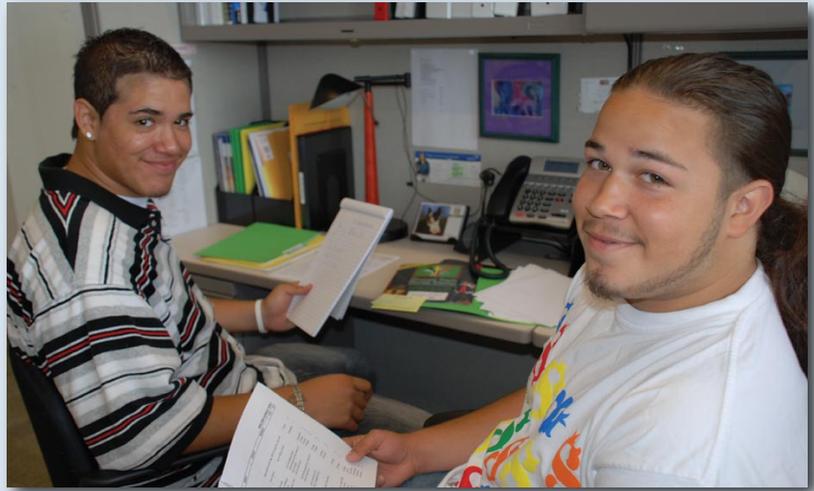


## Editor's Note:

High school seniors Raphael Perez and Luis Baez recently spent four weeks at Prevention First as summer interns through their participation in the Youth Career Development Center training program at the Chicago-based Association House. The teens spent their time learning the different aspects of prevention including training and development, special initiatives, communications and information resources, and engaging in community outreach programs. Upon completing the internship, Perez and Baez share their experience and how they plan to use what they have learned to reach out to other youth in their communities.



Raphael Perez, left, and Luis Baez spent 28 days at Prevention First.

# 28 Days at Prevention First

## Raphael Perez, senior, Carl Schurz High School, Chicago

I have always wanted to learn how to help youth and my community by reaching out to them and talking about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. When I got the chance to intern at Prevention First, I wanted to gain enough experience and be able to use that experience to reach out to teens in my neighborhood. I also wanted to help the staff at Prevention First succeed in their mission and be a part of the change that they are making in many lives.



At Prevention First, I attended a rally and was interviewed by a radio personality. This was when the statewide budget cuts were taking place. I had a chance to share how the cuts in the state's budget were going to hurt people needing help. It was an exciting experience because I had never been involved in such an important cause, and I was able to give my opinion about prevention efforts.

I also learned how drug abuse and its affect on youth have grown over the years. I learned a lot about the mission that the Prevention First staff is working toward which is to provide statewide leadership in promoting healthy, drug free communities. This task is not easy. What I have learned, I plan to take back to the student council so that we can look at ways to promote a drug-free environment at my school. I am also going to propose forming a club that mirrors Prevention First's vision at my school. Secondly, I plan to better educate my community with all the resources that Prevention First offers. It was an exciting experience being a summer intern at Prevention First.

## Luis Baez, senior, Clemente High School, Chicago

Walking into Prevention First was a unique experience for me. The staff welcomed me with open arms and was eager to include me in the work they did. I wasn't sure of what to expect but I kept an open mind and wanted to learn. My internship at Prevention First taught me better people skills and ways to engage others in drug prevention discussion in my community.

There are drug and alcohol problems and violence and teen pregnancy issues in my community. Teens are doing drugs, dropping out of school, getting pregnant at young ages, and one of the causes is they are not informed about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. I plan to take what I have learned at Prevention First back to my community and share with them the scary facts of what illicit drugs can do to them.



The most exciting experience for me this summer was going to Columbia Explores Elementary School and helping with their back to school rally. I had a chance to work with the kids and pass out school supplies. I met the teachers and principal of the school and talked to them about Prevention First and my internship.

I came with very little knowledge about the many drug prevention resources available for youth, but I'm leaving with good information on how to stay away from drugs and violence. This was an awesome experience and I am glad to have spent some time at Prevention First.