

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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A GIFT FOR A TUTEE

It is a beautiful music box with drawers on each side, and a ballerina who dances and plays a song when the lid is open. This is the present Katie K., an 8th grade tutor, gave her preschool tutee, Adilene, in the Saturday tutoring program. Other adults put trinkets in the small drawers: a tiny pencil and paper, some colored “jewels,” and a necklace. Adilene was enthralled by the gift. This is what Katie K. wrote about it:

“Complete and utter joy, that’s what comes to mind when I think of her. Her name is Adilene, and I can’t help but smile when I think of her. I didn’t know it was possible to feel so much love for someone the way I do for her. It’s the way her eyes light up when she sees me come off the bus and jumps into my arms. Or it is when she finally writes an a, b, and c with great handwriting, or when she recognizes the numbers 1-10.

“So I decided I wanted to give her something special, something to bring out that look in her eye, that I have come to greatly adore. She has given me a gift that I have never received before. She gave me the gift of being able to love someone in an almost maternal way.

“When I first met her she pointed out my necklace. Little did she know that it was given to me by my Mimi right before she died. Without it on, I feel alone, but with it, it’s my flashlight guiding me through the rocky path that is called life.

“I wanted to give her that. I wanted to give Adilene something with meaning and love. I wanted to give her a beacon to help her navigate the adventures she will have throughout her life. If I have given her that, something that she can have for more than just every other Saturday from 10 to 12-- I want to make a difference in her life. If I have done that, I will have done my job.”

Katie K.. 8th grader, Adilene’s tutor

An email from Barbara MacDonald about Katie K.’s gift and what she wrote:

“Beth, What a wonderful present that young 8th grader gave her tutee and what an especially touching and poignant tribute Katie wrote. I was very moved by her words. You have given Katie (and all of the tutors and the tutees) such a gift of learning, compassion, and relationship building. Your work has touched hundreds and hundreds of individuals.

“Thank you for sharing that piece and the photos with me. --Much love, Barbara”

NEWS FROM TUTORING GRADS

Maria Najera was a student in the Tutoring Program 25 years ago. Here is Maria’s email from November 2016:

“My name is Maria Y. Najera. I was a part of the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program in the early 1990s. Those years were full of fond memories of Beth Palmer and the volunteers working to help the kids from Goudy Elementary with

their school work. I feel very fortunate to have been part of the program during that time. The program introduced me to many first-time experiences which strengthened my education. I remember the first time I was taught how to use a computer, how to perform a poem in public, how to carefully complete my homework and be able to double check my work. As a child of only Spanish speaking immigrant parents it was difficult to get assistance at home with school work. This program pivoted me toward a more rounded education. I was able to graduate Goudy grade school. I went on to Mather High School and graduated in the Honor roll. After that, I was accepted to the University Of Illinois at Chicago and graduated with a psychology major. Currently, I work as a social worker with the Department of Human Services. I enjoy working in the community and helping out its residents. I feel this would not have been possible without the assistance from the Tutoring Program.”

Brenda H.'s mother was a student in the Tutoring Program in the late 1980's. Brenda was a student in the Tutoring Program in 3rd and 4th grades and was a tutor when she was a senior in high school. Here is an email she sent in March 2017:

“Last time we spoke, I mentioned to you that I was attending NEIU. I completed my first year there, and interned at the Ward 49th Alderman's Office.

“I transferred and am now attending Loyola. Since then, I had a law clerkship the fall semester of 2016, at the Cook County State Attorney's Office.

“I am currently in Washington D.C., completing a program with the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation for this current Spring 2017 semester all while interning at the White House Historical Association.

“I was recently accepted into the John Felice Rome Center, where I will be able to study abroad in Rome, Italy for this summer semester of 2017.

“I was hoping you could help me by providing information about any scholarships that you are aware of. I would love to take advantage of the opportunity to learn Italian. I have been in search for scholarships that will help make this trip possible.

“Brenda H.”

GOOD NEWS ABOUT STUDENTS

The children in Saturday tutoring had fun writing stories for our magazine *Sunshine*. Carlos C. (kindergarten) starting writing in teeny tiny letters, copying the words of his 8th grade tutor. Carlos wrote 2 sentences; then he wanted to write more. He kept writing all hour. His tiny letters were beautiful.

Four first grade boys are doing excellent work. David C., Jason R., Andre M., and Raul V. all work hard and do their homework plus extra reading, writing, and math assignments the program gives them. Jason R., 1st gr., won an award at school for being the class's most improved in math since the beginning of the year. He got 4 A's and a B. on his mid-year report card.

Itzel V., 4th gr., ran the half-marathon this spring.

Leonela C., 6th gr., won 2nd place in her school's science fair this year.

In walking home from tutoring one rainy afternoon, the wind was blowing 40 miles per hour, and the children's umbrellas kept turning inside out. Reisha J., 3rd gr. was laughing and laughing at the situation. All the children were laughing with her. Everyone was soaked and happy.

The book *Chicken Sunday* was assigned to Eduardo F. 5th gr. to read in Saturday tutoring. His 8th grade tutor had a 6-pointed star on the cap his was

wearing. When the tutor saw the picture of an old man in the story with a number on his arm, he told his tutee that the old man had been in a concentration camp in Europe. The tutor has seen people with numbers on their arms.

DIFFICULTIES

A sixth grader new to the Tutoring Program is getting 3 F's on his report card. He isn't trying. His tutors are trying to help him.

A seventh grade girl new to the program is also getting 3 F's on her report card. It takes a lot to change personal and family patterns.

In order to get to Saturday tutoring on time, a tutor drove so fast that he got a speeding ticket.

A preschool girl in the Tutoring Program has lice. Her mother kept thinking the lice were gone and kept sending the girl back to school. The school kept finding lice, so they expelled the child. The girl didn't go to preschool for several weeks. IY's tutoring director took the mother and daughter to a near-by doctor in hopes of getting rid of the lice. The shampoo and procedures the doctor recommended seemed to get rid of the lice. If the lice are gone, the girl may apply for the second year of preschool.

NEWS FROM OTHER GRADS

Stella A. lives in Switzerland and is the CEO of a bank! Ann A. is head of nursing for a hospital in Elgin. Their brothers Michael A. and Robert A. are both doing fine. Rotimi O. does quality control for a firm in the suburbs.

Jeanette P.'s two children were in the Tutoring Program when they were in elementary school in the 1990's. She recently adopted her brother's 3 grandchildren, ages 2, 3, and 6. She and her children live in Country Club Hills and are doing fine. Jeanette loves raising the children. She called Beth Palmer after seeing *The Wizard of Oz* on TV because she remembered her children singing "Somewhere over the Rainbow" when they were in the children's choir. Jeanette is proud of her new children, but they still have nightmares.

EPWORTH CHURCH CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The Epworth Church Christmas Pageant on Dec. 18 was marvelous. A tutoring student from many years ago, Sandra Williams, was Mary; her husband, Cameron Williams, was Joseph; their daughter, Sanaya, was baby Jesus; their son, Larry S., 4th gr., was a wise man. The other two wise men were Carlos F., 4th gr., and Gregorio F., 5th gr. The wise men's trio, "We Three Kings" was loud and happy. Phyllis R., 4th gr., was the angel Gabriel, with a long speaking part. The shepherds with short speaking parts were Donovan F. and Malik O., both in kindergarten. The narrator was Ian F., father of three of the boys. Many other children and adults also were characters in the pageant. Accompanying songs on the piano were Gregorio F., 5th gr., Leonela C., 6th gr., and Fatima E., 8th gr.

Costumes for the pageant were exceptional. They had been developed over several years by talented, creative church members. Eva Schwinge outfitted all the actors with costumes. Pictures on FB: Epworth Church Children Chicago and FB: Inspired Youth show how beautiful the costumes were.

SINGING AT ALL AMERICAN NURSING HOME

Two days after Christmas 20 children from the Inspired Youth Singers and the Epworth Church School singers sang at the All American Nursing Home. They

sang 17 Christmas and secular songs, for a total of 40 minutes. The remarkable thing is that this was the first time 14 of the children had ever sung in a nursing home; 12 of the 20 children were 4 to 7 years old! All 20 children (plus one father) sang all 17 songs well.

Fatima E., 8th gr., accompanied 3 songs and Leonela C., 6th gr., accompanied one song on the keyboard (she had just started playing the keyboard last summer at Inspired Youth's Summer Piano Program). Itzel V., 4th gr., led the hand motions for one song. Jasmine T., a tutoring grad, directed the choir.

At the end of the concert the students acted out "freeze motions" to a special CD and enjoyed refreshments provided by All American. It was a joyous day.

36th ANNUAL YOUTH CHOIR FEST

Five choirs sang, five child pianists and an adult saxophonist performed, and over 110 people came to the 36th annual Youth Choir Fest held at Epworth UMC in February 2017. "I want the concert to be at my church next year," an adult singer announced. "I want to bring more people from our church next year," a director exclaimed. Everyone enjoyed the concert and the fellowship meal afterwards, organized by Eva Schwinge and served by the Girl Scouts and Epworth Church.

Five choirs performed in the concert: Inspired Youth Singers, Park Community Church (North Rogers Park Campus), Epworth Church School Singers, Granville UMC Voices of Praise, and Elston Ave. UMC. Children, teenagers, and adults sang well. Mistead Sai was the announcer for the concert, and Scart Javier was the photographer and videographer.

This was the first time that parents from all the children in the IYS and the ECCS came. The children were glad their parents saw them perform, and it was important for the parents to experience what their children are involved in.

One of the stars of the day was Dorie Burrell of the Inspired Youth Singers who conducted four songs and brought many guests. Jasmine Tripp also conducted several songs.

Other stars of the day were the 5 child pianists. Leonela C., 6th gr. and Priscilla H., 5th gr., played solos for the prelude; Gregorio F., 5th gr., and his father Ian played a duet. Fatima E., 8th gr., accompanied the Epworth Church School Singers on the keyboard.

On the final song, "We Shall Overcome," the combined choirs and the audience sang, while Phyllis R., 4th gr., played the keyboard, John Rimmer (Phyllis' father) played the soprano saxophone, Cameron Scott of Granville UMC played the piano, and Beth Palmer of Epworth UMC played the pipe organ.

Comments on the Youth Choir Fest

Rhonda Hartwell, director of Park Community Church, said this about the concert:

"We really enjoyed the Youth Choir Fest. One of my favorite parts was some of the kids from the Inspired Youth who were very enthusiastic about their singing and really projected their voices; it was really cool to see and hear some of the boys praise and worship God. We also liked the older kids, the

teenagers, singing. Not only did they sound really good, but it was really important for kids to see that you can continue singing right up to your teen years; and they saw the adults singing as well. And I really loved the group at the end that led praise and worship for all of us, and we all got to sing together. That was a lot of fun. Our group had a really, really good time. For some of these kids from Park Community Church, it was their first time being on stage singing, and it was really cool.”

FOUR CONCERTS IN SIX DAYS DURING SPRING BREAK!

25 children performed four concerts in 6 days in CPS’s April Spring Break--at the Saturday Tutoring Program, the Epworth’s Men’s Shelter meal, The Breakers, and at All American. Altogether, the choir performed 23 songs, with songs selected for the particular audience. Leonela C., 6th gr., Gregorio F., 5th gr., and Phyllis R., 4th gr. accompanied 5 of the songs on the piano. Raul V., 1st gr., and Jason R., 1st gr., were soloists for a song. Leonela C., 6th gr., and Gregorio F., 5th gr., were soloists for another song, and Dayveana B., 4th gr., led the motions for a song. Dorie Burrell was invaluable in conducting the concerts, and Jasmine Tripp and Ian Fuller, were indispensable in the choir. Beth Palmer played the piano/keyboard.

An adult coordinator of the **Saturday Tutoring Program** requested that the group have a total group session of singing. Ten songs were selected out of Inspired Youth Singers’ repertoire. 18 children from IYS, along with four 8th grade tutors, stood in front and led the total group of PS-8th graders Chicago children and the 8th grade suburban tutors in singing. An 8th grade tutor brought her ukulele and led two of the songs on the ukulele. It was a beautiful singing. It was very worthwhile.

Three times a year Epworth Church serves a meal to the homeless men of its Warming Center. On Palm Sunday evening, 16 children and 4 adults of Inspired Youth sang for **Epworth’s “Shelter Meal.”** The group sang 21 songs, for almost an hour! Most of the children were 6, 7, and 8 years old. Again, the singing was beautiful!

Two days after the Shelter Meal, the children sang at **The Breakers**. 17 children and 4 adults stood on a stage (!), with colored lights shining on them (!), and again sang beautifully. There was a large audience of retired professional people, who enjoyed the concert. 6 parents and 3 siblings of the children also came to listen. One mother recorded the concert and put it directly on the internet. The children were privileged to sing at The Breakers.

The fourth concert was at **All American**. It hadn’t been planned but was set up two days before the concert. The activities director, Shawn G., suggested the children sing for 20 min., and then dye Easter eggs for 20 min.! The children sang 9 songs, with 5 of the songs played by child pianists, 3 of the other songs with child leaders, and “Sing a Rainbow” with children holding up colored placards. The 18 children and 4 adults performed beautifully. They all “sang out.”

After performing, Shawn G. arranged for the children to dye Easter eggs! These were young children, mostly around 6-8 years old. They loved it! The children were very serious and business-like as they put on plastic smocks and plastic gloves. They got to dye an egg with various colors and then add gold or silver sparkles. They behaved well! Only a little of the dye was spilled on the floor and tracked around the room.

After dyeing Easter eggs Shawn G. arranged a raffle for the children. They had to be able to read the 3-digit number on their raffle ticket. The winners each won \$1 as a prize. (Many children won a prize.) After the raffle the children got bags of freshly popped popcorn from a machine in the room.

What a day! The kids were beaming. Through all the activities, "the children were as good as gold." Thank you, All American and Shawn G.

FUNERAL FOR OLLIE LATIKER

In March there was a huge funeral at Epworth Church for Ollie Latiker. 400 to 500 people came. There was not enough space in the pews for people to sit, so they stood at the back. Ms. Ollie owned a small bar a block from Epworth Church. Many of the families from the Tutoring Program and the neighborhood knew Ollie because she was always outside the bar talking to people. She had been owner of the bar for around 40 years. She was a devoted member of Epworth Church and will be missed.

DONATIONS TO INSPIRED YOUTH, INC.

Inspired Youth has a wide range of donors. In the past year gifts have come from a foundation, church women's group, service organization, and around 55 individuals, including present and former tutors, parents of 8th graders from Wilmette Jr. High School, pastors, friends, family, and community members. Donations have ranged from \$25 to \$6,000. Inspired Youth appreciates all these donations.

Because of the many people who volunteer, Inspired Youth does a lot with minimal funds to enrich the lives of children and families in Uptown/Edgewater 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.