

TUTORING NEWS: INSPIRED YOUTH

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INSPIRED YOUTH SUMMER PIANO PROGRAM

The Lessons

Four to eight students (aged 5-15) sit at keyboards in an upstairs room at Edgewater Presbyterian Church. Volunteer piano tutors sit by them. The students come for an hour two times a week, to practice the songs they were introduced to at the previous lesson and to begin one or two new songs. The keyboards are turned down to “3,” so that students can hear their own music, but they are aware of other students’ music if they listen hard. Working individually, in proximity to other students, is exciting, fun, and motivating for the children and the volunteer piano tutors.

We had fantastic attendance this summer. Out of 45 children coming twice a week for hour lessons in the afternoons and early evenings, hardly anyone ever missed, even on very hot days—and they came on time. One volunteer tutor remarked, “On this hot day, as a kid, I would have been at the beach, but here they are at the piano lessons!” Overall, the 45 students received a total of 515 lesson hours on keyboards from 19 volunteers in the 6 ½ week Summer Piano Program.

Here are a few comments which show how much the program was appreciated: Alex R. (1st gr.) shouted proudly to his sister Ashley R. (3rd gr.) playing another keyboard: “Look, I’m on this song!” Another student said, “Look, I finished the orange book! What song are you on?” Valerie S. (3rd gr.) said determinedly, “I want to finish the orange book and start the blue book. I can do that this week!”

The father of Chima N. and Chijioke N. was all smiles, laughing with gratitude. He was overjoyed that his sons were in the piano program and practicing on their new keyboard at home and enjoying it so much. The mother of David F. (kind.) said, “Thank you! We are so grateful.” The father of MaryAnn (7th gr.) and LilyAnn (8th gr.) was all smiles as he exclaimed, “They really progressed this summer!”

A piano tutor mused: “I’ll miss those three brothers. I really enjoy working with them. I tried to get them to say something bad about one of their brothers and they wouldn’t.”

The Recital

Picture a humid, 93-degree day in Chicago. Picture 97 people in a room without air-conditioning, listening to beginning students playing pieces on a keyboard (amplified). (Out of 40 students scheduled to come, only one was absent.) Picture an absolutely wonderful occasion.

Every song in the recital was good this year. Six students played songs in which the audience sang along. The songs were “children’s songs” and you’d think it would be easy, but it takes a mature person to accompany singing. The performers can’t stop if they miss a note, because the singers will just go on. In the recital, all six students played perfectly, and the audience sang beautifully.

Two students wanted to sing as they played—Valeria S. (3rd gr.) and Stephanie L. (4th gr.). They sang at their lessons and said they wanted to sing as they played their pieces at the recital. This was the first year for that. The youngest child to participate was Freya J. (P3). She led the audience in singing as her sister Fatima E. (3rd gr.) played “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” It was fun.

The Family Duets were a highlight of the recital. It takes a lot of maturity and practice for beginning students to play duets with each other. They have to know their parts perfectly, and then listen and fit in with the other person. Six sets of siblings and one set of cousins played duets beautifully, in the 2011 recital. This took a lot of work! The students practiced and practiced at the lessons, and they practiced at home. We used some rounds and also adapted some duet accompaniments from the lesson books. We’re adding to our collection of duets and hope to have even more family duets next summer. It’s beautiful to see two brothers, two sisters, brother and sister, or two cousins playing a duet at one keyboard.

The last few pieces at the end of the recital were special selections.. Some students played songs from the end of Book C and the beginning of Book D. Other students played “Lean on Me,” “The Entertainer,” and “Requiem for a Dream.” It was a wonderful recital. (The huge rainstorm, predicted for the afternoon and early evening, waited until half an hour after everyone was home before it deluged Chicago.)

Global Perspective

Students’ families this summer were from Mexico, Bolivia, the Philippines, Korea, Nigeria, and Nepal. One returning student went on vacation to Nepal after two weeks of the piano program. (While there she took lessons on Nepalese musical instruments.)

One volunteer tutor, Doris Huang, spends summers in Chicago and the school year in Taiwan, where she is a full-time piano teacher. From where she lives in Chicago, she had to take a bus and 2 trains to get to Edgewater to help with Inspired Youth’s summer piano program. That’s dedication.

Volunteer Piano Tutors

We appreciate all the volunteer piano tutors who worked so well and creatively with the children this summer: : Susan Arjmand, Jim Conlon, Raechel Conyers, Diane Danek, Tasha DeLeon, Steve Duncan, Terri Edelson, Lily Eligator, Linda Finson, Anne Gallery, Bob Guillen, Doris Huang, Katie Moncton, Jacqueline Montalvo, Beth Palmer, Stanley Rutledge, Jennifer Sherrill, Jasmine Tripp, and Natividad (Didi) Yabes. Thank you so much.

Facebook Pictures of the students and tutors at the lessons and at the recital are on Facebook.. Type Inspired Youth in the Search box.

TUTORING GRADS

Shonesha J. (11th gr.) is taking 3 honors courses at her school, Northtown Academy H.S.

Edgar S. was in the Tutoring Program from 1998 to 2003, when he was in 5th through 9th grades. He was also in the Summer Piano Program for a couple of years. He is very grateful for the experience. He said, “You don’t know how important the Tutoring Program was for me all those years. It kept me off the streets. Kids have to have something to do, or they’ll get in trouble in the streets.”

Reyna, a mother of four students in the program, said, “All my four kids were in the Tutoring Program. It was so good for them.”

DIFFICULT TIMES

One of our students (age 11) was in a fight in a small park near his home. Another boy hit him in the head, and his head hurt for 3 days.

Another student (aged 8) fell down the steps at school. She lost her balance and fell during summer school. She had to miss piano lessons one day, but then she got better.

A student (aged 12) was recommended for counseling by a teacher at school because the student didn’t interact with other students. They began individual and family counseling at C4.

TRIP TO LAKE BARRINGTON, IL

“Tranquility ... Goodbye beautiful place. Hope to see you again next time☺ One hour and 30 minutes drive from the city. The girls are totally knocked out but it was all worth it. Thank you IY for this privilege. It was a great experience for the kids.” So wrote Fatima’s mom on her Facebook page as the group left Lake Barrington.

LilyAnn and MaryAnn’s mother wrote on Facebook: “We are having so much fun today.

Rainey Koga., the Spiritual Retreat Coordinator, wrote about the day on Facebook: “The retreat with the IY choir went well! Thanks to Jeff, Josh, Bobbie, Christine, Michelle, Terri, Sherri, and Cathy. We were blessed with great weather and ‘connections’ were made by all!” Rainey invited the choir to sing at Good Shepherd Hospital; she also planned and facilitated a spiritual retreat for the children. The people she is thanking are the youth and adults who led small groups and activities.

Singing at Good Shepherd Hospital

To go on this huge field trip, Inspired Youth rented a school bus which took the 20 singers, 12 family members, and 3 choir directors to Barrington, IL, to sing at Good Shepherd Hospital. At the hospital, Chaplain Suzanne Martinez gave the children a spiritual and motivating greeting, and then the choir sang a 55-minute concert of secular and religious songs. This was the third hour-long concert which the choir had sung during the year. The children said, “The concert seemed short this time.” They sang in the chapel with only family members in the audience, but the concert was televised and

broadcast throughout the whole hospital on closed-circuit TV. The choir was fantastic.

After the concert, Inspired Youth took the school bus to Lake Barrington, where we were guests of former tutor Cathy Davis Pezdirtz. The beautiful lake, beautiful beach, and beautiful grass were wonderful for the families. For lunch, Eva Schwinge brought sandwich makings, and people ate at picnic tables on the beach. (Some children wanted to go swimming as soon as they saw the inviting lake.)

Spiritual Retreat at the Lake

After lunch, Rainey Koga led the children in a Spiritual Retreat. Inspired Youth requested this to take advantage of Rainey's skills in this area. As an opener, she brought a large beach ball with 60 questions written on it. Everyone stood in a large circle on the beach. The first person tossed the beach ball to someone, and that person had to answer the question that their left hand touched. Then they tossed the ball to someone else. Everyone got a chance to answer a question.

Then everyone moved to sit on a small hill. Rainey read a Bible verse and everyone acted out the parts of it, as a pantomime/dance.

After that the people broke into 5 small groups, with high school students and adult leading the groups. The theme was "Fruits of the Spirit." Each group had a large bag of balloons with different fruits of the Spirit written on them—Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If someone in the small group had the quality which was written on the balloon, someone taped the balloon on them. The students had fun experiencing fruits of the Spirit.

Swimming in Lake Barrington

This was the favorite part of the day. The youth were in the lake for almost two hours. They swam and played with each other and swam and played. Buoys marked the area where they could swim, and they stayed within them. The teen and adult group leaders had been instructed by Rainey to watch the children in their group while they were in the water. Josh and Bobbie, teen leaders, walked into the water until it was up to their necks and declared, "No one is to come beyond here." They stayed with the kids the whole time, watching to see that everyone was OK. They were excellent.

The three-, four-, and five-year olds played on the edge of the lake. Their leader stayed with them. Christine, a teen leader, noticed that clay made up part of the beach, and she began to make small figurines of clay for the kids. The children wanted to take them home, but they left them in a row high on the beach.

Crafts For the children who weren't swimming in the lake, there were crafts projects exemplifying Bible stories. (The funds for this were donated.) The children who did the crafts projects were proud of their work, and the rest of the children received the projects to do at home.

Snack, Gifts, Sharing Circle

The kids wanted to keep swimming, but they got out and had a snack which Eva Schwinge provided. While they ate the snack, their bathing suits dried. During the snack Rainey and the other people helping gave each student a bright red nylon back pack from the hospital. In the back pack were note books, pencils, pens, a Fruit-of-the-Spirit book mark, and a mini pouch from Good Shepherd Hospital filled with items for first aid. All these items were donated by people at the hospital.

After people cleaned up the grounds, everyone moved to the parking lot where the bus was parked. Everyone—students, facilitators, moms, toddlers--formed a large circle. Rainey said a prayer of Thanksgiving, and then asked people, one by one, to say what they enjoyed most about the day. People enjoyed swimming, being with friends, the crafts projects, and the spiritual retreat.

Many Leaders Helped

During the day, many people contributed to making this good experience possible for the children. Rev. Suzanne Martinez, the chaplain at Good Shepherd Hospital invited the Inspired Youth Singers to perform. Dorie Burrell directed the choir and Beth Palmer accompanied the singers on the piano. Cathy Davis Pezdirtz, a former volunteer with the Tutoring Program, hosted the group at Lake Barrington. Rainey Koga was the Spiritual Retreat Coordinator. The small group youth leaders were Christine Reis, Bobbie Reis, Jeff Haugen, Josh Brent, and Michelle Reis. Responsible for the crafts table was Sherri Kroeger. Terri Brent offered extra helping hands. Eva Schwinge brought food for the lunch and snack. Thank you to all these people who

worked together to make the day one of the highlights of the summer.

Perfect Weather

The day before the trip we heard that the next day there would be thunderstorms at noon and in the afternoon. On the day of the trip there were tornados in Wisconsin and flash floods in Pittsburgh. A few hours after the bus brought the children back to Chicago, a big sink hole opened up on Foster Ave. (the street we came on), and two cars fell in. The day after the trip there was a huge rainstorm in Chicago with lightning and thunder. But in Barrington, the day of the trip was like crystal--clear, sunny, and warm. The lake was all jewels in the sunshine.

This is what Scarty Javier wrote on her Facebook page as the group left Lake Barrington: "Tranquility ... Goodbye beautiful place. Hope to see you again next time☺ One hour and 30 minutes drive from the city. The girls are totally knocked out but it was all worth it. Thank you IY for this privilege. It was a great experience for the kids."

LINCOLN PARK ZOO

Eight students and two adults were fascinated by all the animals they saw at the beautiful Lincoln Park Zoo. Students saw many kinds of primates. They touched a turtle and talk to a guide about it. They had fun climbing in a jungle exhibit (for little children). They petted a chicken. They were engrossed for a long time as they watched cows being milked in the farmyard. Students had a wonderful time at the zoo, and especially Deyse (7th gr.) couldn't wait to go again.

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

"Look!" "Look at this!" "Come here, look!" Every little thing amazed the children when Inspired Youth took two groups of students to the Field Museum of Natural History on two free days. The children spent two hours looking at the Evolving Planet exhibit, formerly called "Life over Time." They saw the mummies of Ancient Egypt. They saw species after species of animals on exhibit in the Nature Walk. One group saw a 3D movie of the dinosaur Sue.

Since the groups were small (5 students, 3 adults and 6 students, 2 adults on the two days), students were really able to look at and be curious about what they saw. A boy age 11 with very low

reading skills but who loves animals was actually reading the plaques by the end of the visit. He stumbled through multi-syllable words, but he wanted to know about the animals and was reading the descriptions.

Scart, one of the parents, saw a model of Lucy, a 3.5 million-year old hominid, and put Lucy's photo on Facebook with the caption, "I am Lucy. You started from me." She wrote of our trip to the FMNH as "a journey through four billion years of life on earth!"

The exhibits gave students a sense of the long time span of four billion years and a sense of being at one with the animals. People were amazed at all the different kinds of animals, some they'd heard of, and others they'd never heard of. There was a reverence for life as students saw displays of strange marine creatures which became extinct and then other species became prominent, and then they became extinct. People marveled at the vastness of creation. Twelve-year old David wrote, "The thing I like is the Evolving Earth, the centuries about the dinosaurs and how we became people." Nine-year old Junior wrote, "I was interested in the sea [an animated panorama] because it looked like I was in there with the fishes."

DONATIONS TO INSPIRED YOUTH, INC.

Inspired Youth does a lot with minimal funds to enrich the lives of children and families in Uptown/Edgewater in Chicago, because of the many people who volunteer.

Inspired Youth has a wide range of donors. In the past year gifts have come from a foundation, law firm, service organization, church women's group, and around 40 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 \$7,000. Inspired Youth appreciates all these donations.

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 mailed to "Inspired Youth," 5715 N. Ridge, Chicago, IL 60660.

prospective student (age 6) has already had difficult times. When he was 5 yrs. old he set his younger brother's back on fire. He has also done sexual acts with that younger brother.