



Good News from Inspired Youth 2007

Come, they told me, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum, Our new-born King to see, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum, Our finest gifts we bring, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum, To lay before the King When we come.

This fall 92 youth (K-HS) are working with 77 adult tutor/mentors in the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program at Bezazian Library and with 49 eighth grade peer tutors from suburban Wilmette at Margate Park. 35 youth are singing with the Inspired Youth Singers, rehearsing in three apartment homes and at Edgewater Presbyterian Church. Children, youth, and tutor/mentors all bring their finest gifts as they participate.

Baby Jesu, I am a poor boy, too, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum,

Jaime (4th gr.) could not read in 2nd grade. He could not speak or understand English. He continuously talked to other children in class at school. When bored, he stashed spit balls in his desk in neat piles.

In 3rd grade Jaime reluctantly started coming to the Tutoring Program with his friend Fredy. It was a struggle every session to get him to do his homework and read. But by the end of every session, he had done at least part of the work. One day he finished all his homework, and he was so happy he ran around the room telling everyone. Another day he finally completed a difficult math homework assignment. He was so happy he started dancing. His tutor, Susan Mattison, said that was her best day all year. Along the way, Jaime mastered our easiest pre-primer: *Tip I, II, and III*, which has 20 words. Then he read two more pre-primers, and then a regular 1st grade book. Jaime was reading!

Last June we took some of the students and their parents to the North Park Nature Center. The highlight of the trip: Jaime found a frog (actually, a toad). It was small, half an inch long. He put it in a plastic cup his mother had brought. All the kids came to look at Jaime's frog. He was so proud of the frog he carried it with him all day. It was like a friend. At the end of the field trip, we told Jaime that he had to let his frog go free, because the center was a Nature Preserve. He was sad, but finally agreed to let it go. Luckily, we got a picture of Jaime holding the cup with the frog and the other children pressing in to see it.

This fall Jaime is in 4th grade, and we can't believe what we see. He does his work without a struggle—starting at the beginning of every session.

I have no gift to bring That's fit to give our King, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum,

Last summer Summone (now 1st gr.) said, "Will you teach me to read? I asked my brother, and he didn't help me. I asked my uncle, and he didn't help me. I asked my other uncle, and he didn't help me. My father didn't have time. Granny didn't have time. Will you teach me to read?"

Summone was in the youth choir and the summer piano program. This fall she began to come to the tutoring program. She worked and worked to sound out words and memorize sight words. One day she concentrated for over an hour on sounding out, reviewing, and reading four sight words and four rhyming words from school. In December Summone checked out a book from the library. "I can read this book!" she exclaimed.

I played my drum for Him, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum,

"12/18/07 Happy early Christmas! Oops! Where are my manners?! Hellow! I'm Ckoryna from the tutoring program." Ckoryna ("Corina") (5th gr.) was one of 70 kind.-HS students from the Tutoring Program who wrote holiday letters to senior citizens at the Methodist Home.

Alex, a quiet 7th grader who has been in the Tutoring Program for 7 years, wrote, "Hi, my nickname in Spanish is Lalo Santo. I am pure Mexican and always will be."

Cortez (6th gr.) wrote, "My favorite subject in school is computer and Gym. In my tutoring program my favorite subject, or should I say my only subject, is reading. Still, I wish you the best

Holiday you have ever had."

The seniors appreciate the letters and pictures from the students. In November 2007 we received this letter from Carolynn Ediger: "Thank you for all your good work with the Inspired Youth Tutoring Program. My friend, Dora Alanen, at the Methodist Home, received a Christmas letter from Brayant [1st gr. last year] last Christmas. This note of appreciation is late, but Dora and I wanted you and Brayant to know how much it meant to Dora this past year. Again, thank you for remembering Dora. P.S. Dora is 91 yrs. old and blind."

I played my best for Him, pa-rum-pum-pum-pum,

"The children sounded like angels. It brought tears to my eyes," Tamara Clark, grandmother of Karah (2nd gr.), said of the Inspired Youth Singers. "Karah's baby brother was even clapping to the music and dancing. I'm so glad Karah is singing in the choir. I'm your biggest fan." The Inspired Youth Singers took four field trips in December to sing in four concerts: at the Christian Science Church, Bethany Terrace in Morton Grove, the Multi-Cultural Children's Choir Concert at Hemenway UMC in Evanston, and Grace Baptist Church (in Edgewater Presbyterian Church). Before each concert the group went out to eat at McDonald's or for pizza (they sing and behave better when they get to go out to eat). 22 youth sang in these concerts, wearing white shirts and dark pants, with the girls also wearing red-plaid silk vests. The choir, directed by Dorie Burrell and with logistics by Jackie Calabrese, sang with verve and confidence. People said, "The Inspired Youth were singing harmony!" "They were so professional." "The kids wanted to sing well, and the music just flowed."

Then He smiled at me, Me and my drum.

It snowed at the beginning of December, and all the kids had fun. On Saturday, walking back from Saturday Tutoring at Margate Park, Brenda (5th gr.) made a snow angel. On Tuesday on the way home from the library after tutoring, Desiree (7th gr.) saw the wind blowing a light snow sideways and squealed, "It's a blizzard!" Then she said, "Look at the trees. They're beautiful!" On Wednesday coming back from the library after tutoring Justin (2nd gr.) walked in the snow, not on the shoveled walk. "I like the way the snow sounds," he said. His sister Jayla (1st gr.) asked, "Will there be a blizzard when we get to that building (5225 N. Kenmore)? [The wind is always very strong in front of the hi-rise.] I can't wait." On Friday Yulisa (5th gr.) said, "Last night the snow was so beautiful. We made a big snowman. Then we made snow angels. Do you know what a snow angel is? My brother (age 3) made a small one. My uncle made a big one. And I made a big one. Afterwards we destroyed the snowman. We had fun." On Friday Efrain (4th gr.), the calmest, nicest boy in the program, came out of his building to walk to choir practice. He saw the snow and his eyes became bright and fierce! He was so happy! He picked up some snow and made a big snowball. He threatened, "If Jaime throws one at me, he's toast!" Then he scooped up more snow for a second snowball and limbered up by throwing a snowball against the wall—all happy. "If Jaime throws one at me, he's toast." When Jaime, Fredy, and Keily came from their building, they couldn't restrain themselves with Efrain so excited and perfect snowball snow all around. The kids love the snow.

Blessings,

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