

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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1. SUMMER PIANO PROGRAM

“At the beginning of the summer my children didn’t know anything about the piano. Now they can read the letters and play pieces!” Ms. Nwansi was very happy about her four children learning to play the piano.

Even from the beginning people were excited. Three mothers came half an hour early on the first day to register their children. New children kept coming and coming. Anahi’s mother brought three other mothers to enroll their children for the program. Altogether 48 students came for one hour twice a week for seven weeks to learn to play the piano with volunteer piano tutors (a 33% increase from 2009).

At the end of the first day when Alfonso’s mother came to take her three children home, he pleaded, “Wait, I need to practice this one more time!” After one week of lessons, all four Nwansi children could play “Lean on Me” and Sabi (5th gr.) could play the main melody of “Fur Elise.” Anahi said, “My brother (Jr., 3rd gr.) wants to come every day.”

Fatima E. (2nd gr.) got a keyboard at the end of the first week. That weekend her father taught her to play “Doodles,” songs that are passed down by show and copy. Fatima started practicing them in the morning as soon as she got up. She played them over and over.

Elija W. (6th gr.) learned the first part of “Fur Elise” last summer. He was introduced to the middle section at a lesson this summer, and spent three hours at home the next day practicing it.

Two years ago when Lily Ann (7th gr.) just finished 4th gr., the piano lessons were very difficult. After 5th grade, she didn’t participate in the Piano Program. In 6th gr. she came to the Tutoring Program and was in the Youth Choir. After 6th grade she came to the Piano Program again. This time she whizzed along! Everything was easy. She loved it. She learned fast. She practiced at home. She went ahead in the book before going over the pieces with the teacher. She figured out her own method for remembering the names of the lines and spaces. She began to learn pieces on the Song section of her keyboard. She was very happy playing the piano. – Using a typing program her mother bought, she also learned how to type—on the computer keyboard. What a fruitful summer for Lily Ann!

Leonora S. (2nd gr.) had a difficult time with the beginning piano lessons. She didn't seem to gain. Then on her computer at home she found an explanation of the music lines and spaces. She drew a keyboard on paper and figured things out. At her next piano lessons she was a different person. Now she could play the pieces!

The Ramirez family was given a keyboard for the summer, and they really enjoyed it. David (6th gr.) played all morning and was very serious. Edgar (5th gr.) talked about his piece, "I got it! I can play it!"

In the final recital, **43 students** played one or two pieces on the keyboard. No one was absent. Everyone came! One family, the Trans, had been planning to leave on a trip to Missouri the afternoon of the recital, but they delayed it so their children could play in the recital.

The audience listened to all the children! 129 people were there. It was hot. There were many young children and many toddlers, but the whole audience listened. It was remarkable.

Special this year were five "Family Duets"--two brothers, two sisters, or brother and sister playing a duet with each other. Parents love family duets. It's not easy to have two beginning students playing duets, because they have to know the music extra well. All these sibling pairs were fantastic.

Four students played songs while the audience sang. It is not easy for beginning students to accompany singers, because the singers go ahead regardless of hesitancy by the pianist. Everything went beautifully on the night of the recital.

Marco G. (6th gr.) played "Beauty and the Beast" for the recital. After a couple of weeks of lessons, he thought piano lessons were childish. When we gave him "Beauty and the Beast" to play, he didn't want to miss the lessons. The first time he played with the duet part, he was so happy, he said, "I did it! I played it all." Marco played the piece for the recital. After the recital he said, "My dad was so happy. He's going to buy me something."

Valeria S. (2nd gr.) is very shy. She never spoke to her piano tutor, but her tutor said, "Before we begin your piece, say, 'Don't play too fast.'" At the recital, before she played her piece with the tutor on the duet part, Valeria said, "Don't play too fast."

Brayant S. (5th gr.) was afraid last year. He was frozen at the recital. Every note with every finger was an effort. This year he wasn't scared. He was phenomenal!

All the students played to the top of their ability. We were afraid that some of the pieces weren't going to go well at the recital because they were difficult for the students, but all the pieces were beautiful. The students did so well.

Volunteer tutor Sarah Abu-Absi, who took photos at the recital, wrote in response to a thank you, "It was absolutely my pleasure. It was an inspiration to see the recital and all the students whose lives have been touched by you and music. Kudos to you, and to the students, of course. Thanks for allowing me to volunteer -- I hope to do it again next summer."

In the last week of the program many students rushed to sign up for the piano classes next summer, and a volunteer piano tutor, Anne Gallery, exclaimed, "I hope you have this program forever, every summer! This is such a great program for the kids, and the tutors! I'm coming next summer."

The volunteers who worked with the students this summer were Sarah Abu-Absi, Chris Benevich, Jim Conlon, Steve Duncan, Lily E., Ronald Epstein, Anne Gallery, Bob Guillen, Shonesha Jones, Guadalupe M., Susan Mattison, James McDunn, Beth Palmer, Peggy Reitz, Caroline Swinehart, Jasmine T., Kent Williams, Lisa Witmer, and Natividad (Didi) Yabes. Thank you.

2. CONCERTS: INSPIRED YOUTH SINGERS

Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood, June 24

After three days of lightening rainstorms, tornados, and an *earthquake*, Inspired Youth had a cloudless, sunny, cool day to sing for the Kiwanis Club at the Hilltop Restaurant. 12 youth took the Foster bus to California Ave. One student had gone before, and 11 were new to the trip.

The children sang ten “Songs of Peace and Old Favorites.” One girl who couldn’t go this year moaned and groaned when she heard the choir had gone to sing for the Kiwanis Club at the Hilltop. She had to go to summer school this year, and her grandmother said she could only miss three days. She had to save them in case she got sick.

As soon as we got on the bus to go home, one of the boys who came to sing this year asked, “Can I go there to sing again next year?”@

The favorite thing was the food at the Hilltop. It was a real treat for the children. A tutor who chaperoned last year (Susan Mattison), said after the concert, “Those brownies were so good last year. Did you have them again?”@

Maria Bappert, President of the Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood, wrote: “Inspired Youth Choir, you are truly INSPIRING! Thank you for coming to the Kiwanis Club of Ravenswood and sharing your talents with us. Keep up the good work!”

3. Jefferson Park Lutheran Church, July 11

Pastor Zuehsow of JPLC invited the Inspired Youth Singers to sing at his church, and 22 children went, along with 15 adults and 2 younger brothers and sisters. The children looked good, sounded good, and behaved well during the worship service. The children sang five songs as a choir as well as the hymns and liturgy. On “Amazing Grace,” the children sang a different verse from the rest of the congregation, and a chaperone remarked, “Our kids drowned out the other singers!” During communion, the pastor gave each child an individual, heartfelt blessing. Thomas R. (1st gr.) said, “I want to come here all the time.”

4. Block Party at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, Aug. 8

Ten children went to sing at the EPC Block Party on Aug. 8--six from Inspired Youth, two from the Presbyterian Church, and two who also like to sing. The children shared microphones to amplify the sound. They sang a lot. After they sang, they got to eat hotdogs, chips, and soda.

5. Lake Shore Health Care, Aug. 27

21 children, 2 younger siblings, and 6 adults went by bus to the Lake Shore Health Care to sing for former choir director Eleanor Bilby and other residents. When they arrived, the children helped set up the equipment and talked to the residents. They all sang well. The audience enjoyed the concert.

6. OTHER FIELD TRIPS: 97 People Go on Field Trips with Inspired Youth

62 students, 17 parents, 11 younger sibs, and 7 tutors went on field trips – other than choir trips - with Inspired Youth from Aug. 2009 through Aug. 2010. Students love the field trips. They also learn about different places in Chicago and science, history, and culture.

7. North Park Village Nature Center, July 11

On a beautiful sunny Sunday, after singing at JPLC, 21 children and 16 adults went to the North Park Village Nature Center. They ate a picnic lunch and then set out on the trail.

The two turtles: At the wetlands, Edgar R. (5th gr.) said, “Look.” On a thin stick jutting into the pond sat a motionless turtle, with a shell 7” diameter. Then Michele R. (6th gr.) said, “Look.” Another turtle was swimming slowly near it. It got on the log, then slid onto the other side. The children watched silently for about 5 minutes.

The deer: Kedus K. (4th gr.) said, “Look” the weeds (plants) on the other side of the path were taller than the children. Just below the top of the “weeds” was the brown head of a deer. It noticed the children and stopped and looked at them. It stuck its head above the weeds, looked at them, aimed its big ears at them, and took one step toward them. The children gasped, but stood

still. The deer still had spots, as a fawn. It looked like it was 5-6 mo. old. After a minute, the deer flashed to the other side of the path behind the children. They silently raced to see it. They saw the deer with another deer (its mother?) resting on the ground. All of a sudden the children ran back laughing: the deer had pooped.

Eva Schwinge, Girl Scout leader and chaperone for the trip, stated, "The young deer got told by its mama that it shouldn't be out in this part of the day. It got told!"

A guide walking with us said, "There are around 20-25 deer within the Nature Center. They come out mostly in the early morning and at dusk."

The chipmunk: Valeria's mother was waiting at the door of the lodge and she saw a chipmunk.

Butterflies and dragonflies: The children saw monarch butterflies, painted ladies, and many, many dragonflies.

Insects, millipedes, spiders, worms, and slugs: A highlight of the trip to the nature center was finding little creatures in the forest and examining them. The lodge gave us a backpack of small magnifying cubes. The children collected tiny creatures, put them in the cubes, and watched them move. They especially liked the daddy long legs, the ants, and the slugs. They were afraid of the angleworm that Leslie and Edward's father picked up. He said in his state in Mexico they used angleworms to catch trout and carp. Before we left the forest, the children let all the creatures go free.

Ending circle: Just before the end of the trail, in the savannah, we formed a long thin circle. The children told what they were thankful for, and we sang a chorus of a song suggested by one of the children: "Blessed Be Your Name." It was a good day.

8. Field Museum of Natural History

Inspired Youth took two groups to the Field Museum on two free days. 21 children and youth, 5 parents, and another adult enjoyed seeing Sue, the 67 million year old dinosaur and the movie about her. They learned what Sue ate and how she moved. She came from an egg, and she died when she was 28 years old. They were also fascinated by the many animals displayed. The children were intrigued by the Egyptian mummies. They walked on a glass case and looked down to see a mummy. It was scary. They also saw an African village. They saw how the people did their hair and saw a comb and brush that were made of stone.

9. Millennium Park

Two groups of Inspired Youth families went to Millennium Park in August on two different days. Right off the bus, the children tried to climb up on a bronze cow in front of Chicago's Culture Center. They had fun. At Millennium Park they sang along with musicians from the Old Town School of Folk Music. They wrote on post-it notes what they liked about Chicago and added them to a display. They ate lunch to background music of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra rehearsing Brahms (old people's music). They crawled under "The Bean," and bumped their head, amazed at all the distortions of their images in the polished steel. They walked in the Lurie Gardens. They walked on the "bridge" to the Art Institute; some got scared; one almost wet his pants. They loved the juggler: "Ooh! Ah!" They tried to balance a feather on their chins. They started to juggle. They began by "juggling" scarves. Finally, the best part was Crown Fountain. They waited all day to get wet and had a glorious time standing under the water spewing from the "picture's" mouth. Everyone had a wonderful time.

10. Chicago History Museum

Six children, 4th-6th grades, took a 45 min. ride on the #36 Broadway bus to visit the Chicago History Museum. Led by a docent, they did a writing project on the Lincoln Park neighborhood. Then in pairs, on their own, they studied exhibits and wrote reports on them: The Great Chicago Fire, the 1968 Convention, Early Chicago. They work well, without supervision! After a lunch

outside on the lawn, they wrote reports on Voices of Freedom. They enjoyed putting on banners and having their picture taken marching with suffragettes, sitting at an old school desk while learning about the 1963 Chicago School Boycott, and learning about the slave trade and the imprisonment of Japanese during World War II. .

They enjoyed having their picture taken with statues waiting for an old el-train and on an old bicycle with a huge front wheel. Their favorite part of the day was playing in the large fountain outside, built in 1982 while Jane Byrne was mayor of Chicago. Good day had by all.

11. TRIP TO GERMANY

Three students of the Tutoring Program went to Germany with Circus Esteem (which is sponsored by Alternatives). Cortez Y. (9th gr.), Ckoryna L (8th gr.), and Cordell Y. (7th gr.) did acts with juggling, the unicycle, and the “silks.” Congratulations!

12. DFFICULT TIMES

Ms. Tripp’s nephew was killed in mid-August. He was shot six times. The person meant to kill him.

A student’s father lost his job because he didn’t have “papers.” He got another job.

13. TUTORING GRADS

The mother of one of our tutoring grads said her son has turned out to be a brainy geek and he has also become religious. She said he loves to read – history and religion. When he was in the first Tutoring Program as a 2nd grader, he was anything but a brainy geek. His mother said he lives near Naporville, that his two oldest children are on the honor roll, that his 2-year old child speaks Spanish and English. His mother didn’t say that her son was in prison and that he would be released in Dec. 2011.

Ebony T. was married in a beautiful, much anticipated wedding ceremony in late August. Best wishes, Ebony.

Maria M. will be a junior at Lane H.S. this year. Her sister, Karla M., is a freshman at Senn H.S.

DeJuan M. has three children. He is as amiable as he was as a child. Right now he is looking for a job.

14. DVD OF INSPIRED YOUTH: PARENTS’ TESTIMONIES

With the new Inspired Youth digital camera, we took short videos of parents telling how they appreciated the Tutoring Program. We put the parents’ testimonies along with photos of tutoring pairs into a 14 min. DVD. The artistic director and production manager of the DVD was Scart Javier, mother of Fatima E., a new singer in the choir. To see the video, go to Facebook.com, and search for Inspired Youth or email inspiredyouth2@yahoo.com for a link to Vimeo.

15. INSPIRED YOUTH ON FACEBOOK

Inspired Youth has a community page on Facebook. Go to Facebook.com and search for Inspired Youth to find us.

16. 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

