



70 Ninth Grade Students to Bridge Perceived Differences Between Duluth and Superior at Special KIDS PLUS Youth Leadership Academy Session

The Duluth and Superior Youth Leadership Academies' "Bridging Session" is scheduled for this evening, Tuesday, January 27, in the Northern Lights Ballroom at The Inn on Lake Superior in Canal Park. A group of 70 ninth graders from Duluth and Superior will meet to "bridge" the physical distance and perceived differences between people in their respective cities. Dinner is served at 4:30 p.m. and the program begins at 5:00 p.m.

Speakers include a Superior City Council member (and former Council President), Ed Anderson and the current Duluth City Council President, Greg Gilbert. The two presenters will offer their perspectives on similarities between the two cities and the role that cooperation between the Twin Ports plays in strengthening the region.

Following presentations by Mr. Anderson and Mr. Gilbert, the students will break into small mixed groups made up of youth from throughout Duluth and Superior. The 2008-2009 KIDS PLUS Youth Leadership Academies, comprised of approximately 30 students each, typically meet separately each month but join together for the Bridging session.

The teams, with assistance from adult community members who volunteer as Youth Leadership mentors, will work together to design popsicle-stick bridges to signify the importance of cooperation and represent the figurative bridges they have crossed during the session. The evening will close with each group formally presenting their creations to the audience and relaying the message behind their design.

"Young people often have the impression that people from other communities are different from them," said Lynn Haglin, Northland Foundation's Vice President/KIDS PLUS Director. "But when they meet each other, they discover that they are more alike than different. By talking and working cooperatively on the bridge-building projects, barriers are broken down."

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The goal of the KIDS PLUS Leadership Academy is to develop young leaders who will serve their communities now and in the future. The program features several unique aspects, among them the fact that the ninth graders who participate have often not had many other opportunities to develop their leadership potential. Together, youth and adults engage in a year-long series of interactive sessions to build relationships and sharpen team-building, leadership, and communication skills.

The program year concludes in May with a youth-planned and implemented community service project, allowing young people to use the knowledge and skills they have gained, promote the power of youth-adult partnerships, and help community members recognize youth as resources and leaders. This is the seventh year the KIDS PLUS Youth Leadership Academy has been offered in Superior and the ninth year for Duluth.



Building a Strong Foundation for the Future of Our Region

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