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## Community involvement touted at school summit

By Phil Collins | Daily Herald Staff



*Monse Marquez, left, and Naomi Kalume of Round Lake Middle School present their project during the Our American Voice student summit Friday at the Adlai Stevenson Center near Libertyville.*

More than 100 students from nine Illinois middle schools met in Libertyville on Friday to share ideas about potential improvements to their communities.

Our American Voice, a new after-school program, held its first summit at the Adlai E. Stevenson Center on Democracy, 25200 N. St. Mary's Rd., and unveiled ideas ranging from increasing recycling efforts to curbing underage drinking to better lunches.

Presenters included students from Round Lake Middle School, who spoke about efforts to make peers aware of underage drinking as a problem in their community. They used homeroom talks to discuss the effects of drinking and alternative activities.

"Alcohol is the easiest thing you can get. You see it everywhere and it's all over your house," said eighth-grader Naomi Kalume.

The group focused on the importance of finding activities for students in safe environments.



*More than 100 students from middle schools across Illinois presented community service projects during the Our American Voice student summit at the Adlai Stevenson Center near Libertyville.*

Cheryl Caesar, assistant principal of Round Lake Middle School, said the students have benefitted from serving on the Avon Township youth advisory council as part of their work.

"This has given them an opportunity to interact with adults in their community (and make a difference)," Caesar said.

Each group used video as part of their presentation to show the research and interviews they did with other students or skits they filmed about their issue.

Students from Iroquois School in Des Plaines presented their plan to make Touhy Avenue, a high traffic road next to the school, safer to cross. The group looked to state law and found an answer: designate the nearby area of the road a school zone, lowering the speed limit to 20 mph.

Among the other issues tackled were the quality of school food by Apollo Elementary School in Des Plaines and an expanded recycling plan by Carl Sandburg Junior High School in Rolling Meadows.

Our American Voice will be a six- to nine-month program in the future, aiming to teach middle school students about democracy and citizenship.

Adlai E. Stevenson III, former senator from Illinois, was on hand to give encouragement to the students.

"I urge you all to stay engaged and run for public office," Stevenson said.