

## TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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### SUMMER PIANO PROGRAM

Her face beams. Her eyes sparkle as she sits at the piano keyboard. She is shy, and she tries her best. This was her first year in the program. Jasmine H., 2<sup>nd</sup> gr., loved playing the piano. Alexander G., 3<sup>rd</sup> gr., and his brother Kevin, kindergarten, wanted a piano at home so much, their parents bought a used keyboard for them. Now the whole family is discovering the sounds and songs on it. They all love music.

47 students came to the Edgewater Presbyterian Church twice a week for hour-long sessions of piano lessons on Inspired Youth's nine keyboards. They were taught by 20 volunteer piano tutors who came from one to six hours each week to help the students learn to read notes and play the piano.

Of the 47 students in the program, 17 were from Goudy Elementary School and the rest were from other schools. 16 of the students were taking piano lessons for the first time; 31 students were in the Summer Piano Program before, some for several years.

Students from at least five families took the bus to get to the program. One family came from half way across Chicago (1½ hours away) by bus. Three families walked almost a mile to get to the program.

Most of the students learned pieces from Alfred's Basic Prep Course, and 6 students worked on more challenging pieces from Suzuki I and II. The students using Suzuki were really motivated. They were in the program before and had keyboards at home. They practiced like crazy.

For the final recital some of the students learned pieces from Faber's series of popular, jazz, favorites, rock, marches, hymns, and kid's songs. The students loved these pieces: "This Land Is Your Land," "Over the Rainbow," "Surrey with the Fringe on Top," "Blue Moon," "The Entertainer," and "Let It Go," from *Frozen*. The songs were more difficult than those in the lesson books, but the students were excited by them and loved learning to play them. Next year we hope a student will play "Happy."

This year we encouraged six older students to work on pieces in the Suzuki Piano Books, which are more challenging than the Alfred's Series. Josue E., 9<sup>th</sup> gr., Brandon W., 7<sup>th</sup> gr., Pamela M., 7<sup>th</sup> gr., Jason L., 6<sup>th</sup> gr., Hellen S., 5<sup>th</sup> gr., and Katie S., 4<sup>th</sup> gr. all worked on pieces from Suzuki the whole summer and played very well. Hellen and Katie also played a flute/piano duet from Suzuki.

Here are a few sound bites from Inspired Youth's Summer Piano Program:

Eduardo F., 3<sup>rd</sup> gr. was very studious. He practiced hard and learned "Rockin' Robin," not easy for a beginning student. Miguel N., 3<sup>rd</sup> gr., missed a few days of the piano program because of a family vacation, but he learned to play the sinuous "Snake Dance" really quickly. When Emmanuel G., 4<sup>th</sup> gr., played "ABC, It's Easy As 1 2 3," everyone smiled. Joshua S., 8<sup>th</sup> gr., helped his brother Matthew S., 4<sup>th</sup> gr., learn his piece. Oscar L., 4<sup>th</sup> gr., loved to play "Puff, the Magic Dragon." He played so fast that his student accompanist, Josue E., 9<sup>th</sup> gr., could hardly keep up with him. Shafton D., 6<sup>th</sup> gr., learned the chorus of "Lean on Me" in his fourth day in the program. Last year, Edgar G., 6<sup>th</sup> gr., hardly concentrated at all. This year he learned most of "This Old Man" in a day,

and then began to learn “Star Wars.” Stephanie L., 7<sup>th</sup> gr., worked on the rhythm of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” and played it perfectly. Joam L., 11<sup>th</sup> gr., learned “River Flows in You,” and played it beautifully.

2 families (5 students) dropped out before the recital because the oldest sons were taking a course at the University of Chicago, a long bus ride away.

Xavier B., 6<sup>th</sup> gr., loved playing the piano and worked by himself. His mother said that playing the piano brought him “out of his shell.” She said he related to other people better now.

Piano tutor Elaine Jones knew her student Itzel V., 2<sup>nd</sup> gr., would enjoy playing “Let It Go,” from *Frozen*. Elaine found the notation, and then found an easier version, and a still easier version. Itzel started playing it, and loved it. One day Itzel’s father and mother came to the piano class, and they got to hear Itzel practicing the piece. They also got to hear their son Raul V., a pre-schooler, play two pieces with the duet accompaniment. The parents were beaming when they heard their children playing the piano.

### **The Piano Recital!**

The final recital came all of a sudden after 6½ weeks. 115-120 people gathered at the Edgewater Presbyterian Church to hear and enjoy 39 students, ages 4-17, performing solos and duets on the keyboard and piano.

But what had happened? Were these the same students as 2 weeks before? The week before the recital, they could hardly play their pieces. Two days before the concert they practiced like crazy, and at the recital they played their pieces fast and didn’t miss a note. The music was fantastic.

Children looked so nice for the recital. Yair S., 1<sup>st</sup> gr., wore a suit. The sisters Gracie H. (5<sup>th</sup> gr.) and Jasmine H. (2<sup>nd</sup> gr.) had their hair especially curled. The brothers Edgar G. (6<sup>th</sup>) and Emmanuel G. (4<sup>th</sup>) got new, handsome hair-cuts. They looked so good.

Three pairs of cousins were in the piano program for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. One of the cousins, Valeria B., 3<sup>rd</sup> gr., worked on “Oh, How I Love Jesus.” We found out that the mothers of the cousins (3 sisters) knew the song in Spanish, “Cuánto amo a Jesús,” so they all practiced singing it for the recital. On the night of the recital, all three moms wore matching rose blouses and black pants. They looked so good! They hadn’t been used to singing with a microphone in front of people, but they were great! Valeria B., 3<sup>rd</sup> gr., kept playing the song and they sang it over and over. Everyone did beautifully.

After the recital three families gave Beth Palmer flowers. This was not perfunctory. The families were sincerely grateful. As Ms. Lara handed Ms. Palmer a huge bouquet, she spoke into the microphone and said how grateful she was that her four children had been able to participate in the piano program for 8 years. This year her oldest son played, “River Flows in You.” Ms. Lara took a video of it and sent it to her oldest daughter. Her oldest daughter told her mom it was so beautiful she had tears in her eyes.

Roberto S., 6<sup>th</sup> gr., handed Ms. Palmer a gift and told her how grateful he was for the Piano Program. One father came to the recital, even though he was on crutches.

Scart Javier took winning photos of all the students. Look at the 60 photos on Inspired Youth’s Facebook page.

### **Comments from Tutors:**

From Wallie Dayal, piano tutor: “It was quite an experience yesterday: my first recital! And I marveled at the performances, the organization and the family spirit of the attendees. It must have been around 100 people, I would guess. Amazing!!!

“I marveled at the low-no-pressure forum for the kids to show off their skills in front of an audience, and at the accompanist's rescue techniques while the little fingers took a nervous detour. Given this kind of repeated exposure, these kids will not have any fear of public speaking or performing for an audience. My sincere compliments, Beth!

“Sadly, I missed Luz' performance entirely. Not even sure what kept my attention at that time, and kudos to Fidel, he did amazingly well. BTW, little Cynthia recognized me in the serving line, ‘You were the teacher!’”

From Margaret Sullivan: “The evening seemed to go so smoothly. We had a great set of helpers for the dinner and the cleanup.

“Armando S., 7<sup>th</sup> gr., helped a lot with the meal. He set up the drink table, helped us set out the food, and helped serve the hot dogs. He seemed genuinely interested in helping. I told his mom that we really appreciated his help. He was a really good kid and followed instructions very well.”

### **Wonderful Volunteer Piano Tutors**

For 6½ weeks during the summer, twenty adults came one, two, or three times a week, for 1-5 hour-sessions, to help the students learn to play the piano: Stacy Arriola, Nicholas Chen, Diane Danek, Wallie Dayal, Terri Edelson, Josue Estrada, David Halpern, Alison Hung, Tasha Johnson, Elaine Jones, Nina Leung, Kiersten Lofton, Jamey McDunn, Beth Palmer, Kenny Roman, Santiago Salazar, Nat Scholl, Jill Werner, Andy Xu, Owen Young. Thank you, volunteer piano tutors, for working so well with the students this summer.

### **YOUTH CHOIR CONCERT**

On a sunny Sunday in August, the Inspired Youth Singers and the Epworth Church School Singers—16 children along with 9 parents and three other adults--went to the Block Party outside of Edgewater Presbyterian Church. They ate good food, they looked at books, the children had their faces elaborately painted, and they sang eight special numbers. The children looked beautiful in white shirts and dark pants.

The choir sang 8 songs, with five different children accompanying songs on the keyboard, Fatime E., 7<sup>th</sup> gr., Louis R., 7<sup>th</sup> gr., Katie S., 5<sup>th</sup> gr., Valeria B., 4<sup>th</sup> gr., and Katie H., 3<sup>rd</sup> gr. All the pianists played well, and all the children sang well. Pictures of the Block Party are on Inspired Youth's Facebook page.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

#### **To Millennium Park, Aug. 7**

It was a glorious day. 9 youth, 2 preschoolers, 2 moms, and the tutoring director went to Millennium Park. It was not cold, and not too hot. It was perfect.

The group went to 3 concerts: 2 for children and 10 min. of a rehearsal of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. Everyone loved the concerts. In the concerts for children, the kids sat on the floor. They shook maracas, or pom-poms, and they sang along on all the songs. Even the moms sang. They were beaming. Everyone was happy. Even at the rehearsal of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, everyone listened.

In the Family Tent, the group loved the art project, sponsored that week by the Art

Institute of Chicago. There were small pieces of colored paper, scissors, glue, and wooden sticks for the kids to make 3D projects: houses, a tall person, various designs. Even the moms made things. They enjoyed it.

The kids walked on the high bridge from Millennium Park to the Art Institute. The bridge crosses a busy Chicago street. The kids said the bridge started bucking up and down in the center as they were walking on it. Yikes! We asked a guard about it, and he said it was designed to do that. It was designed by a boat builder, and the end of the bridge resembled the stern of a boat. Was the bridge designed to give people a sense of going over waves???

When the kids were high up on the bridge, they spied some beehives. None of the many other Inspired Youth who have walked on the bridge have seen the beehives. The bees pollinate the plants in the Lurie Garden, which is next to the bridge. When they kids to the Lure Garden, they loved looking at all the plants.

The children loved everything they saw in Millennium Park. Their favorite place was the Crown Fountain. Kids put on clothes which could get wet, and they stood under water pouring down from a huge obelisk. They loved it. Even the moms got wet. It was a great day.

#### **To Millennium Park, Aug. 14**

Six girls, ages 2-10, and the 2 adults who went to Millennium Park on Aug. 14 had a wonderful time, an amazing time,” a stupendous time,” an “out of this world time.”

The children did similar things as the previous group, but they also did a few other activities. The children saw 4 large tubs filled with small pea-sized slippery beads in a little water. The adults thought, “Is this an activity? There’s nothing here. We should go to another activity.” Wrong! The children loved it. They scooped up the beads with their hands and felt them. They scooped them up with various scoops and moved them to tubs with a different color and saw the beads turn a different color. The beads are called “orbi.” The children played with the orbi beads in the tubs for over half an hour.

In the Family Tent the children went to a rock concert, “Jeannie B. and the Jelly Beans,” three electric guitars, drums, and a dynamic singer. The audience sang several songs, and then Jeannie B. had the kids do all sorts of jumping songs. There was a jumping contest to see who could jump the longest. For the last number, Jeannie B. laid out long strips of bubble wrap for the kids to jump on and pop while the band played fast music. The kids loved all the music, especially 4-year old Jaelyn G, who jumped the whole time--around 30 minutes straight! The photos, taken by Santiago S., on Inspired Youth’s Facebook page, are beautiful.

#### **EMAIL from the woman who sent stuffed animals for children to wrap for 20 years**

The following letter is from Enid Young, the woman from Iowa who, for 20 years, sent boxes and boxes of reconditioned stuffed animals for Inspired Youth to wrap and give to children from Uptown/Edgewater who don’t receive presents at Christmastime. Here is the letter from Enid Young:

July 16, 2015

Hello Beth,

Many thanks for the newsletter and colorful photo you sent to me. I love the news about

the students; reading about the choirs, youngsters being so much more confident as they learn to read and join in with others. You all give so very much toward the futures of all of them. It is also good to read of the adults who have benefited, and stop you on the street to tell you. Such a joy!!!

The photo depicts those who are the youngest; having come to find out what it is all about their faces show apprehension, anticipation and joy. The older ones are more confident and proud to be on your team. God bless you for giving all these opportunities, to learn and to teach.

I was sad to read of very young pregnancies; these girls are burdened far too early, and hopefully the babies are given up for adoption. That is just my hope.

Stay well and in touch. I miss my toy project so very much, but it was for the best that I stop, for many reasons. Blessings to you and all your staff. ~Enid Young.