

# LAKE COUNTY NEWS-SUN

## 'Drinking is no good for young people'

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Round Lake Middle School students Naomi Kalume and Monse Marquez know that young people and alcohol do not mix.

The teenagers, along with nine of their friends, spent several months completing a project tackling underage drinking that was displayed at the first annual Our American Voice summit.



**Round Lake Middle School students Karla Figeora (left), 12, and Tracy Anderson, 14, watch and listen to presentations at the "Our American Voice" summit at the Adlai E. Stevenson home in Libertyville.**

*(Thomas Delany Jr./News-Sun)*

Some 124 students throughout Illinois convened at the Adlai E. Stevenson Home Friday in Libertyville to introduce plans to improve their communities.

The program was sponsored by Lake Forest-based Barat Foundation. It has attempted to link history, government and civics with the latest technology to encourage students to create change in various communities.

"The program is about getting children out of the classroom to learn about government in real-life settings," said Barat Education Foundation

chairperson Shelia Smith. "Through this program, we hope to equip students to develop positive change in their communities and motivate the leaders of tomorrow."

The Round Lake students spent time working with the Lake County After School Coalition and Nicasa spreading the word throughout the community that underage drinking has dire consequences.

"We spent time in every homeroom in our school showing facts and explaining how alcohol is bad for the body," Kalume said. "Everyone needs to know that drinking destroys the brain and is no good for young people at all."

As part of the project, the group wanted to address the issue of alcohol advertisements in their neighborhood by determining how many were near their homes and school, with the hopes to make city officials aware of how they might inadvertently be targeting adolescents.

"Some people might think it is not a big deal, but it is to us," Marquez said. "Parents, and adults in general, need to know not to make alcohol available."

All the hard work of the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students has impressed Round Lake Middle School Assistant Principal Cheryl Caesar, who attended the event.

"The students have grown so much," she said. "When we first started, the students did not believe their voices were being heard. Now they are experiencing what a difference can be made by being proactive."