

## MIKVA CHALLENGE SPOTLIGHT: SERITA AND MARC FORD

As a parent, I admit that I didn't know much about Mikva Challenge at first. My son, Marc Ford, became part of the Mikva family in his sophomore year of high school. That year, he volunteered for Sandi Jackson, who was running for 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman.

### **As time went by, I witnessed a change in my son.**

Basketball and video games were no longer on his weekend 'to do' list. I realized Marc was making a conscious change, and he now understood that the things he says and does can truly make a difference.

I watched him unselfishly volunteer his time for what he believed in. Through Mikva, he traveled to New Hampshire to work on Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. He was a student judge for the presidential election. Marc was a member of Mikva's Youth Safety Council, and together with his colleagues, he presented a set of recommendations to City Commissioner Mary Ellen Caron about how to reduce youth-on-youth violence in Chicago. He even found time to join the NAACP.



Serita Ford



Marc Ford (top row, 2<sup>nd</sup> from right) in New Hampshire, January 2008.

Mikva is a godsend! **I tell people all the time that Mikva is the best kept secret in the world.** I am so overwhelmed, just thinking of all the connections he is making. I truly wish there was a program like this when I was in high school.

South Shore High School, where Marc went to school, asked him to speak at his senior luncheon about his Mikva experiences. I was so proud. Marc is now on his way to college. I know he is well prepared, because not only did Mikva teach him public speaking skills, it also taught him great leadership skills.

I know that if he can canvass in New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Indiana, he can take a college final. If he can give a presentation in front of city officials, he can speak before of a classroom of his peers.

The organization could not have been named more appropriately – Mikva “CHALLENGE” – because they challenge young people to be heard, challenge them to be more than ordinary, challenge them to dream, to succeed.

Marc is young and hasn't yet fully realized the impact the program has had on him, but I certainly do! Through this experience, Marc is, like Mikva, a diamond in the rough.

**I hope you will support this program and reach more young people like my son, Marc.**

*~Serita Ford, Proud Mikva Parent*