

TUTORING NEWS: EPWORTH TUTORING PROGRAM

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HOLIDAY SPECIAL

"MERRY"

In December, Saturday Tutoring saw around 60 elementary children from Uptown/ Edgewater work with around 75 eighth graders from Wilmette Jr. High School on reading, writing, and arithmetic. They typed holiday letters to senior citizens in the Methodist Home. They learned about Kwanzaa. One group wrote letters thanking people for the Epworth Tutoring Program. Jack Jacobson, who started the partnership between the Tutoring Program and eighth graders of Wilmette Junior High School, came and brought candy canes for all the students. During crafts time, the students made gingerbread houses out of graham crackers, frosting, and candies. Maria, age 11, later said with a twinkle in her eye, "I liked making the gingerbread house. The next day I ate it! for breakfast!" A friend added, "Me, too!" After the session the children from Chicago and Wilmette enjoyed each other's company outside while the Wilmette youth waited for their buses. During the whole morning a ripple of good feeling said, "This is 'merry.'"

HOLIDAY LETTERS TO SENIOR CITIZENS IN THE METHODIST HOME

This year 69 children wrote holiday letters to 75 residents of the Methodist Home this year. A student's mother, who works at the Methodist Home, brought the letters there. Another parent remarked that it was a blessing that the children were given the opportunity to write the letter. Too often children want things at Christmas time. This was a chance for them to give.

EPWORTH PAGEANT

The Community Youth Choir participated in the Epworth Pageant in mid-December. They sang several songs as a choir and sang carols with everyone. Some of the children dressed up as shepherds, angels, and wise men, to dramatize the Christmas story. Stephanie Nichols sang a solo: "Away in a Manger." Afterwards everyone had desserts.

SINGING AT BETHANY TERRACE IN MORTON GROVE

Every year since 1990 the Epworth Youth Choir has been asked to sing for the "Little Christmas" of Bethany Terrace Nursing Home in Morton Grove. This year a caravan of 8 cars, including 21 children and 15 adults, went to Bethany Terrace. The trip is always one of the highlights of the year. The children enjoy putting on robes, singing the Christmas repertoire, shaking hands with the senior citizens afterwards, eating goodies, and receiving gift certificates to McDonalds that someone from the Terrace has given them for the past several years. We had been told that the woman who had given the gift cards before had died and that the children shouldn't expect anything this year, so they were surprised when they received them. Many of the residents of Bethany Terrace have Alzheimer's; when the children sang Christmas songs, the residents experienced it at a very deep level. It is a ministry for everyone.

SINGING AT THE ALDEN-LAKELAND

On a weekday after school, 12 children walked to the Alden-Lakeland to sing Christmas carols. It was very meaningful for the residents, who sang along on the carols, listened to the new songs, and clapped on the gospel song. One resident came who had not been out of bed for 1½ months; she loved the concert and looked ready to dance. Another resident lying in a moveable bed at the back was happy the whole time; she sang along, clapped, and was joyous.

Among the residents at Alden-Lakeland is Gigi Head. Her daughter LaMonica was visiting that day. LaMonica had been in the Youth Choir several years ago, and the concert brought back memories for her. After the concert the children were disappointed that they hadn't sung as well as they sometimes do. LaMonica said, "Just seeing your youthful, happy faces brings joy to these people. They don't get to see children very often, and you cheer them up just being who you are."

GENEROSITY OF MANY INDIVIDUALS

Members of four churches selected names of 260 children of the Tutoring Program and Goudy Elementary School for whom to get special presents. Glenview United Methodist Church sponsored 60 children in the program, "Whose Birthday Is It Anyway?" Kingswood UMC in Buffalo Grove, IL sponsored 80 children in "Gifts for All God's Children." Trinity Church of the North Shore sponsored eight families and included the adults. Grace United Methodist Church of Naperville, IL gave gifts to 100 children, 9 children of the Tutoring Program and three classes at Goudy School.

Trinity Church brought the gifts on a Sunday and met the families. Grace UMC brought gifts for the classes at Goudy to the school. Some families who live out of the neighborhood came to pick up their presents at Epworth Church. The rest of the gifts were delivered to the families' homes by Rick Senne and Beth Palmer the Friday before Christmas.

Rick Senne and Beth Palmer drove up and down the streets of Uptown/Edgewater delivering presents to children in 42 families so the presents could be part of the families' Christmas celebrations. Someone was home in most of the families, but sometimes it was hard to get hold of them. In one building it took repeated ringing of the doorbell before a child peeked out of an upstairs window and came down to let them in. In another building the apartments were subdivided: a door led into an entryway which led to two apartments. The man who answered the door didn't seem to know the family in the opposite apartment, but finally he pointed to the other door, which turned out to be the one. One family lived in the basement, which had to be accessed around a fence from the building next door. It was so dark that they had to slowly feel their way over a low wire fence and down uneven stairs. It was relief to have the basement door open and to see the children's faces smiling. Another family lived on the first floor of that building, but they lived at the back and so couldn't hear any knocking from the front. Rick suggested seeing if there was a back door, so they went back again, climbed over the wire fence, went down the uneven stairs in the dark and through the dark gangway. Then they saw a lighted window and knocked on a possible door. There the family was! Presents delivered!

GRATITUDE FOR THE PRESENTS

The children were especially eager about the presents. They kept asking if and when they were going to get a present. One family of children phoned several times to ask when the presents were coming.

The parents were very grateful to receive the presents. One grandmother said, "Oh, thank you. These must be worth a thousand dollars!" Another mother said, "*Santa* will be giving these to the children." One mother is planning to send a thank you card.

Another grandmother called the day after Christmas to thank us for the gifts. She said her daughter screamed when she saw a gift card for her 8-year old daughter. The grandmother said the girl had outgrown all her clothes and this was a blessing. She said the boys received very nice clothes, too. "These people gave the gifts out of the generosity of their hearts. This is a blessing coming from God and we really appreciate it."

Along with the gifts from the church each family received a gift certificate to Jewel for food. These were given by the Indian Hill Garden Club of Winnetka, which had a luncheon in early December and raised \$1100 for the gift cards. The gift cards were given directly to the mothers or grandmothers in the family, who really appreciated them.

STUFFED ANIMALS FROM IOWA

For 13 years Enid Young of Dysart, Iowa, has sent boxes of stuffed animals to the Tutoring Program. This year she sent 10 large boxes of toys, which children of the program wrapped to give to the preschool children at Goudy, the local elementary school. As the children were wrapped the animals, they ooh'ed and ah'ed at how cute the animals were. It made them happy to think of the children about to get them. Including stuffed animals which Lorraine Swanson (former high school group coordinator) donated, the Tutoring Program gave around 25 boxes of toys to Goudy, which Mr. Durkin, principal of Goudy, gave to the children the Thursday before vacation. He was grateful at being able to give a toy to all the children from preschool up to fourth grade. One preschool boy came out of school carrying a small gorilla with a loose-fitting sports outfit on. The boy waved the animal in the air, saying, "Fly! Fly!" He was happy.