

Karmen, a high school freshman and patient of La Rabida Children’s Hospital, was struggling with math and science. With assessment exams coming up—and holding the key to future academic options—the teen’s doctor at La Rabida recommended she work with a tutor at the hospital. Karmen was paired with a University of Chicago student.

Since 2000, La Rabida’s volunteer tutors have worked with patients and their siblings one-on-one, offering help with homework, studying and college preparation. This free program has opened opportunities for advancement and strengthened the south side Chicago community the hospital serves by helping thousands of children from low-income families overcome educational challenges and build confidence. The program, which runs from October to May, is virtual this school year due to COVID-19. In-person tutoring will resume once it’s safe.

For Karmen, the ongoing tutoring helped bring up her grades and test scores. She improved by 22 points her score on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) exam, which won her an award for high achievement at school and helped her gain acceptance to an excellent charter school.

“I appreciate the fact that this program is available and it’s free of cost,” says Karmen’s mom. “That’s a very big help to me. The outreach for the kids is wonderful. My daughter knows what she’s really capable of (now).”

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