

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660, 773-561-4759, inspiredyouth2@gmail.com
www.inspiredyouthchicago.org, www.facebook.com/inspiredyouth
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Brenda H. in Washington, D.C.

SHE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF “BY CHANCE”

Brenda H. sent this email in April 2017:

Good Morning, Ms. Beth,

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 that 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.

Thank you for your time, Brenda H.

Brenda received the scholarships that are helping her study in Rome this summer.

Here is Beth Palmer’s back story about Brenda: Brenda’s mother, **Veronica**, was a Tutoring Grad. In the 1980’s Veronica and her three siblings, Teresa,

Ociel, and Mario, lived a half block from Epworth Church and were in the Tutoring Program, children's choir, and Saturday Tutoring Program.

Years later I heard that Veronica had a daughter, Brenda, in kindergarten. I wanted her to be in the Saturday Tutoring Program, but it didn't work out.

Then one day, by chance, I saw Veronica's mother and sister at Edgewater Library, and again I wanted Brenda to come to all the Inspired Youth programs. Brenda was in 3rd grade, and it worked out fine. When she was in the 3rd and 4th grades Brenda was in the afternoon and Saturday tutoring programs and the Inspired Youth Singers. Then her family moved.

Meanwhile, Brenda's mom, Veronica, wanted suggestions on how to write a resume. She also wanted a letter of recommendation for a job. She learned how to write a resume, and she got the job she wanted.

Then another "by chance" happened in May 2015. I happened to see Brenda, a senior in high school, walking to the el from Rickover Academy (Senn HS). She asked if Inspired Youth had any community service opportunities because she needed to do 40 hours of community service--in 2½ weeks! So Brenda volunteered in the afternoon tutoring program, choir rehearsals, Parents' Night, and a choir trip downtown to sing at the Four Seasons Hotel. She got the 40 hours, graduated from Rickover Academy, and went to Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU). Read her email letter again to find out what she did next.

We are happy for Brenda and wish her well.

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

Here is an email from Barbara M. 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 A TUTORING GRAD

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."

STUDENTS AND TUTORS COME FROM MANY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Some of the students of the Tutoring Program were born in Chicago, but many other students or their parents came from other countries: Mexico, Ethiopia, Albania, and India, as well as Congo, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. All the students speak English, but they need to keep working on vocabulary, English usage, and comprehension.

The tutors also came from many different countries. Most of the tutors came from the United States and were Caucasian or African American. Other tutors came from Mexico, China, Ghana, Japan, the Philippines, and Turkey.

INDIVIDUALS IN PROGRAM 2016-2017

STUDENTS TUTORS

		ADULT HS/Univ./8 th gr.
Mon. HS Tutoring	5	29
Mon. 5th-8th Tut.	29	
W/Th 1 st -4 th Tut.	34	45*+12 New Trier HS 8 DePaul Univ.
Sat. PS-8 th (+2 HS)	<u>29**^(57total)</u>	<u>7 51 WJHS 8th gr.</u>
Individ. in Tut. Prog.	91	81+ 71

Choir, PK-HS 9***^(41total) **5+ 71**
Total Individuals 100 86+ 71

*Several tutors volunteered more than one day per week.

** Sat. students not in weekday Tutoring Program.

*** Choir members not in Tutoring Program

GOOD NEWS ABOUT STUDENTS (BOYS)

Nathan B., 7th gr., has been in the Tutoring Program for several years. His parents know how important the Tutoring Program is, but Nathan has always had a hard time in school. Finally, in 7th gr., Nathan is starting to do better. He is bringing his homework to Monday night tutoring and also doing the work in the tutoring folder after his homework. His regular tutor, Amanda S., has been patient and thorough with him. When she couldn't come one day, substitute tutor Bob G. was reluctant to work with Nathan because of past experience. But after giving it a try, Bob G. wrote, "He was focused and worked very well and worked hard." This was a strong compliment.

Meinor C., 6th gr., entered the Tutoring Program in March 2017. He does our hardest math series and is doing well in it. His math and science grades went up from C to B on the April report card.

Alejandro S., 6th gr., entered the Tutoring Program two years ago, in 4th gr. He could read quite well, but he was poor in math; he couldn't multiply. In the tutoring sessions, he worked and worked at math. In 5th gr., he continued to work at math. By April of 6th gr., he loved math, and he got a B on his report card, but he got a D in reading! Now we'll focus on reading!

Marco O., 5th gr., has made tremendous gains in his first year in the Tutoring Program. His math has improved greatly. His written expression has dramatically improved. Marco's mother brought her two sons, 5th and 7th grades, to tutoring every Monday night and every Saturday session. She really cares about her sons' progress.

Marco's brother, Miguel O., 7th gr., was consumed in doing his online math homework, IXL, at the tutoring sessions. His teacher at Goudy wrote about Miguel, "Lots of untapped potential –has ability to make A's on report card."

Giovanni R., 4th gr., enjoys math and is improving in reading and writing. He also has a lot of potential.

Byron C., 2nd gr., entered the Tutoring Program in March 2017. He worked steadily on his homework and the work in the folder. He loved math and worked furiously on it. His grade in math on his April report card went from C to B. His grade in social studies also went up from C to B. His written expression has also improved, but it still has to be reflected on his report card.

First Grade Boys

Inspired Youth has an amazing group of boys in the first grade. David C., 1st gr., is very serious. He always focuses on his homework. He got straight A's in school, and he likes art.

In September, Jason R., 1st gr., couldn't do simple math or read any words. He worked and worked and kept learning. On the January and April report cards he received all A's, with one B. He received an award in his class for the student who improved the most in math. Now Jason has to focus on anger management, becoming aware of when he is angry and not physically lashing out. Jason has a lot of energy. As we walk from the school to the Tutoring Program and then walk home, he loves to run fast to the next street and wait for the rest of the children.

Raul V., 1st gr., keeps working in the Tutoring Program. He writes excellent sentences but has to keep working on math and reading. In Inspired Youth's Children's Choir, Raul is one of the strongest singers. His mother says Raul always plays the Inspired Youth CD at home and sings along. Raul has been in IY's Summer Piano Program for two years, since he turned five. Raul and his sisters are also in a running program with the Park District. His sister Itzel, 4th gr., ran a half marathon this spring, at age 9.

Andre M., 1st gr., entered the Tutoring Program at the end of February. His mother knew about the Tutoring Program because when she was in early elementary school, several of her friends were in the program. Andre loves to read and he is very alert. When he first entered the Tutoring Program, it was hard to understand him. He didn't enunciate clearly, and his voice was high and soft. By the beginning of May, he started to speak clearly. It was a real difference. In his academic work, we worked hard on math and on writing sentences. He is improving in both.

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.

DIFFICULTIES

A sixth grader new to the Tutoring Program is getting 3 F's on his report card. He isn't trying, but 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 kindergarten in September 2017.

STUDENTS' WRITING PROJECTS

84 students, preschool through high school, wrote one or more stories for magazines Inspired Youth published in 2016-2017.

43 students wrote letters to President-elect Donald Trump in November 2016.

46 students wrote, "Editorials!! Here's What I Think..." The editorials covered many topics.

36 students wrote essays imagining what their lives would be like "In the Year 2036."

21 students wrote longer articles for "Chicago: History, City, People."

33 students, with their 8th grade partner from Wilmette Jr. High School, wrote "Scary Short Stories—Round Robin—Based on Various Prompts."

48 students, pre-school through 4th grade, wrote articles published in their own hand-writing for two issues of Inspired Youth's magazine *Sunshine*.

31 children wrote "Animal Reports" in March 2017.

40 children wrote general articles in May 2017.

In addition to this, students practiced writing sentences using words from chapters in spelling books. All this writing is good experience for the students.

These magazines except *Sunshine* are on Inspired Youth's website inspiredyouthchicago.org.

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 ECSS 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. She 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 F. 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. It was glorious!

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."

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 mailed to "Inspired Youth," 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660, or made through PayPal on the Donations page of the website: www.inspiredyouthchicago.org