



Teen Symposium Seeks To Build Leaders

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Nineteen Fox Valley schools will send more than 300 freshmen to invest a day at the 2018 Teen Symposium in hopes that the payoff will be informed leaders who will leave their mark over the rest of their high school careers.

The symposium will be held Feb. 12 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in downtown Appleton with a succession of speakers and activities built around this year's theme: Be yourself.

Organizers say the event is intended to increase the young participants' awareness of their strengths and increase their ability to instigate change in their schools, while they teach their new-found skills to their peers. There is no cost for the students who were selected to attend, accompanied by their school advisors.

A \$2,500 grant from the [Bright Idea Fund](#) will support the keynote address by motivational speaker [Michael Cuestas](#) (pictured above). ([See the full list](#) of Bright Idea Fund grants.)

Michael grew up in poverty without knowing his father. He has lived in a homeless shelter, a center for victims of domestic violence and even a tent. Michael was able to overcome these struggles and he encourages students to not accept average, but go for greatness. He connects with teens using his personal stories, humor and compelling message. He graduated with a B.S. in Business Administration and has worked for six Fortune 500 companies.



The event is organized by [United Way Fox Cities Youth Board](#) with help from adult advisors. Evaluations of [last year's event](#), also supported by a Community Foundation grant, showed 95% of the 289 students attending indicated they strongly agreed that it was a positive experience.

The lineup of speakers and activities are intended to encourage the freshmen to find their talents and strengths and use them to create positive changes for themselves, their friends and their school community.



The day will start at 8 a.m. and consist of team-building activities, the keynote speaker, wellness activities, a service project, a community resource fair and wrap up with the opportunity for students to create an action plan for positive change in their schools.