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Leadership confab: Ideal forum

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KINGSVILLE — A high school leadership conference planned for Nov. 16-17 at Texas A&I University will help combat the negative image given to young people by those involved in gang violence or drugs, said an organizer.

Responsible students will find a forum at the conference for their ideas and a place to develop their leadership skills, said Lloyd Stegeman, a Texas A&I student and a conference organizer.

More than 150 student leaders from Kingsville, Corpus Christi and across the Rio Grande Valley are expected to attend, he said.

U.S. Representative Kika de la Garza, D-Mission, will give the keynote address at 10 a.m. Saturday.

The students, in addition to hearing speakers and attending workshops, will divide into small groups to develop case studies for addressing such issues as drug abuse, gang violence, sex education and environmental programs, said Rito Silva, director of Texas A&Is Leadership Ladder Program, and conference sponsor.

Plans call for the students to work on case studies Saturday and part of Sunday, and present their plans between 1 and 3 p.m. Sunday.

Silva hopes that students will not only gain helpful insights into these problems, but the plans they develop at the conference can be implemented at their schools.

Silva added the conference is apparently filling a need.

"We thought we would have a successful conference if we had 70 students. Twice that number are already signed up to attend," he said.

The Leadership Ladder Program is part of College I, the success oriented program for students with fewer than 30 hours. The Leadership Ladder Program provides scholarships and stipends for successful students to act as peer advisors, tutors and mentors to freshman students.

Dr. Gary Low, former College I dean who developed the program, said it has two goals, improving the academic and career success rates of freshman students and developing leadership abilities in outstanding students. Stegeman, who is helping organize the conference, is a Leadership Ladder participant.

For more information contact Silva at (512) 595-3307.