

# TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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## 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF TUTORING PROGRAM! What a Joy!

The Tutoring Program began in September 1985 as the Epworth Tutoring Program. People were concerned about the high drop-out rate in CPS, and they wanted to do something about it. Adults and high school students from the church were the tutors, and children from the church and neighborhood came to study. We scrambled to figure out how to help the students with reading, writing, arithmetic and school homework.

When the next September came, we asked each other, "Can we do this again?" The answer was always, "We are driven to try." And now 30 years later, with a change in location and auspices, and with more tutors, we are still helping children in Uptown/Edgewater with their schoolwork. What a joy! And what a benefit to everyone involved, children, families, tutors, and sponsors. Back in 1985, we could never have imagined the riches of these past 30 years! What a joy!

## INDIVIDUALS IN PROGRAM, 2014-2015

	<i>STUDENTS</i>	<i>TUTORS--TUTORS</i>	
		<i>ADULT</i>	<i>HS/8<sup>th</sup> gr.</i>
<i>Mon. HS Tutoring</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>36</b>	
<i>Mon. 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Tut.</i>	<b>27</b>		
<i>W/Th 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Tut.</i>	<b>33</b>	<b>47*</b>	<b>+ 12 HS fr.</b>
			<i>New Trier</i>
<i>Sat., Kind-7<sup>th</sup> (+2 HS)</i>	<b>36**</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>51 8<sup>th</sup></b>
			<i>WJHS</i>
<b><i>Individ. in Tut. Prog.</i></b>	<b><u>106</u></b>	<b><u>89</u></b>	<b><u>63</u></b>
<i>Choir, PK-HS</i>	<b>(47) 19***</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b><i>Total Individuals</i></b>	<b><u>125</u></b>	<b><u>95</u></b>	<b>+ <u>63</u></b>

*\*Several tutors volunteered more than one day per week.*

*\*\* Sat. students not in weekday Tutoring Program.*

*\*\*\* Choir members not in Tutoring Program*

## **Family Day, 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> gr., Wed./Thurs. Tutoring**

What a glorious celebration! Children, parents, and tutors poured into Bezazian Library for the final day of Wed./Thurs. afternoon tutoring. People from 17 neighborhood families

(including many fathers!) came to hear the children recite their poems.

First the audience got to join the Inspired Youth Singers in singing four songs. "Sing" was in Spanish and English. In "Sing a Rainbow" children held up placards of the rainbow colors. The kids loved to sing "Let It Go," from *Frozen*. For "This Land Is Your Land," Phyllis R. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) played the keyboard while the people sang. She did a beautiful job. (See video on Inspired Youth's Facebook page, along with pictures, taken by Mr. Zak, of children and families.)

The center of the day was the children reciting poems by memory. 26 children stepped to the microphone and recited poems Only 2 children were absent. The audience loved the humorous poems. The announcers for the program were among the best we've ever had: Celeste L. (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) and Keyde G. (4<sup>th</sup> gr.).

The day ended with pizza, cookies, and juice, served by children and teens. The weather was the most beautiful in an unusually cold May, perfect for a delightful celebration.

### **Family Night, 5<sup>th</sup> – HS Tutoring Program**

Around 50 people came to the parlor of Epworth United Methodist Church for the Family Night of the 5<sup>th</sup>-HS students from Monday evening tutoring and Saturday Tutoring. First, students in Inspired Youth Singers performed several songs, including “This Land Is Your Land,” which Phyllis R. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) accompanied on the piano. The students sang with gusto, and the music rang out in Epworth’s chapel. Then 19 students recited poems by memory. The audience was surprised by how well the students recited their poems. Alexandre H. (5<sup>th</sup> gr.) recited Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” and Sara G. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) recited “The Swing,” by Robert Louis Stevenson. After the poems, refreshments were served by neighborhood children with help from 8<sup>th</sup> grader Jonathan E.’s parents. It was a rich evening.

### **A Few Current Students** (*For more stories, see former editions of Tutoring News.*)

In September 2014 when Kimora (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) first came to the Tutoring Program, she could not read. She could not even read *Tip*, the book we use to teach children how to read. She could do a little adding, and she was quiet. We gave her mother a typed version of *Tip*, so Kimora could practice reading at home. Kimora finally read *Tip* and then read our other pre-reader books. When the weather got colder in November, Kimora’s mother said it was too cold for Kimora to walk to the library for tutoring.

One day, a little warmer, I mentioned to Kimora’s mother that if Kimora wanted to come to the tutoring program, I’d walk her to the library and then home again, so her mother didn’t have to come outside. Kimora said she wanted to come: she hasn’t missed a day since. Kimora can now read her 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reader at school and is progressing in math. She struggles with writing sentences, which is the next subject to work on. In mid-December her tutor wrote on the evaluation sheet, “Reading has improved!” On the walk home one day, Kimora said, “My mother doesn’t like hamsters; I like hamsters. My mother doesn’t like cats; I like cats. My mother doesn’t like dogs; I like dogs.” That day on the way home I taught Kimora how to tie her shoes, and the next day she told me she tied her own shoes. Kimora has come “on line.”

When Maria (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) entered the Tutoring Program a year ago in the middle of first grade, she couldn’t read, and she never smiled. Her Wed./Thurs. tutor, Terri Edelson, patiently helped her start to read. In May 2014 in Saturday Tutoring, Maria finally managed half a smile. By the middle of February 2015, what a change from a year ago! She could plow through her homework packet of defining category words and reading substantive articles. (She breezed through math.) And look: Maria smiled brightly all the time! To get to the tutoring location, Maria, her little brother, and her mother walked a mile and a half every session. Maria’s mother saw how important the tutoring program is.

Reaisha (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) did well in the Tutoring Program. She also loved singing with the 2 Inspired Youth Singers. In December she wrote out the words to one of the choir songs to bring to her teacher at school. Reaisha and Princess (1<sup>st</sup> gr.) sang the song for their class.

In Saturday Tutoring on Jan. 10, Omaree, Kind., learned to read four words! Cherish, 1<sup>st</sup> gr., read *Tip I*, twice! She concentrated all hour—the first time in a year and a half. Then she wrote a letter to her teacher at school, with her tutor’s help. This is a “first.”

Two sisters, Guadalupe (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) and Tanya (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.), entered the Tutoring Program in Sept. 2014. They were getting As, Bs, and Cs on their report cards. Now they’ve brought

them up to all As and Bs. In the third marking period Guadalupe made the Principal's Honor Roll (all As). Congratulations!

Edwin L. (3<sup>rd</sup> gr.) and Katie H. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) also made the Principal's Honor Roll (all A's). Phyllis R., (2<sup>nd</sup>) is on the Honor Roll (As and Bs). Other students from Inspired Youth are also on the honor roll.

Note from mother of Luna B. (1<sup>st</sup> gr.), a Saturday student: "Thank you so much for all your help. Luna got better grades and she has increased her interest in reading because of your program."

David R. (10<sup>th</sup> gr.) has been in the Summer Piano Program for a few years. He continues to work on piano pieces at home. He enjoys songs from his church. He plays chords, which he learned last summer, and sings the melody. He especially enjoys "Oceans."

Jason L. (6<sup>th</sup> gr.) also continued working on piano pieces after the Summer Piano Program. He also plays chords and sings special songs.

An 8<sup>th</sup> grader who was in the Tutoring Program and IY Singers in 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades is expecting a baby in September

### **Saturday Tutoring Program**

Saturday Tutoring on April 11, 2015, started with high expectations, but the 8<sup>th</sup> grade tutors from Wilmette didn't come! They were stranded at Wilmette Jr. High School because of a snafu with the bus company. We paired the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade Chicago kids with the K-4<sup>th</sup> graders. Guess what? The 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders were excellent tutors! They followed the suggestions in the children's folders, helped them do reading, writing, and arithmetic, and made comments on the evaluation sheet. What a delightful surprise! It was a productive session, even though the 8<sup>th</sup> grade tutors didn't come. Hurray!

Students in Inspired Youth, led by the Saturday Program, wrote like crazy this year! In the fall they wrote about interesting things they were learning in school this year. Then the 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders wrote a round robin fictional story based on a prompt. In November they made Thanksgiving cards which we delivered to residents at Mid-America Nursing Home. In January the students wrote a letter to, or essay about, their favorite teacher. The 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders did research about the culture of a country and wrote about it. The 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> graders did research and wrote about animals. The 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> graders also wrote stories for our magazine *Sunshine*. All the writing is exciting to read.

### **Goudy School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation**

80 eighth graders graduated from Goudy Elementary School in June 2015. Nine of the students had been in Inspired Youth. Some of them had special parts in the graduation ceremony. Ariana T. sang "A Song for Mama" with another student. Joanna Z. sang the "Star Spangled Banner" *a cappella* with another student. Marleni R. won the good citizenship award. Christopher Z. was on the AB honor roll all four years, and he received a leadership award. Ariana T. and Summone S. each introduced a speaker. We are proud of all the 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

### **Inspired Youth Singers**

The 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Choir Fest was held on March 1, 2015 at Elston Ave. UMC. The children were eager and sang energetically! Around 36 children from three choirs participated: the Inspired Youth Singers, the Epworth Church School Singers, and Elston Ave. UMC. For 10 of the 19 children in the Inspired Youth Singers, this was their first Youth Choir Fest. Everyone enjoyed it.

Each choir sang two songs as a choir and five songs with the combined choirs. Dorie Burrell and Jasmine Tripp each conducted two songs of the combined choir as well as the

Epworth choir and the Inspired Youth Singers. Fatima (6<sup>th</sup> gr.) and Rheana (4<sup>th</sup> gr.) each accompanied a piece for the Epworth Choir.

After the concert the children and parents were treated to a banquet of pizza, chicken donuts, and hot dogs. Thank you, Elston Ave., UMC!

Beautiful close-up pictures of the singers were taken by Scart Javier and are posted on the Facebook pages of Inspired Youth and Epworth Church Children-Chicago. You will love the pictures!

The Inspired Youth Singers performed at a dinner for the Men's Shelter at Epworth Church on Palm Sunday evening. Homeless men and homeless families kept pouring into Epworth's parlor for the occasion. 70-80 people came and enjoyed the dinner prepared by members of Epworth Church, a dinner of chicken, potato salad, lettuce and tomatoes, croissants, and white sheet cake.

13 children from the Inspired Youth Singers performed for the dinner. They sang 24 "golden oldies" for almost an hour. Their singing made the guests happy. Some of the guests even sang along.

The Goudy Talent Show featured several students from Inspired Youth. Katie H. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) and a friend sang "Mean Girl" with stage posters.

Jason L. (6<sup>th</sup> gr.) sang "All of Me" and accompanied himself on the keyboard. He began playing the piano last summer in the Summer Piano Program. For the recital last summer he played "The Entertainer." He learned "All of Me" from YouTube. It was excellent.

Summone S. (8<sup>th</sup> gr.) sang "Bullet Proof."

Ariana T. (8<sup>th</sup> gr.) sang a moving solo, "His Daughter."

Elijah R. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.), did a humorous dance.

9 students from the Inspired Youth Singers performed at the Mid America Nursing Home during Spring Break. They sang beautifully. The residents kept smiling during the concert. They loved the children singing.

At the end of May, Inspired Youth Singers sang for the Spring Banquet of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth, held at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Chicago. This was the fifth time the Inspired Youth Singers performed for this special banquet. Each time has been a wonderful experience. This year 26 youth and 4 adults sang in the choir for the banquet. Of the 26 youth, eight sang in the concert last year, and **18** sang in the concert for the first time this year! Several of the new students had been singing with the Inspired Youth Singers since the fall, and the rest had been in Inspired Youth's Summer Piano Program; they practiced with the choir and sang in the concert. The choir sang 26 songs (60 minutes) in the luxurious lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel. Everyone enjoyed being part of the event. It was a beautiful evening.

3

In mid-June the Inspired Youth Singers and the Epworth Church School singers performed at the Memorial Service held at Epworth Church, for the husband of Ms. Brandt, the principal of Goudy School, which most of the children in the Tutoring Program attend. 250 people were there. 20 children and youth choir sang "How Great Is Our God," and led the congregational songs. It was a meaningful service.

### **Tutoring Grads**

Brenda H., graduated from Rickover Academy HS in June 2015. Brenda's mother, Veronica S., her aunt, and two uncles, were in the Tutoring Program when they were in

elementary school in the late 1980's, when the Tutoring Program first began. Like her mother, Brenda also enrolled in the Tutoring Program when she was a 1<sup>st</sup> grader. This spring, as a senior in HS, Brenda was a tutor with Inspired Youth. She also sang with the Inspired Youth Singers in the concert at the Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth Banquet. This fall Brenda will attend NEIU, majoring in social work.

Jasmine T. received the Associate's Degree from Truman College in May. This summer she is working at a camp in Indiana.

Latrice T. is resuming college studies, this time at National Lewis University online. In January she knew she was going to need help with her astronomy course, so she contacted Inspired Youth, her former tutoring program, for someone who could help her. Latrice said, "I've never flailed a course before!" She did everything she could to pass that one. For several weeks she worked at the library with Dan Solomon, a tutor on Monday evenings and also a Board member of Inspired Youth, Inc. Latrice appreciated working with Dan Solomon.

A Facebook post received in December from a Tutoring grad who was in the Epworth Tutoring Program when she was 6-9 years old and is now a student at U of Illinois in Urbana:

"Hello Beth, I don't know if you remember me from up north, Shayla Hobbs. I just want to thank you for your community outreach and helping me through the different activities, like Girl Scouts and tutoring and volunteering. So far that's all I can remember. But thank you. You are truly an inspiration and a blessing to the youth."

Tyree H. is from a tutoring family of several years ago. He was just been released from prison and has been put on house arrest. He took educational advantage of his time in prison and is ready to lead a productive life. He just got a job at an auto shop in Evanston.

Precious S. is a teacher with CPS. Jamine B. is a substitute teacher with CPS. Both are tutoring grads from several years ago.

**Beth Palmer sees parents of tutoring grads.** They stop her on the street to say hello and tell her about their sons and daughters.

As I was crossing a busy street a woman in a car waved at me. She stopped her car and waved again. I walked back across the street to see who it was. It was Esther S.'s mother, who was happy to see me. Esther will be a senior in HS this fall, earning her final credits to graduate. Her cousin Itzel S. graduated from HS in June 2015. Hugo S. is a junior in HS this year, and is doing fine. Esther's cousin Betzabe A. has a job as a hospital lab technician.

"Miss Beth!" I thought I heard someone call my name as I rode my bike on the sidewalk. I stopped, turned around, but could see no one. I got on my bike again and started pedaling. "Miss Beth!" Again, the same thing; no one was there. The third time it was a shout, and when I turned around I saw a woman running towards me, her face beaming. "Miss Beth, I've been looking for you!" She was happy to see me. Her four children had been in the Tutoring Program in the late 1990's, and she was proud of them all. Her son, Ernest M., now lives in Hawaii and is an actor! His wife is Hawaiian, and they have 2 children. Christopher C. is a manager at Krogers. Perhaps Christopher's son will enroll in the Tutoring Program. D.M. is incarcerated, but he told his mom, "It's good I'm here. Otherwise I'd probably be dead." He earned his G.E.D., and is now working on an associate's degree. Jasmine W. graduated from high school and is about to have a baby.

As I came back from concert at the Four Seasons Hotel, Mr. Gomez was walking his dog and saw me pass by. He told me his son "Jr." was working at the airport, and Jorge G. had a job. Edgar G. transferred to Oakton Community College and is doing well.

Flora Johnson is proud of her children. Quiana (who was in the first year of the Tutoring program in 1985-86) was married two years ago, and just had a baby: 11 pounds! "Q" still works for 911, but is on maternity leave until August. "Q"'s oldest daughter, Briana, will be a senior this year at a Christian college in southern Illinois. Shenika is working in home health care.

### **Accolades and Media**

The one who suggested and encouraged our first Tutoring Program in Uptown/Edgewater in 1981, Dick Walsh, sent this email:

I read your Christmas greeting/newsletter with great interest. Can't believe that it's been 30 years since you started the tutoring project. It is amazing to me what you've been able to accomplish. The stories of tutoring student successes are wonderful to read. What an impact you have had on so many -- not only tutoring students, but their families and the tutors involved in the program, as well. It is great to see 8th graders from Wilmette still involved in the program as studying buddies.→ And how great is it to see adults from so many countries and children from so many countries working productively together. Thank you for keeping me informed of your work/urban ministry. You are amazing, my friend!!!

An email from Barbara MacDonald, Beth Palmer's sister: "You have built and continue to expand a program that more than meets the needs of the families around you – it stimulates their growth and their lives in ways they couldn't have imagined. And you've helped to expand the lives of everyone who has helped in your program. I can't think of a more worthwhile program."

The home page of Loyola University Chicago's website currently features one of Inspired Youth's tutoring pairs: Fatima, 5<sup>th</sup> gr., and tutor Jacob Guise, a student at Loyola University. It's a beautiful picture. See [www.luc.edu](http://www.luc.edu).

The *Chicago Sun-Times*, Jan. 19, 2015, includes an article about one of Inspired Youth's tutoring pairs, Roberto Sanchez, 6<sup>th</sup> gr., and his tutor David Work. Look up the article (with picture) in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Jan. 19, 2015, p. 14. We are proud of this tutoring pair.