



The fall sessions of the Top 20 II Saturday Program has officially come to a close (December 6) and will resume on Saturday, March 7, 2015.

We ended on a high note as our girls were able to perform in front of their parents, friends and peers. Continuing to work with these same girls throughout their senior year in high school should result in our desired goal of getting them to a level of performance comparable to Top 20 of times past. A major difference is that we were able to start the school year with a younger group of girls, some as young as 6th grade since we included the middle schools due to our collaboration with Communities in Schools.

On a table set festively for the Christmas holiday season, we had plenty of food and beverages for everyone who attended (a total of 13 girls and those they invited). Since it was the last day of the fall sessions/Christmas celebration, we fluctuated a bit on our regular menu and served donuts, coffee, pizza and fruit punch. We continued, however, our nutritional regiment of having a variety of fresh fruit and plenty of bottled water available for the girls. Some of the parents dropped their daughters off and came back at noon to see them perform. Those who stayed the entire time were able to see somewhat of how the Saturday program usually functions. What they didn't realize was that the warm-ups were led by two young ladies who were actually auditioning to replace our current dance instructor, Brittany Kelley, for the CIS After School Enrichment Program.

These two potential replacements for Brittany (for the after school program ONLY) were able to demonstrate their dance capabilities in terms of instructing Top 20 II participants. Both were good, though their styles of teaching were different. Both dancers had the girls full attention and got them moving and learning very quickly. Once the warm-ups were completed, Brittany began to have the girls practice the routines that she has been vigorously working on with them, despite the many issues she has faced during our Monday through Thursday pilot program in collaboration with CIS. Linda Velasco and Bette Velasco Wilson brought the colorful material they purchased and began sizing/cutting, and then wrapping the girls up so they

could look and "feel" like real dancers. It's amazing what a peace of material can do for a child's ego! After a few dress rehearsals, they nervously performed as proud family members took pictures and cheered them on. Overall, I think the girls were quite pleased with what they had accomplished. As a board, we all know we have a long way to go...BUT we are still young as an organization, and will continue to move forward.

Another dancer we're interested in having work with us in a different capacity is Joshua Ishmon. Joshua would not be a regular instructor for us, but may be available to engage Top 20 II participants in workshops similar to what we did last summer. He emailed a promotional video to Deb. Felisha Rashaad is speaking on the video promoting an event for the company he's with—Deeply Rooted Dance Theater. This company, located on State Street in Chicago, produces high quality dancers and may be considered as one of our field trips for the girls during the winter break. Click here to preview the promotional video: www.deeplyrootedproductions.org

Once the dance committee decides on a replacement for Brittany, and gets a vote from the board to confirm that individual (or maybe both of them), we will begin to focus on our plans for the off season. A component for Top 20 II Girls & Mentoring program includes having the girls do some kind of community outreach service and rewarding them with a field trip. We will also determine which of the girls have earned the privilege of attending Iris Rosa's workshop (Indiana University African American Dance Company) the weekend of March 6, 2015. The dates of the workshop conflict with the first day of our Saturday Program in the spring. However, Iris has graciously arranged to provide scholarships, so we will find a way to resolve the date conflict.

As we carry on the tradition of Mildred M. Ball to aid in the development of girls in the East Chicago Public School system, we will continue to share our accomplishments with all of our gracious donors. On behalf of the Top 20, Inc. Board of Directors, **THANK YOU** for your prayers and continued financial support.

