

2009 Eastside Children's Summer Program (ECSP)

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Photo by Lynn Pham

Daily attendance was at least 55 children and teens at the 2009 ECSP, nearly doubling from 2008—solidifying the significant need for a well-structured children's summer program in this section of the Payne Phalen neighborhood.

Another Successful Summer Program!

Whew! A whirlwind of children, teens, volunteers and parents just blew through the neighborhood (did you feel it?), as Arlington Hills Presbyterian Church (AHP) graciously again opened its doors to St. Paul's Eastside children and teens for summer fun and learning during the 2009 Eastside Children's Summer Program (ECSP).

First and foremost, the ECSP staff takes this opportunity to formally thank the church for "hosting" the 2009 program (AHP founded ECSP in 2007), and for its warm welcome and hospitality. It's hard to believe that we have now completed our third year of the program!

If you happened to stop by the church on Monday through Thursday, July 15-August 20, you would have seen (and perhaps felt) the energy of at least 55 children and teens (up from an average daily attendance of 28 in 2008) who arrived at the church doors at noon every day, ready for a lunch snack, then off to classrooms for science, art, outdoor activities, healthy lifestyles, and help with reading.

2009 attendance went well beyond our

expectations—for the first time necessitating "a waiting list,"—and solidifying the significant need for a well-structured children's summer program in this section of the Payne Phalen neighborhood.

At the program's "Open House" on Aug. 17—and during AHP worship services—numerous parents lifted up their gratefulness for this "program that keeps our children from forgetting the things over the summer months that they learn during the school year."

The nearly-double attendance over 2008 also clearly identifies Arlington Hills Presbyterian Church as a key component for the program's continued success.

The greatest areas of growth were: the number of AHP children and teens participating in the program (an increase of 14 AHP children and youth—sometimes as many as 17).

ECSP is a "free" program to children and teens through a sponsorship from the McKnight Foundation, the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, and anonymous donors. The McKnight Foundation also provided \$5,000 towards the AHP kitchen remodel in 2008.

(continued on next page)

ECSP (cont.)

Two Youth Job Corps (YJC) interns participated in the program: Annie Gonzalez (first year with ECSP), who will be attending Union Theological Seminary, and Mainong Yang (second year with ECSP) as an administrative intern, who will soon continue her education at the University of Minnesota. Both helped with our YJC and teen program.

"Over the Ocean and Through the Woods"

The environmental theme this year centered around the oceans and Mississippi River. Art projects of clay tiles and fish paintings decorated the classrooms. Ron Kierdyski, who has been a part of the ECSP for two years, wrote several songs about the Mississippi River using his Braille typewriter. The children were fascinated as they watched his fingers move across the page and heard him sing the words rhythmically to Tim's accompaniment.

"Wisdom circles" were once again a mainstay of our group gatherings, affirming social skills, building self-esteem, critical thinking skills and teamwork.

"Teen Warriors" experienced their own learning program, plus assisted the staff in the classroom, playtime and outdoor activities. They also participated in "service learning" as reading buddies for the children every day from 3:00-3:30 p.m.



Photo by Lynn Pham
Mike Scantlin—and others from AHP—came regularly to serve as a "reading buddy" to the children.

Plus, another group came to potentially create a similar program in Monticello.

One of our key collaborative partners in 2009 was the Duluth Case Recreation Center, 1020 Duluth St. in St. Paul. Every Thursday, children, ages 6-12 years, went to the center for healthy exercise, plus from 1:00-3:00 p.m. they had access to local artists from the East Side



(L-R) Tim Fletcher, with guitar, and Ron Kierdyski teach new songs about the Mississippi River—the words were written by Ron using his Braille typewriter. The children were fascinated as they watched his fingers move across the page and heard him sing the words rhythmically to Tim's accompaniment.

Artmobile. Art projects were abundant on Thursdays!

Always a stabilizing factor of the ECSP is getting great staff to return to the program. We were fortunate to again get these Minnesota licensed teachers: Lynn Pham, Program Director, and Abby Einberger, 3rd-5th grades. Also returning from 2008 were Mainong Yang, administrative assistant and Nancy Fox, cook.

New to the program, were Kelly Thyne, K-2nd grade teacher, and Wanda McKenzie, teaching substitute, both also licensed in Minnesota. Charlie Taban helped this year with daily maintenance.

Minnesota visiting artists included Tim Fletcher from First Presbyterian Church of White Bear Lake where he has been active in youth ministry as well as within the presbytery—his love for art and the medium of clay is a new "ministry" for him; Mary Esch, a Twin Cities-based painter whose narrative images portray figures, often seemingly drawn from stories and fables—and a two-time winner of the Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship); and Ron Kierdyski, who is blind, is music director (plays violin) at Hazel Park United Church of Christ, which is part of the Eastside Ministerial Association. Ron is also studying to become an old catholic priest (to be ordained June 27, 2010).

The ECSP this year wouldn't have been successful without the wonderful volunteers from AHP: Deanna Dick, Pat Gehrke, Marlyce Johnson, Don and Jeanne Karwoski, Donna Hampton-Maki, Paul Oppelt, Betty Brandt Passick (AHP communications), Dave Peterson, and Mike Scantlin. A special thanks to Marge Silber, office manager, for letting us invade her space everyday, and Rick Wollenberg, custodian, who made certain our learning space was ready for us again every Monday.