

**REPRESENTATIVE SCHAKOWSKY ANNOUNCES CHICAGO AREA STUDENTS TO ATTEND "VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE CONFERENCE" STUDENTS WILL HEAD TO WASHINGTON, D.C. TO WORK WITH LAWMAKERS TO DEVELOP YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) announced today the selection of Chicago area students who will participate in next month's "Voices Against Violence: A Congressional Teen Conference."

The Conference is sponsored by House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt (MO) and will be held in Washington, D.C. on October 19th and 20th. More than 500 teenagers from across the country will work with lawmakers to draft a House Resolution and to develop "youth violence prevention action plans."

A number of teenagers applied to Representative Schakowsky's office for the three available slots. Albert Smith, Markeda Whitney, and Rachel Marshall were chosen to attend the conference. An independent committee comprised of a diverse group of community activists and leaders from the Chicago Metropolitan area selected these students.

□

"Too many students are surrounded by violence in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Who better to help us find solutions to the emerging crisis of youth violence than these young people on the front lines?" Schakowsky said.

Smith is a freshman at Bradley University and is a graduate of Evanston Township High School. Since the tragic shooting of his sister, he has become a youth leader in the fight to prevent youth violence. He is recognized for his efforts and has participated with political leaders, including Schakowsky, House Democratic Leader Gephardt, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), and local and state officials in events to find solutions to youth violence. In June, he was one of the teen leaders invited by President and Mrs. Clinton to a roundtable discussion on violence.

Markeda Whitney is a senior at Senn High School in Chicago. In her application to Representative Schakowsky, Whitney indicated that school safety is an important issue in her community. She, like many other teenagers, has been personally touched by an incident of youth violence. Her brother was the victim of gang violence.

Rachel Marshall is in her senior year of high school at Ida Crown Jewish Academy in Chicago. She wrote in her application that the government could play a role in curbing teen violence, saying that government officials must hear first-hand from teenagers and listen closely to their problems and their suggestions on preventing youth violence.

Albert, Rachel, and Markeda will help draft the House Resolution stating the action the conference teens believe Congress can take to prevent youth violence. Once drafted,

the Resolution will be presented to Congress for immediate consideration on the House floor. In addition, the teenagers will participate in workshops that will cover a variety of issues including violence in the media, peer mediation training, and hate crime prevention strategies. MTV, the Children's Defense Fund, the Department of Justice, elected officials and celebrities will participate and lead many of these discussion groups.

"I am proud that so many young men and women have placed the prevention of youth violence at the top of their agenda. They are leading the way and finding solutions to make our nation safer. This conference will further local efforts and projects that will prevent violence in our communities and I look forward to working with every child, parent, and educator on these efforts," Schakowsky said.