

Jan 16, 2009 10:30 pm US/Central

Youths Rewarded With Inauguration Tickets



Reporting

[Vince Gerasole](#)

CHICAGO (CBS) —

It's an unexpected reward for hours of hard work, standing in the cold or manning get-out-the-vote phone banks.

The Mikva Challenge sent civic-minded Chicago high school students to campaign in New Hampshire, Indiana, Wisconsin and here at home in the presidential election. Now U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin has rewarded them with tickets to the presidential inauguration.

CBS 2's Vince Gerasole reports on their story.



You may not notice them here on the campaign trail, but in the background they were hard at work. They were high school students from Chicago who, through the not-for-profit Mikva Challenge were hooked up with a number of presidential campaigns.

"Most people didn't come to the door when they saw us out there," Laniya Patton said.

Each learned what it was like to get out the vote on the front lines of democracy.

"Some people weren't going for Obama so they kind of slammed the door on us," Kevin Fong said.

On Friday, at a pizza party they celebrated an unexpected reward: an all-expenses-paid trip to the presidential inaugural, with tickets to the swearing-in ceremonies for the 26 students who logged the most hours.

Most admit they are Obama supporters and recognize the connection he has with their generation.

"He's just like one of us," Neha Surrender said. "His speaking skills are amazing; he addresses you like you are in his family."

They are serious and civic-minded, but tonight these students are also giddy. They're talking

about capturing as many pictures as they can on their phones and cameras, blogging on their laptops, and being a part, they say, of history -- a history they helped create.

(© MMIX, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.)