

HIGH SCHOOLERS LEARN STREET LAW IN SUMMER PROGRAM

High schools students will learn what legal rights they possess in a variety of everyday situations through a new summer program sponsored by the Valparaiso University School of Law.

Elizabeth Cash, a second-year law student from Avilla who has helped organize Valpo's High School Law Institute, said the students will benefit from the introduction to what's referred to as street law – legal education for lay people.

"When the students have a basic understanding of street law, they will be better prepared to handle many situations that are common in life, such as signing a lease," said Cash, who has previous experience teaching high schoolers.

Fifteen students from Valparaiso are participating in the program, which will include Tuesday and Thursday sessions covering topics such as free speech, landlord-tenant law, employment law, family law, consumer law, sexual harassment and search and seizure law. The High School Law Institute begins June 8 and continues through July 23.

The street law sessions will be taught by Valpo law students and faculty, and are part of a broader program that is encouraging young people to take charge of their lives and pursue their career ambitions.

That program, the Summer Nexus Leadership Program, is being led by Derek Perkins, community pastor for Valparaiso First United Methodist Church, and his wife Karyn Farrar. Perkins said his father started the program in rural Mississippi to inspire talented young people and encourage them to become leaders in their community.

Perkins said the program was tremendously successful and has spread to other communities over the past few decades. This will be the program's first year in Valparaiso.

"We want to help young people realize what their dreams might be and prepare them for success in life," Perkins said. "Part of that is to get students to shift their mindsets from thinking 'if I go to college' to 'when I go to college'."

Over the course of the next several weeks, Perkins said the Valparaiso youth will engage in mentoring relationships with individuals in the Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce, Valparaiso Police Department, doctor's and dentist's offices, Valparaiso city officials and others.

In addition to the twice weekly programs at the School of Law, the high schoolers will visit the University's Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources every Wednesday to watch a film related to history.

At the conclusion of the program in late July, the students will visit several national monuments and museums in Washington, D.C., as well as Gettysburg National Military Park.