

IWA and Swift School: Building a Strong Relationship



Kris Lewis helps a Swift student choose just the right book.

For more than ten years, IWA has been presenting Culture in a Suitcase programs in Chicago schools, promoting cross-cultural awareness in the classroom. Our members have been sharing their cultures with George B. Swift Specialty school students since 2006, so it was serendipitous that in 2009, our partner, Reading is Fundamental (RIF),

recommended Swift School as the location of our book distribution program. Swift, as a port-of-entry school for low income, immigrant, and refugee students who come to Chicago from around the world, matches IWA's culturally diverse membership, resulting in a satisfying and mutually beneficial relationship.

Shortly after the initiation of the RIF partnership in 2009, IWA members began volunteering at Swift School by tutoring students in need of extra help with reading, reading comprehension and math. The teachers greatly appreciated this extra support and the Principal asserted that IWA's presence was making a real impact. Although tutoring was initially confined to the primary grades, members now work with students Kindergarten through Grade 8. In addition, members volunteer as guest readers in the classroom, providing enrichment and enjoyment to the students.

Following the success of these programs, the school principal has asked that our members support a new volunteer mentoring program for 7th and 8th grade students, starting in the fall of 2013. In cooperation with the school counselor, mentors will assist these students in making the important transition to high school.

As a result of our successful 2012 fundraising efforts, IWA has established a program of philanthropy that builds upon these community service programs. The strong support for our philanthropy initiative was evident in the record success of our 2012 Gala, which enabled us to make a generous allocation to this fund.

In addition to IWA's Insider Chicago program donations that support the RIF free book distribution,

the Board, with the endorsement of the Group Chairs, has approved the funding of an essay contest and educational enhancement programs at Swift School. As part of the school curriculum, the essay contest, "Global Understanding: What International Experience or Cultural diversity Means to Me," will run in the spring, and serve as a compliment to our tutoring program.

IWA also supports a special program of test

Each tutor expressed the satisfaction of working with the children and each returned to continue their work, for they learned that once the heart is touched by the grateful appreciation of a child, there is an intangible pride and sense of accomplishment that brings immeasurable reward.

—Barbara, IWA Tutor Volunteer

preparation classes for all seventh grade students as well as an "Ideal Student Workshop" program for eighth graders, designed to help with high school readiness.

The Gala Committee is again asking for member support so that we can continue to grow these exciting programs at Swift. It is the long-term goal of IWA to leverage our experience at the Swift School to serve as a model as we expand to other targeted schools in the



Chicago Public Schools system. With your continued support, we can make a real difference in the lives of Chicago's children.