

Kings girls miss prom for a cause

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KINGS MILLS - They could have joined their classmates for what many high school students consider the crowning social event of the year.

But instead of going to prom, Kings High School seniors Maggie Grady and Kelsey Albert spent the night in a cardboard box shanty with about 6,000 other teenagers in Chicago.

The girls joined 67,871 people in 14 cities that night in the "Displace Me" campaign run by Invisible Children to raise awareness for innocent civilians and children in Uganda who have been displaced by the Lord's Resistant Army, a rebel militia that has abducted thousands of children and forced them to fight and kill their own people.

Many Ugandan children commute to the city at night and hide from the army so they can sleep.

So that's what thousands of people did that night on the streets of Chicago.

Albert and Grady committed to the date last fall, before they knew it was prom night.

But that didn't stop them.

Armed with armfuls of cardboard, the girls instead boarded a bus and headed for Chicago.

"We got a lot more out of this than going to prom," said Grady.

"This is way more important than anything we'll be able to do at high school."

After several hours of grueling work to set up their shanty homes as soundly as possible, the participants wrote letters to members of U.S. Congress and to the leaders of Uganda urging them to keep peace talks going to end the violence.

They also filmed a documentary which was shown to members of Congress - and it had a huge impact on the nation's leaders, according to Albert.

"We're sitting in a box sleeping and we're thinking and all these people around us are thinking 'Wow. We're making a difference,'" said Albert.

"You can't ignore 68,000 people sleeping in cardboard boxes all over the United States."