

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

5715 N Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660, 773-561-4759

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GOOD START TO FALL TUTORING

All the sections of the weekday Tutoring Program of Inspired Youth at the Bezazian Branch of the Chicago Public Library are full. Many volunteers are helping many students at the library. The high school and 5th-8th grade sections are calm, and the 1st-4th grade sections are buzzing with excitement. It is a good experience for everyone.

Here are the people participating so far:

Mon., 13 HS, 2 elem., 15 tutors

Tues., 23 5th-8th graders, 21 tutors

Wed., 31 1st-4th graders, 32 tutors

Thurs., 28 1st-4th graders, 23 tutors

Total: 67 individual students, 91 tutor days.

85 PEOPLE ATTEND FAMILY NIGHT

It was a cold October day, with drizzle all day, and 85-90 people came to Family Night. The new tutors got a chance to see the families of the children and a bit of the neighborhood.

As the families came in, they looked at pictures from previous Family Nights on cards on the tables. Lili (age 2) looked at a picture and said, "Mommy, that's you and me and daddy!"

People loved the food in the potluck supper. The kids loved the pizza, and the adults loved the squash dish. Nathaniel's mother brought 27 cupcakes, and they were all eaten.

The program was a reading of *Alice in Wonderland* in English and Spanish. AnnMarie Kneebone, interim pastor of Grace Baptist Church, and tutor Laurie Bowers gave an animated reading in the two languages. People followed the story, and the Spanish parents particularly appreciated it. "*Muy bien!*" one parent said.

The Youth Choir sang three songs. Karah's mother said, "They sounded like a real choir, especially on 'Beauty and the Beast.'"

The final song, "We Are the World," was done as a solo by Cortez Y. It was beautiful. He had a clear, silver tone with true pitch and perfect diction. Kimberly's mother said that was the best part of the evening.

This was the first Family Night we used our new sound equipment: amplifier, speaker, two mics, and two mic stands. It all worked well. The equipment will be fun to use when the students recite poems in the spring.

As one parent commented about the Family Night, "Everyone had a good time!"

"THE HUNDRED DRESSES"

19 children (16 between the ages of 6 and 10), 5 parents, and 3 tutors went on the el to see the world premiere run of the musical "The Hundred Dresses," based on the 1944 novel by Eleanor Estes.

Tutor Lisa Witmer, who works in the box office of the Royal George Theater where the Chicago Children's Theater resides, got us a discount on the expensive tickets.

Before the play, musicians jammed with happy music, and the actors came into the audience (of many children) and high-fived them. It was a happy introduction.

The set was a bright red school house that revolved (showing the classroom on the other side), a double swing set, and the ground painted like a large piece of loose-leaf notebook paper! The costumes were all bright colors.

The theme of the play was bullying--two girls being mean to a new girl in class. The subject was sad, but there was comic relief. A comic actor kept coming out with different costumes -- a cowboy, an astronaut, Superman. One of our children said she liked another actor, "that kooky girl," the best. The play was all very "kid friendly."

Our children behaved perfectly during the play; they were "as good as gold." No one said a word. The fast paced dialogue, songs, dance steps, and new scenes caught the children's attention, and they were engrossed. The scary part was the very loud thunder during the rain storm.

After the play the actors signed autographs for all the kids. It was a wonderful experience.

USING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By Tutor, Susan Mattison,

Oct. 24, 2009

During tutoring we got into groups about conflict resolution. And then walking the kids home after tutoring, one boy was very upset because he had wanted to use a tutor's cell phone to call and make arrangements to get permission to go to someone else's house, or get them to come to his house, and he was told, "No, you cannot use the phone." And he was very angry and very mad. He was hitting walls, kicking things all the way home and basically having a tantrum, and he is a little too old to be behaving that way. I tried talking to him, just to tell him his feelings were OK. It is OK to be angry, but it is not OK to be striking out against objects and making so much noise. I also said that it's OK to have those feelings, but you don't want to get stuck in the angry feelings, because then you can't get past it. And he was pretty determined to stay angry.

Christopher and a number of other kids came up to him and were concerned about him and said, "What's the matter? Why don't you talk about it?" He didn't want to talk about it. And then Christopher started using all the wrong techniques. He was starting to make fun of him, saying it was dumb how he was acting, and trying to embarrass him or shame him. And I said to Christopher, "This is not helping. This is not a good idea," but Christopher was very persistent. Even if I was pushing him away from Justin, he kept coming back.

Finally he turned to Justin, and they dropped away, walking a few steps behind me, and Christopher was saying, "I understand how you feel. I know what that's like. I've been there. I've been through that." And Justin got very quiet and was listening, and Christopher was being very understanding, very empathetic. Then he was pointing out good things that maybe Justin didn't want to hear. "Look how lucky you are. You have tutoring you get to go to. Ms. Beth picked you up. You don't have to pay for this. You could go." And Justin stayed calm, and he let go of the anger. It was really amazing to see.

It was wonderful to see how Christopher kept trying. At first he was using the wrong approach. He was showing concern, but he was making Justin feel worse. But Christopher didn't give up. Even

when I tried to push him physically out of the way and said, "Leave Justin alone," Christopher kept trying. He showed Justin that "You're worth my efforts, and you're even worth my disobeying a teacher (me), and I can still try to help you." I thought that was great.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION

By Tutoring Director, Beth Palmer Oct. 28, 2009

Dear Kelly (a tutor),

I was going to tell you yesterday (without your 1st gr. student F. hearing) how important it is to provide an intervention for him, but I didn't have a chance. I was going to say that I was pretty sure that two of his uncles, ages 19 and 18, are part of a gang.

Then on the way home after tutoring, as we were turning east on Argyle from Broadway, a man came running toward us shouting, "Don't go that way. There's shooting that way." So our crowd of 8 children and 4 adults reversed direction, walked back to Broadway, and turned north. The kids were scared. They live east, between Argyle and Winona, so at Winona we turned east and made our plan. I would go a little ahead, slowly, trying to see what was happening, and everyone else would follow. We crossed Winona, and just then we saw one of F.'s uncles. A police car pulled up with lights on, and said, "A. ..." I couldn't follow what he said, but A. (F.'s uncle) got in the car. Some kids thought A. was part of the shooting. He may have been, but sometimes kids jump to conclusions. A. may have been told to get in the car because of information he had.

Our little group split up. I took some kids home to their place on Kenmore, and three tutors and a child went north on Winona. F. and his relatives (1st gr. M. and 4th gr. M.) stayed and talked to the people near the police car. One of our children said, "I feel ... sad ... for M. (4th gr.)." We all felt sad for M. and M. and F.

We at the Tutoring Program have to be an early intervention, so the children don't aggregate with their older relatives. Let's see what we can do.