard on math and reading with her tutor, Carrie DeVries. One day they focused on long and short vowels. Usually calm and quiet, Anahi became excited as she identified more and more long and short vowels.

Leslie A. (7th gr.) always had trouble in school. Her tutor, Kim Dunlap, work with her on the very difficult 7th grade math homework. One day after Kim had had a hard day at work, she came to tutoring and Leslie told her she had scored “above the line” in math (above the cut-off line for failing). That made Kim’s day.

Eduardo S. (7th gr.) was new to the tutoring program in Sept. 2009. He never brought homework, but he hardly missed a session. His tutor, Bob Guillen, worked very hard with him on math because his skills were low. When his tutor asked about anything, Eduardo always said, “I don’t know.” But one day he mentioned the French Revolution, and Eduardo started telling everything about it.

Eduardo seemed to have “violence issues.” He frequently talked about punching people. Once he asked his tutor, “If someone kills someone, do they go to heaven or hell?” Bob G. didn’t know what to say.

Yulisa R. (7th gr.) worked hard at math. Her English pronunciation has improved significantly. She wants to go to high school in Mexico instead of in this country.

Ckoryna L. (7th gr.) of the Summer Piano Program will be going to Germany at the end of July with the program CircEsteem of Alternatives.

Shonesha J. (9th gr.) applied for a special business program sponsored by Cushman and Wakefield at her charter high school. The program is only at her school, and only 7 freshmen and 9 sophomores will be accepted. Shonesha also started a club at her school to raise money for Make A Wish. They raised \$200 by selling raffle tickets for an iPhone.

Latrice T. (12th gr.) has been in the Tutoring Program and the Youth Choir for many years. She just graduated from high school in June 2010 and hopes to attend Northeastern (NEIU) this fall and major in special education. Her tutor, Pamela Loose, helped her apply to four colleges and for financial aid. Sometimes at the tutoring program she asked other tutors to help her with certain subjects. One day Latrice commented, “In school I don’t understand a thing my teacher is saying in my chemistry class. The teacher doesn’t explain anything. Then I come to tutoring and Mary Clark explains everything. Everything is clear.” We wish Latrice well.

These are some students who received awards this year: Honor Roll: Karah P. (4th gr.), Ladaja S. (4th gr.), Ariana T. (3rd gr.). Everardo L. (2nd gr.), Yulissa L. (1st gr.), Good Citizenship: Summone S. (3rd gr.). Perfect Attendance: Guadalupe M. (5th gr.). Goudy Elementary School has one of the highest attendance rates in the city of Chicago! It’s one of the top 5-10 schools.

5. TUTORING AT THE LIBRARY

Hirut N. (9th gr.) has been in the Tutoring Program for 5 years. She attends Loyola Academy. At the *Inspired Youth Family Night*, she gave this speech:

“Monday is my favorite day of the week, because it is the day I get tutored. Most people ask me “Why do you get tutored?” and I tell them that I can ask any questions I want in tutoring, but in class I have trouble asking with lots of students in class. Most students appreciate having tutors, but some don’t. Tutoring is available for my siblings and the others who come and it is also free. We should be grateful for having great, wonderful, enthusiastic and fun tutors and we don’t have to worry about how much it costs. Thank you everyone who comes to help us. Thank you. Because of tutoring I have become fluent in English much more quickly than I would have without tutoring. Tutoring makes me feel good, that I could walk out of it and do well in school. I have improved a lot since I started coming to tutoring.

“Ms. Beth has sacrificed herself a lot for the tutoring program. I really want to thank her for what she did for my siblings and others. She has inspired me a lot and I hope to help other kids someday.

“Thank you, Ms. Beth!

“By: Hirut Negassi”

6. WRITING – SUNSHINE MAGAZINE

56 students, kindergarten through 4th grade, wrote reports about animals this spring. Each child was handed a magazine featuring an article about an animal – *Your Big Backyard*, *Ranger Rick*, or *Little Kids* from National Geographic. (Inspired Youth was given subscriptions to these magazines by former tutoring coordinator, Connie Galliard.) The children read the articles with their tutors and filled out a chart “Research Your Animal.” They wrote short reports about the animals, and some also drew pictures.

The students who came on Saturday gave oral reports about the animals. The leader of the

session, Stephanie Raue, an English teacher at Wilmette Jr. High School, was surprised by all the different kinds of animals. She'd ask a student, "What's your report on?" The child replied, "Sandhill cranes." "Sandhill cranes!" Then she'd ask next, "What's your report on?" The child replied, "Black footed ferret." "Black footed ferret!" Then, "Polar bear." "House wren." "Snow monkey," "Lady bugs," "Parrots." Ms. Raue was surprised at all the animals the children gave reports on. The reports were collected and printed in the March and May 2010 issues of *Sunshine* magazine.

7. PIANO LESSONS ANTICIPATED

On the last day of school before the March Spring Break three new families asked about the summer piano program. Piano lessons will begin the week after school finishes for the summer, on June 21.

8. SATURDAY PROGRAM

Sat., Mar. 20: Rosalinda V.'s (1st gr.) Saturday tutor helped her write (draw) a book report for school every session. Last Sat. Rosa also read "Tip I," our first pre-primer.

3/20: Darylmiah W. (K) read 4 word cards. He was so proud he wanted to take them home. We gave him 20 word cards to take home and read. He was so proud to get to take them home he played with them all session.

3/20: Isaac R. (K) had written a short article about an animal (harp seal) a couple of weeks previously. When his mother brought him on Mar. 20, we showed her the article. She was so proud! Her mother had just died two weeks before, and seeing Isaac's work cheered her up.

3/20: Nina A. (1st gr.) has been working on math and writing sentences in Sat. tutoring. She is gaining.

Ashton B. (8th gr.) has been in the Saturday tutoring program since 3rd grade. Even when he moved, he still came, walking over a mile from his home in Edgewater to Margate Park. In June he graduated from Stockton Elementary School. Mayor Daley spoke at the graduation. Ashton will be going to Lane H.S. in Sept. 2010. He is looking forward to it.

9. Comments From 8th Grade Saturday Tutors

"I've been glad to tutor Fredy. He's made terrific progress of these months! I hope he continues to pursue academics and learn strong!" – Harry Owen

"Ana is very good. She works hard and continues to improve every week."

"Hey Jonathan! Thanks for being such a great friend and student. We always had a great time on Saturdays, and I'll never forget them. I'm sorry I couldn't give this to you myself, but I just wanted to say thanks. I'll miss you. Love, Divya"

"I will miss you, Jamileth. Good work!"

The tutor of Leslie A. (7th gr.) wrote: "My favorite part of tutoring has been being with my tutee. I have come to know her well, and I think of her as a friend since she is only one year younger. I liked watching Leslie get better at math especially. Kids should join because you learn how to be a better teacher, and you form a connection with your tutee. I have learned to be grateful for my education because I have learned my material better."

Her tutee, Leslie A. (7th gr.), wrote: "My best part is to be with my tutor. I like to be here because they can help you know everything. I am learning so many things and I am getting better in math."

10. DIFFICULTIES

A tutor was on the el-train when suddenly she heard a woman screaming, "B_tch, turn around!" The tutor looked to see what was happening and saw a mother of children in the tutoring program screaming at her 3-year old daughter. The tutor was so ashamed and embarrassed she tried not to be noticed.

A tutoring grad in her early 20s had been drinking in a different part of the city. A man (a new acquaintance) asked her to go some place with him. They got into a cab, drunk, and went to an apartment. The woman was raped, and the man took her cell phone and charger. The woman went outside and didn't know where she was. A police car happened to go by, and she flagged it down. It took her to a hospital and then to a police station to look at some pictures. In the very first picture, she recognized the man. She plans to press charges.

A note between 3rd graders (The spelling is corrected.): "____, I'm sorry for whatever I did. Will you just accept my apology and then never again? Please. And then I will be much happier. Please, you're not my friend, you're much more than that. You're like my sister."

Reply: "Dear _____, You are not my sister, and I am your friend. I am sorry for not doing one thing

to you, but I am sorry, and I'll try to not hurt your feelings again."

On the last day of school before summer vacation a mother was desperate about what to do about her 9-year old son for the summer. She called the father of two of her children and asked if he would take the 9-year old to work with him every day at his job at a gas station. She said, "These streets are dangerous. People are putting dope up kids' noses." Then she whispered, "And the head of it is [the father of some children in the Tutoring Program, who lives in her building.]"

11. TUTORING GRADS

Malola B. and a friend were driving down Rockwell St. and saw Beth Palmer. They circled around the block so Malola could talk to Ms. Beth. Malola and her siblings had been in the tutoring Program many years ago. Malola graduated from Lane HS in 2003. Now Malola's baby Brooklyn is 7 mo. old. Malola's sister Naomi still has her own website – more than one!—and she still writes poetry. Malola said Naomi got her start writing poetry because of the Tutoring Program, when she stood at the podium and recited poems for Family Nights.

The Watts girls all graduated from high school – Nina (now attending college), Shaton, Dionna (now attending college), Glenda, and Shanese. LilRita M., their cousin, also just graduated from college. Their grandmother Alberta said it was good they had been living in Minnesota. She didn't think they'd have graduated from HS if they had been in Chicago.

Mario Jernigan is doing collision rehab, fixing up cars that have been wrecked. His brothers, Cleotus, Jonathan and Charles are OK. His sister Nikki died from a congenital condition. Their grandmother also died. Mario looks good.

12. TUTORS

Jim and Heather Conlon, tutors in the HS section, represented Inspired Youth at the Barristers' Big Ball sponsored by the Chicago Bar Association in March. Inspired Youth was given tickets by the CBA because it received the Much Shelist Award from Lend-A-Hand to Youth.

Several students from Loyola University tutored children in Inspired Youth as part of courses in experiential learning and Christian ethics. At the end of the course they wrote papers on their experience. Kristy Johnson remarked about writing

the paper, "I wrote 21 pages. I had so much to say because I learned so much. I would be cutting it short if I didn't tell all I'd learned. It would be like cheating, so I just wrote and wrote."

Kim Dunlap, a Mon. tutor, wrote: "Thanks so much for letting me into your program. It has been a bright spot during each week. I love being a part of the program, and I'm really looking forward to participating again in the fall."

Tom Walsh, who has tutored for seven years in the program, was one of the people grading the ISATs! He and a few other people graded the 6th grade math tests. They graded *one certain problem* on all the ISATs from Illinois – or part of Illinois.

13. Reflections from Tutors' Meetings

Suggestions for writing projects for 2010-2011:

(1) Essays about students' families or members of their families; (2) Chicago--history, famous people, sports teams, rivers and lakes, famous buildings and landmarks; (3) Stories based on *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, which is a series of pictures with titles and captions which are springboards for stories. (4) A newspaper or a period newspaper. The tutors would like to use story maps or brainstorm bubbles to help the students get ideas and organize them.

The tutors felt the conflict resolution sessions were valuable. They observed that the 5th-8th grade students knew violence wasn't the answer. In one group the students were talking about violent responses, and one of the tutors said (paraphrased), "I grew up in a rough area. I kept getting in trouble because I fought a lot. I always got in trouble. Then I realized that fighting wasn't doing what I thought it would, so I just stopped." The students looked at her in awe.

For next year's conflict resolution sessions, the Mon. tutors suggested that all the tutors, not just the appointed leaders, have the materials ahead of time. They also recommended focusing on a smaller part of the lesson during the short sessions. Carrie Devries, a Mon. tutor, remarked that conflict resolution was part of the mentor portion of their role as a tutor/mentor. The afternoon tutors suggested that we review the rules as a total group at intervals during the year so the students are reminded what is expected.

For Family Night the tutors suggested name tags for the parents (I'm with _____) to give tutors a quick context for talking with them.

The Saturday tutors suggest that the adult coordinators wear name tags so the students get to know them. Other ideas: We should have the students draw pictures and present a gallery exhibition of their drawings, or do screen printing on T-shirts.

We should sponsor classes for the parents to learn English.

14. YOUTH CHOIR CONCERTS

Alden-Lakeland, Feb. 11

The annual Valentine's Concert at the Alden-Lakeland with the Uptown Girl Scouts was a big occasion. On a bright day 18 youth walked over half a mile to sing at the nursing home. Several parents of Girl Scouts came to watch their children perform. At the end of the concert the students gave the residents Valentines made by the Girl Scouts and the Saturday Tutoring children, and the singers and Girl Scouts talked with the residents. Michele R. (5th gr.) spoke to one resident a long time, in Spanish. The activities director exclaimed, "This is the best choir we've ever had."

15. Lake Shore HealthCare, Feb. 12

Former choir director Eleanor Bilby is a resident of Lake Shore HealthCare in Rogers Park, so the choir went to sing for her in February. First we had pizza at Giordano's, a couple of blocks from LSHC. (We had received a gift certificate for performing at the Multi-Cultural Children's Choir Christmas Concert, and this was a good time to use it.) "It was the best pizza I've ever had," one child said. Another asked, "When are we going to Giordano's again?" It was exciting to eat there and then walk to the LSHC.

The residents came in wheel-chairs, recliners, and with walkers. They enjoyed the singing and sang along. Eleanor Bilby especially enjoyed the youth and sang the songs with them. We used the magnificent keyboard of one of the residents, which made the youth sing better. The last number was the dance the "Cha-Cha Slide."

After the concert a 99 year old woman handed Beth Palmer a piece of paper with wobbly script, barely legible: "I personally really enjoyed this today. It brought some life to a lot of folks here. I hand them all from me. Twinkle Toes, the Clown."

16. 29th Annual Youth Choir Fest, Feb. 28

"It's good for the kids to get up in front of people

and for people to clap for them and the kids to know someone liked it," a parent remarked.

Kinte cloth stoles, bright blue T-shirts, white shirts with red vests, dark dress-up clothes—this was the colorful scene as 65 youth from five children's choirs gathered at Hermon Baptist Church across from Lincoln Park Zoo in February for the 29th annual Youth Choir Fest.

The large, multi-cultural gathering was an enthusiastic audience. As each choir sang, the audience cheered for them. Humboldt Park UMC sang in two-part harmony. The middle school youth in Rogers Park Baptist Church sang two-part harmony and solos. Hermon Baptist Church, backed up by their pastor, Rev. Keith Edwards, on electronic keyboard, sang a gospel song that rocked the roof. The Multi-Cultural Children's Choir from Evanston sang a song written by their pianist, Joseph Dittman. The Inspired Youth Singers (17 youth ages 5-19) sang "We Are the World," with 11 soloists. As a combined choir, the youth sang five songs which they had rehearsed as separate choirs. A highlight of the program was "Tomorrow (A Better You)," with guest saxophone artist John Rimmer, the partner of Dorie Burrell, director of the Inspired Youth Singers. John Rimmer has played in the Chicago Blues Fest and the Pennsylvania Blues Fest as well as playing in several bands in Chicago.

The cover design on the program was taken from a design done for a YCF concert in 1994 by an artist from Berry Memorial UMC when the YCF was held there.

The concert was a high point for everyone. The 30th anniversary Youth Choir Fest will be in 2011.

17. Covenant-Methodist Home, April 30

Cheryl Smith, grandmother of some of our tutoring students and mother of two tutoring grads, was staying in the Covenant Methodist Home, so the Youth Choir went to sing for her.

The 19 singers of Inspired Youth sang so loud, the sound bounced off the walls and was amplified. The residents enjoyed the song, "Neath Vine and Fig Tree," when the students did an Iraqi-Israeli-Assyrian-Armenian-Greek dance in a long curved line all around the dining room. On "We Are the World," 14 students sang solos. Cheryl Smith sang along on many of the songs because her two daughters had been in the Youth Choir several years ago. She said, "The concert cheered me up."

18. Northside Action For Justice, May 22

22 youth, 4 parents, 1 baby, 2 directors, and 1 friend went with Inspired Youth to sing for the banquet of Northside Action For Justice on a beautiful sunny spring Saturday. The group took two buses to get to Immanuel Lutheran Church north of Senn H.S. to sing peace and justice songs. Toni Preckwinkle, candidate for Cook County Board, was the keynote speaker. (The choir arrived after the speaker left.)

The choir did well. The students who announced the songs were poised and spoke clearly into the microphone. The children sang with gusto and enthusiasm. The audience enjoyed the songs and the children.

Beth Palmer got to talk with an acquaintance from her days of civil disobedience 27 years ago. Dorie Burrell and some of the choir members got to talk with a woman they knew.

Helium balloons on strings provided a happy atmosphere, and we captured the songs on video, using a feature on our new camera. It was a beautiful afternoon.

19. DVD OF INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS

In May we realized that the Tutoring Program's new digital camera can take video clips. We videoed the songs at the May 22 concert and wanted a DVD made of them. We asked three people. One was busy; one didn't reply to an email; one couldn't. Finally we discovered that the mother of a new choir member (Fatima, 1st gr.) had been a computer graphic artist in the Philippines. She made a fantastic DVD of the songs and included still photos in between the songs. She did a fantastic job!

20. CAREER DAY: Girl Movement 2010

Every year the girls look forward to Career Day, sponsored at Senn H.S. by Girl World of Alternatives. This year 14 girls from Inspired Youth went to Career Day. They had a wonderful time meeting women from different professional careers. Altogether 200 girls were registered for the event.

21. A WORD OF THANKS

Enid Young, from Iowa, sends reconditioned stuffed animals for our students to wrap to give to preschool children in the neighborhood. She wrote this about Inspired Youth's December newsletter:

"I am really impressed with the newsletter. Looking back in my mind to the struggles you've had with some of the children over the years, this letter was so good. You have indeed accomplished so much and deserve great credit for helping so many children set their feet in the right direction. Wonderful lady! There seems to be an eagerness in the children now, most anyway, to learn things and be active in the community. God's blessings to you and all those who willingly work with you. Love, Enid"

22. 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 mailed to Inspired Youth, 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.