

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION 2008

Breakthroughs *Englewood, Ill.*

Last fall, 14-year-old James wrote a summer vacation essay. His teacher was amazed at the people James met, the books he read and the field trips he took, not to mention his collecting signatures supporting children's health care sent to senators and the governor—all in six weeks. James earned his first "A" last fall, and his mentor John was among those celebrating.

James is one of 12,000 children in Chicago's Englewood community who faces violence, drug dealing, and warring gangs.

James is also a student at the Bethel Imani Children's Defense Fund Freedom School.

Your mission support is helping to fund the Freedom School through an ELCA Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit grant, along with the City of Chicago and other sponsors.

The Freedom School provides free, high-quality summer programming, including reading, conflict resolution and social action for children and youth ages 5-18 in Englewood where 43 percent of residents live below the poverty level. Year-round mentors for the children and weekly workshops for parents also are available.

"It is our intention to inspire and motivate children living in this neighborhood to want to read and learn, and to help them discover their own identities and unique gifts and talents in a safe environment," said Paulette Corley, executive director, Bethel Imani CDF Freedom School.

Bethel Imani Lutheran Church sponsors the Freedom School, which began its ministry in the summer of 2006 as one of 102 Children's Defense Fund sites serving 7,700 children across the United States. Other Lutheran-affiliated sponsors include local St. Stephen's Lutheran Church and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

For more Stories of Faith in Action, visit www.elca.org/stewardship/interpreting.html.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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