

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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Volume 19, Number 5, www.inspireyouthchicago.org,

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JANUARY 2010

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1. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Jan. 27 was a big day for the Wed. afternoon tutoring session. Guests from the law firm Much Shelist and Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth came to visit and present Inspired Youth, Inc. with awards.

Morrie Much, one of the founders of Much Shelist, along with two others from the firm--attorney Carrie Risatti, the newest board member of Inspired Youth, and Stephanie Hall--presented Inspired Youth, Inc. with the Much Shelist Founders' Award for emerging tutoring programs. Much Shelist established the award in 2005 to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the firm.

Inspired Youth also received an award from Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth. Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth promotes and supports one-on-one tutor/mentor programs serving disadvantaged Chicago area youth. Lend-A-Hand awards approximately \$200,000 in grants a year to tutor/mentor programs, recruits volunteers from the legal profession to serve as mentors and board members for the organizations, and raises awareness about the power of one-on-one, long-term relationships to transform the lives of disadvantaged youth.

The awards were presented, followed by children, parents, and tutors coming to the microphone to tell how the tutoring program is important to them. Here is what people said:

2. Genita C. Robinson (Executive Director of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand): Hi, I'm Genita Robinson, Executive Director of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth, and I'm so excited to be here today. Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth supports tutor/mentor programs like Inspired Youth. We give out grants and we recruit volunteers. We really believe in two things. One, we think that volunteer tutors and mentors can really make a difference in the lives of children. And two, we believe that there's a place for lawyers in supporting programs such as Inspired Youth.

So I'm here today to introduce a man, Morrie Much, who has really been instrumental in a partnership that Lawyers Lend-A-Hand has with his firm, Much Shelist. When Much Shelist had their 35th anniversary, they announced that they wanted to give something back to the community, so they set aside a sum of money to give out a grant each year to a new or emerging tutor/mentor program. Much Shelist works with Lend-A-Hand to select the recipient of the grant each year. Much Shelist relies on Lend-A-Hand to recommend candidates for the annual grant. The Much Shelist/Lend-A-Hand relationship has blossomed over these last five years, not just in the money that they have provided, but in the relationship. As Ms. Beth mentioned, Carrie now sits on the Board of Inspired Youth, and Much Shelist has really become a model of what Lawyers Lend-A-Hand tries to do with its partner law firms. So, without further ado, it's my pleasure to introduce Morrie Much, one of the founders of Much Shelist.

3. Morrie Much (one of the founders of the law firm Much Shelist): First of all let me thank the parents who are here today and applaud them and support them because they are making a wonderful opportunity available to their children. They obviously love their children very much, and even the children whose parents are not here today -- I want all you kids to go back home and thank your parents because they love you a lot, especially immigrant children. I'm one of

them. My parents were immigrants. I know what it meant to have help from an older brother and sister. I didn't need outside tutors, but I think it's great that the volunteers give unselfishly. Secondly, I thank the volunteers for exactly that. What a great job you're doing here.

I remember coming here five years ago when we first started this program. We went to several places. A few partners and I were taken around by Genita's predecessor at the Chicago Bar Association. We saw about four different places. They were all different. They were all wonderful. They all had volunteers who worked with the children. But I came here, and it was a revelation. It was totally different. One of the other groups wanted money because they wanted to build their own school. I thought that was wonderful and very ambitious, but not exactly the community thing that I had anticipated. Then I came to Inspired Youth and fell in love. The job that you have done in organizing this and working with the volunteers and community has been remarkable. With no organization and very little dollars -- our contribution is meaningful to Beth and the group but it's not huge -- and yet they're able to get in about 140 different volunteers to work with about 100 different children, to generate about 4,000 tutor-lesson hours per year. That doesn't even include the choir time and the piano lessons, 503 piano lessons in the course of the year. So before we hand a check to Beth -- and she's going to want to thank us -- I want to thank you, Beth, and the parents and the children and the volunteers. You don't know how much you have meant to us. So, thank you very much.

Well, I guess it's my honor to do this. Beth, this is the check that we have for you this year. *(He holds up a giant check. Children ooh and aah, laugh and clap.)* The bank won't accept it exactly this way. This is to help you all be able to read it a little better than you might otherwise do.

4. Beth Palmer: Thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Morrie Much of Much Shelist and Genita Robinson of Lawyers Lend-A-Hand to Youth. Thank you so much. This will allow us to continue to have our tutoring program for another year, and you can see how much they appreciate it. And maybe in the first few minutes before we started this presentation you could tell the good relation between the tutors and the children, and this is only one part of our program. We also have our Monday night section of high school and 5th-8th graders. We have the Thursday section, when these kids and different tutors come, and Saturday, our peer tutoring program with Wilmette Jr. High School eighth graders, and then our piano program and our choir. And so we really appreciate this. I just want to show you one more thing about our program. I want a couple of the children, parents, and tutors to come up and tell a little bit, two sentences, about this.

5. Students

Lamarr (4th gr.): My name is Lamarr Sheppard and what I like about the tutoring program is that my grade in math changed from a D to an A. Ms. Beth helped me with a lot in school and I enjoy the tutoring program. Thank you.

Ladaja (4th gr.): My name is Ladaja Seals, and I want to thank all the tutors that tutored me, because I would never have known how to do math, because Ms. Danielle and Ms. Ellen taught me how to do math, and I want to thank them for that. Thank you.

Chris (3rd gr.): What I like about the tutoring program is that my tutor, she helps me a lot with the times tables, and if my tutor wasn't here, I wouldn't know times tables very well. My name is Christopher Smith.

Mario (4th gr.): My name is Mario Delacruz. I like the tutoring program because it helps me with my English.

Nathaniel (1st gr.): My name is Nathaniel. The tutoring program helps me with my stuff.

6. Laura Estrada (grandmother of Ariana): Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Laura Estrada. I am the grandmother of one of the children here. I just wanted to say that I haven't known Ms. Beth for very long, maybe about a year. She is an awesome lady. She is just all about our kids, and that's our future, the kids. And math is so popular today. My granddaughter also went from a D to an A in math, and I have to thank this program. You're doing an awesome job. Keep it up.

7. Rosa Castaneda (mother of Yulisa, Marleny, and Kevin): Hola. Mi nombre es Rosa. (She is very happy ... they have helped all her children... since they have been participating in this program. ... Gracias. (Thank you.)

8. Shirley Edgleston (mother of Shana, Sam, and Nathaniel): Hi. I've been knowing Ms. Beth for many years, and she helped me with three of my kids. My second oldest daughter--she's in college because of Ms. Beth, and my son was in the newspaper because of Inspired [Youth] Tutoring. This is a very wonderful program for kids, and my son—he has a wonderful chance now because he's focusing because he comes to Monday night high school tutoring, and they are helping him so much. He had wrote a letter, but I had left it at the house, but he wanted me to tell Ms. Beth that my whole family are so grateful for this program and for her being in our life for so many years. When we weren't able to afford gifts, she came through when I didn't have anything, and she put a smile on my

kids' faces when we weren't able to buy anything, and I am so grateful for Ms. Beth, and all she did for us over all the many years. And I thank everybody for supporting the group because it is really nice and it's wonderful to have somebody to care about other people. And I thank everyone.

9. Gabby DeRubira (tutor): I'm Gabby DeRubira, and this is my second year tutoring. Even in the name, Inspired Youth, you can tell it's a great opportunity to motivate the kids. In working one-on-one I've really enjoyed being able to offer them guidance for the academics. I just wanted to thank you, Beth, for always having things so organized. She provides folders so even if the students are done with their homework, we can give them extra practice for the important skills of reading and math and writing. It's been really great to work with the kids. Thank you, Beth.

10. Susan Mattison (tutor): Hi. My name is Susan Mattison. I've been involved with this tutoring program and with Beth Palmer for 9 years. This has been a wonderful opportunity for me. I am a certified teacher, and I appreciate being able to use my skills-- but not have to work full time-- and work with my community. These are the kids of the neighborhood. I live in their community, so I see them all, and even more learning goes on when I walk with the kids from the school over here. We have learning going on during that time, too, so thank you.

11. Stanley Rutledge (tutor): My name is Stanley Rutledge, and I just celebrated my one year anniversary with Inspired Youth, which started last year on election night when the President said some things that made me think I needed to get up off my tuchis and do something. I live here in the Uptown neighborhood, and sometimes (as many of us know) living in the city can get you down. Coming to the tutoring program and spending time with the kids and spending time with Ms. Beth always takes my attitude from a D to an A (*people chuckle*), so I'm glad to be a part of this.

12. Eva Schwinge (Girl Scout Leader): I cannot tell you how delighted I am to see you and see your check to support this program (*people laugh*). Well -- (*Comment: "Especially the check!"*) you know, you have to have support.

I've been around Ms. Beth for 24 years. I probably take the longevity award. I came here when my daughter was 11 years old to do Saturday tutoring, and that was back in the days when we did whole language, and I came with the Girl Scouts.

You've heard the testimony to the improvement in scores. But we also need to

consider that this is a wonderful opportunity to bond together. Here, in a community group, all ages, all types can be together. And I'm going to tell you that in the 24 years I've known Ms. Beth, I've never known her to kick a kid out, no matter how needy and how difficult. In fact sometimes it would get on some of our nerves that she didn't. But she always managed. She was always prepared. She always cared. And we have something special here, because it's suited to the individual child. I'm a retired public school teacher, and we have after school programs, but it's in groups. Here it is for that child, which is a wonderful experience. So thank you so much. I'm glad to meet all of you because I've seen your checks through the years (*people laugh*) and thank you.

13. After the Speeches

Following the speeches, students eagerly passed around healthy, non-messy refreshments--cheese, crackers, and small cold cuts from a party tray, carrot sticks, tangerine sections, and apple juice. They also passed around copies of *Sunshine* magazine of the 1st-4th graders' writings.

Everyone knew it was an important day because of the parents and outside guests, the microphone, and the photographer from the Chicago Bar Association who took pictures with a flash. People also noticed the videographer from the CBA, whose camera was on a tripod. The videographer is going to make a video of the event which will publicize how lawyers and tutor/mentor programs can relate. The video aims to get more lawyers involved, to raise needed funds, and to show the good work which results.

The "Press" was also present. Lorraine Swanson, a former tutor and now editor of the on-line publication, LakeEffectNews.com, sat in the front and took notes. When Mark Kaplan, the Branch Manager of Bezazian Branch Library, met Lorraine Swanson after the presentations, he was very excited. He followed her reporting when she wrote for News Star, and now he reads her stories in Lake Effect News every week.

It was an exciting day.

14. OTHER NEWS FROM INSPIRED YOUTH

Summone (3rd gr.) has hardly missed a day of tutoring in 3 years, but reading and writing don't come easy for her. Just before first grade she begged, "Will you teach me to read?" In first grade with the help of tutors, she worked and worked and finally learned to read. Math has always been difficult for her. She works and works, and it is still hard.

Summone loves singing in the Youth Choir. When Beth Palmer introduced the

song, “Blessed Be Your Name,” one of the children asked what was meant by “on the road marked with suffering.” Ms. Palmer said, “It’s like when there are difficult times, when someone dies, when someone loses their job, when someone gets robbed.” Summone said, “There was this boy and girl, and the girl was crossing a lake [river] hanging onto a rope and the rope broke.” Ms. Palmer said, “Bridge to Terabithia.” Summone said, “Yes, that’s it.” Other children said, “I saw that show.”

The schools teach children how to relate literature to their own experiences, to other literature, and to events in their lives. Summone’s reflection showed she was doing that.

15. FIRST GRADERS LEARN TO READ

Wed., Jan. 13. From September through December we worked to get Jose (1st gr.) to try to read our first pre-primer “Tip.” He didn’t try. We dragged him through “Tip I, II, and III,” but he didn’t try. The second week in Jan. we put “Bears I” in his tutoring folder for him to read. (We divide “Bears” into three parts, I, II, and III, for easier focus.) Jose finished his homework, and then *he* took out “Bears I” and read it. Then he took out “Bears II” and read it, stumbling over the words “get” and “it.” Then he took out “Bears III” and read it! What a marathon! The tutor was exhausted, but Jose could have read more. What the children can do is beyond what we can imagine.

Wed., Jan. 13. During Fall semester Fernando (1st gr.) alternated between being playful and totally shutting down. In rare moments he showed promise and learned to read. The second week of January he read the last half of “You and Me” (pre-primer 3) all by himself. He finished the whole book.

Thurs., Jan. 14. Valerie (1st gr.) read the basal reader *Hang On To Your Hats* all by herself. When she finished all the stories in the 222-page book the second week in January, she was exhausted and proud.

16. SATURDAY TUTORING

Fri., Jan. 8. Myre (4th gr.) was going to Karah’s birthday party on Saturday, so she couldn’t go to the Saturday tutoring session. For the birthday party they were going to go roller skating. On the day before the party, Karah mentioned that Myre wouldn’t be going to the party because neither her mother nor her grandmother had the \$16 necessary for the party, since they had to pay bills. Beth Palmer called Myre on Fri. evening and asked her if she would like to go to Saturday tutoring and said that she would pick her up at 9 am. Myre said, “Yes, I can go.” Then she yelled, “Yea!”

Sat., Jan. 9. News reports said, “It’s cold today. Don’t go out unless it’s absolutely necessary.” In that weather, 40 Chicago children and 40 8th graders from Wilmette Jr. High came to the program. Some came by car, several came by bus, and many walked up to a mile. They felt it was absolutely necessary.

Sat., Jan. 9. Rosalinda’s (1st gr.) older brother Gustavo came to Sat. tutoring for several years. Rosalinda was in another program on Saturdays so she wasn’t coming to Saturday tutoring. On that cold Sat. in January, Rosa and her mother showed up to Sat. tutoring. Rosa had to do a book report on “Yurtle the Turtle.” She couldn’t read and could hardly speak English, so a tutor read the book to her and helped her do the book report.

17. FROM A TUTOR, Quincy Tod Edwards

Dear Beth, Over Christmas break I was able to find gainful employment. While this is good news for me personally, the news is also bitter sweet because now I have to devote my time during the day toward my new career and not tutoring and mentoring young children. I want to thank you for allowing me the privilege to guide and justly mold children in their daily lives. The work being done by programs like Inspired Youth continue to thwart any negative effects these children face beyond the walls of the library and I hope and encourage you to persevere in this fight and be the catalyst for positive growth in their lives. In the event that my schedule opens up, I will gladly offer my assistance. My sincerest gratitude, Quincy Tod Edwards, Political Science, University of Michigan

18. DONATIONS WELCOME

Inspired Youth does a lot with minimal funds because of the many people who volunteer. Your contributions are important for enriching the lives of children and families in Uptown 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 checks may be sent to *Inspired Youth, 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.*