The Tutor’s Corner

Former tutee, current tutor, and student at Duquesne University Ernest Blackwell has a unique insight into the PACT tutoring program. Through being involved in every aspect of PACT possible over the years, Ernest can see how PACT has significantly affected his education.

Ernest is a freshman at Duquesne University, and is majoring in Music Performance with a minor in Political Science. He is a member of Sigma Tau Gamma, a fraternity at Duquesne. Ernest is a senator of the Student Government Association and a member of the Debate Team. He also is the Youth Music Director at his church, and a camp counselor over the summer.

So, how did Ernest come to be such a successful student, you might ask? Ernest began by joining the PACT tutoring program in 3rd grade, as well as beginning to play the clarinet. This led to attending Rogers Creative and Performance Arts Middle School, and continuing his education at The Creative and Performing Arts High School (CAPA). Through being involved in PACT, Ernest was exposed to higher education at an early age. This aided him in his aspirations to attend a respected college to study music. Also, for Ernest, meeting other African Americans on a collegiate level at a young age influenced him greatly and encouraged him. (Continued on Page 3)

I am a fourth year psychology student. This is my first year with the PACT tutoring program. I was a little nervous at first with the thought of being a tutor, but once I started working at the Lawn Street Center and the Saturday program at Duquesne University, I came to really enjoy tutoring. It is really nice to be able to help these kids.

During the week, I go to the Lawn Center in Oakland. I mainly work with the K-2 grade classroom. Ms. Susan does a wonderful job overseeing everything at the center. More importantly, the kids that I work with are extraordinary. They come in with their homework, which is what we help them with. They are always asking questions, whether it’s about homework, or questions about me, just to get to know me. It makes for a fun work experience.

On Saturday, I tutor two fourth graders. The kids are very smart. I work with them on their homework, correct mistakes, and guide them. Then, we go over the lesson plan that I came in with that pertains to what they are working on in school. I think the best part of the day is going to lunch with them. I’m really looking forward to continuing working for PACT next semester.

By: JP Knutsen / Tutor
The Tutee Talk

Many teenagers need help in this day and age. They need help with school but they do not know who to turn to. But for me, I have PACT. Here is the reason why I am doing so well in school.

I have been in the program for a while, and I have had a good time as well. Whenever I go on Saturdays, I always get my homework finished. If we have time, we also study for any tests or quizzes that I might have later in the week. The tutors of the program are very cool, as well. My first tutor, Shawn, was a great tutor. We became very good friends and we made a very good connection. I was very disappointed when Shawn had to graduate and move on, but that’s life. My current tutor, Tanya, is also very good. I think that everyday that we meet our connection grows stronger.

As you may now know, the PACT program has been a very good experience for me. I hope that it will continue to be a good experience into my senior year.

By: Jordan Bullard / Tutee

“My tutor and I have a strong relationship.”
-Lexie Jones

“My tutor program has been a good experience for me.”
-Jordan Bullard

The Tutor’s Corner (Cont.)

When something impacts a person’s life in a positive way, the experience can be talked about forever. Most of my family will say that I am more of a listener than a talker; but, when considering PACT tutoring, they know that I never run out of things to say.

I tutor at Lawn Street Community Center in Oakland. It is an after school program where the kids are the liveliest bunch. Most tutors after a week or so will begin to work with the same kids. This forms a bond – a bond that he or she otherwise might not have had in his or her life.

I work with a first grade boy on a regular basis. I have learned what techniques will keep him motivated, as well as subjects that we can talk and joke about.

PACT tutoring is more than just a job. The tutors serve as role models and are important people in the kids’ lives. I have seen the kids I tutor at the grocery store, with their parents or grandparents, and they have introduced me to their family.

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I am extremely privileged to be a part of Duquesne’s PACT program. Being able to work one-on-one with students is a very fulfilling and rewarding opportunity. This semester, I was paired with two students, for the Saturday morning tutoring, who are juniors in high school. Their main educational focus is math, chemistry, and reading comprehension. Coming from a Health Management Systems major, I was able to really influence my tutees and provide a positive impact. Taking the initiative to be involved in PACT has greatly changed me as a role model. PACT has been a great way for me to not only escape the usual everyday college life, but to also be one of the most influential people in my tutees life. Establishing a sense of trust between my tutees and I was a great success, and it kept our educational relationship strong. I have seen great progress in my tutees as they work through their junior year.

Another great aspect of working with the children is watching them work towards their dreams. Both of my tutees are looking into college for the upcoming year, taking PSAT’s, and the SAT’s. Moving onto the next phase in life can sometimes be difficult, but by allowing them to hear what a wonderful college experience I am having, they are motivated to take that next step. My one tutee is aspiring to be an architectural engineer, so our main focus is on math, science, and getting him prepared for the college curriculum. With each success my tutees make, it is a rewarding experience for the both of us.

I have become an active part in both of my tutees’ lives. I have gotten to know their strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. I have also had to chance to form a relationship with their parents which shows my dedication to this program. I have taken the time to discuss with the parents their student’s progress and certain areas where more time needs to be spent.

Overall, the PACT program has become a part of my everyday life and has impacted me greatly. I have always loved being involved with various projects, volunteering, and making a difference in people’s lives. The PACT program was a great way for me to outreach to the youth in the Pittsburgh communities and help them excel educationally and personally. Being able to be a role model and an inspiration for my students have been the most exhilarating experience.

By: Tanya Lehman / Tutor

A Tutor’s Story

“Being able to be a role model and an inspiration for my students has been the most exhilarating experience…”

-Tanya Lehman

By: Megan Evangeliste / Tutor

By: Heather Smith / Tutor

The Learning Skills Center at Duquesne University would like to congratulate Ernest in his accomplishments on receiving the Governor of Pennsylvania Youth of the Year Award, and for receiving the Provost and Laval Scholarship from Duquesne University.

By: Megan Evangeliste / Tutor

By: Heather Smith / Tutor

And, what is even more interesting is that Ernest has chosen to become a tutor for PACT to inspire children in the way that he was once inspired. He tutors on Saturday mornings at Duquesne University, and also at the Hill House Association. He would like to strongly encourage children to join PACT because he believes that it really helps in educational and personal development.

They have given me insight about who they are outside of the center. Although there are significant differences, such as age (they call me Ms. Heather), we learn from each other. The education we both receive goes far beyond books and worksheets, it is about who is there to impact us through our journey.

By: Megan Evangeliste / Tutor

By: Heather Smith / Tutor

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Who do I contact for more information?

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What is PACT?

Project for Academic Coaching Through Tutoring (PACT) began in 1990 as a community outreach and service learning project of the Duquesne University’s Michael P. Weber Learning Skills Center. Organized to provide after-school and Saturday morning tutoring for children residing in the Hill District community, the project was expanded in 1997 when an infusion of federal funds allowed the inclusion of in-school and after-school tutoring throughout Pittsburgh and surrounding communities.

Duquesne students serve as PACT tutors and are noted for their commitment to helping the children who have come to them for learning support. They serve for course credit, as volunteers and as college work-study recipients.

The Saturday PACT Program and Credits

Saturday PACT is a tutorial assistance program that seeks to enhance the academic achievement of elementary, middle, and high school students in the Pittsburgh area. Students are tutored in reading, math, science, computers, and the languages. They also receive help with researching and writing papers via the computer. Tutees are recommended by school principals or school counselors and are selected based on their willingness to participate.

Saturday PACT takes place on Duquesne University’s campus, and is staffed by Duquesne University students as tutors and aided by Duquesne University staff.

“Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.”
-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.