

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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INSPIRED YOUTH, INC. RECEIVES AWARD

Inspired Youth, Inc. was honored in January with a gift from the Sun-Times Judge Marovitz Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth Program. Inspired Youth was humbled and excited to receive the award and appreciate the part Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth plays in creating an education foundation for children and youth in Chicago through one-on-one tutoring programs. Thank you, LLAH for being important in children's lives.

RE-ARRANGING TUTORING DATES

Inspired Youth had some challenges in January 2012, but things opened up, and the tutors were wonderful as they worked with the students. At the beginning of January the mayor closed public libraries across the city every Monday. Inspired Youth's 5th-12th grade tutoring section had been meeting at Bezazian Library on Monday evenings. [In January 2010, when Bezazian began to be closed on Tuesday nights, the 5th-8th grade section moved to join the 9th-12th grade section on Monday nights.] When the library closed on Mondays, the library staff said we could use part of the library for tutoring on Wednesday evenings, but most of the tutors had long ago arranged their schedules in order to tutor on Monday evenings and wanted to continue on Monday evenings.

We asked Edgewater Presbyterian Church if we could use their Fellowship Hall for tutoring, and they said that would be fine. Robert Frost wrote, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." 'I should have called it, something you somehow haven't to deserve.'" Thank you Edgewater Presbyterian Church.

We also opened a small tutoring section on Wednesday evenings because some of the tutoring families think EPC is too far away. We have already recruited several new tutors for Wednesday evenings. We met at EPC for the four Mondays in January (the first week there was no school) and met at Bezazian Library on Wednesday evenings for three weeks. Every tutoring session has been worth while.

VISITING THE SHEDD AQUARIUM

On two rare free days at the Shedd Aquarium, Inspired Youth took small groups to see the sea creatures in the world class Shedd Aquarium. Ten children and 4 adults went on Fri., Jan. 27 (no school), and 6 children and 2 adults went on Sat., Jan. 28. On Fri. morning the wait was not very long. On Sat. afternoon, the line stretched a block over to the Field Museum; the group stood in line in the cold for two hours waiting to see the beautiful sea creatures. The cold wait was worth it.

The children loved all the creatures in the huge Caribbean fish display. They liked the small sharks, the big yellow eel, and the schools of bigger fish. A diver who fed the fish told people about the big turtle, Nimble. When Nimble was young, she was injured by a motor boat in the Caribbean. She was rescued and healed, but she couldn't go back to the wild. When they X-rayed her, they found a nickel in her digestive tract, so they re-named her "Nickel." Because of her injury, Nickel can't go all the way under water. Her back legs stay near the surface. The children liked Nickel.

In the exhibits of ocean creatures in salt water, the children were fascinated by the sea horses with babies in their pouches. They saw lobsters which were camouflaged and could hardly be seen. They saw gray starfish on a sandy bottom and strange-looking octopuses. The sea anemone looked like plants. The children saw a spider crab standing on some rocks; it was so tall it looked like a hut. The children loved the jelly fish, which were highlighted by special lights to bring out the diaphanous flow of the jelly fish

In the Amazon display the children saw an eel whose teeth were waving with the current under water! There was a turtle that had a large, strange, flat (ugly) head; it had a little tube that it put above the waterline in order to breathe. There were tiny frogs in one display and a large frog sitting in the hollow of a log in another. A big spider was in another hollow of the log. The kids were fascinated by a huge anaconda: one thick part was in one window and more of the anaconda was in a side window.

Sometimes when children go to a museum they walk by fast and see everything in 20 minutes! These children were not like that. They watched each display of sea creatures for a long time. Melissa (3rd gr.) was fascinated by two large fish. She stood watching them for 10-15 minutes. Darryl (4th gr.) especially liked the seahorses. Leoncio (4th gr.) liked the anaconda. Deyse and Anahi (7th gr.) looked at the sea creatures for a long time and noticed everything.

We asked a man working at the Shedd how the water in the huge tanks was cleaned. He said a squeegee-type machine was used to clean the water every day, but on the first day of every month all the water was replaced with new water. He said it was a “state of the art” operation.

Photographs of the sea creatures do not always turn out well because the public is not allowed to use flash with many of the exhibits, and most of the creatures keep moving. Some photos we took are on Inspired Youth’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/inspiredyouth. They give a hint of the wonderful experience the children had at the Shedd Aquarium.

THE MYSTERIES OF HARRIS BURDICK

As a creative writing project this year, we duplicated six pictures from the book *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg. The students wrote stories based on the pictures. The stories are all different and very creative. The tutors helped them with details, the flow of the story, and grammar and spelling. The endings of some of the stories are cute. So far 65-70 students have written stories, which you can read on the Inspired Youth website.

STUDENTS PROGRESS IN MATH AND READING

The students are taking hold of math. Mary Ann B. (7th gr.) hardly knew any of the multiplication facts at the beginning of 5th grade when she enrolled in the tutoring program. Now math is easy for her. Joanna S. (5th gr.) and Myeeshia M. (5th gr.) and Brenda H. (4th gr.) started memorizing the multiplication facts this year (their first year in the program) and are doing an amazing job with them. Fernando B. (3rd gr.) did not like math last year in 2nd grade. This year he really likes it. Lizbeth V. (3rd gr.) is the top math student in her classroom. Her mother says she has improved significantly

since she first enrolled in Inspired Youth in the middle of first grade.

Jennifer S. (7th gr.) is improving in reading. Jaely E. (3rd gr.) is reading and writing English much better than last year; she enjoys reading. Three first graders are really reading well: Amber S., Celeste L., and Frankie F. Congratulations!

TERRIBLE NEWS

The mother of three of our students was in a car crash while her aunt was driving. She broke her left ankle, right wrist, and several ribs. She is glad to be alive. The broken ribs were caused by the strain of the seat belt as the car crashed. If it weren’t for the seat belt, she might have gone through the windshield. Her children are sobered by their mother’s experience. The mother says it is a sign and was meant to happen. It means she should live the best she can.

SNOW

The first snowfall of the year was predicted to begin at 10 am on Jan. 12. It began at 9:45 am, right on time. When the kids got out of school, 3 to 4 inches of the fluffy white stuff piled on the ground. It was a tutoring day, and we gathered in front of the school to walk to the library. Everyone had on winter coats, etc., except the smallest first grader, Celeste. On her feet were little ballet slippers, no stockings, skin bare to the falling and slushy snow. As the children walked, Celeste’s tiny feet turned red. An adult had a large pair of gloves that she tried to put over the slippers, but it didn’t work. Almost at the library, 7-year old Estefany carried Celeste for a few steps, then 8-year old Lizabeth carried her the rest of the way.

Once at the library Celeste did amazing work with her tutor, Akie M. But what to do about walking home? We asked if a tutor could drive Celeste and her sister Ana the 4 ½ blocks home so she wouldn’t have to walk in the snow with that bare skin. 7-year old Jennifer said her mom could drive them. Then Ana started to cry. Tutor Bob Siegel calmed her down. Outside the library Jennifer’s mother talked to Celeste and asked her to come with her. Ana wanted to walk. The snow kept coming. Everyone got home safely.