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MVTHS students invited to LEAD SI Class of 2010

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MT. VERNON — Five Mt. Vernon Township High School students have been chosen to join the LEAD SI Class of 2009-2010.

Sophomores Hannah Weber and Alexandra Frisby, along with juniors Blake Fields, Taylor Morgan and Tyler Weston will be led through a "full curriculum" developed by university professionals focused on developing skills such as communication, problem solving, team building and decision making, according to information from MVTHS AVC Director and CTE Department Chair, Rob Knutson.

The students will also be presented with opportunities to network with

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regional leaders from the business, government, education and healthcare sectors.

"What they're trying to do," Knutson explained, "is that our talented youth are moving away for college or another job. And they're not coming back [to Southern Illinois]. So this is an economic initiative through state and federal dollars to start with the young people — high school students — and make them aware of opportunities in Southern Illinois in the hope that they will stay."

"A lot of people don't realize the quality of opportunities are here," he continued. "What sets this program apart is they plan not to only select a group and bring them together for a summer retreat, but they plan a program throughout the year so students will be exposed to different industries and different leaders. In addition to being exposed to

leadership activities, they're going to have the opportunity to network with some of Southern Illinois' finest leaders and learn from them."

"We want them to understand the benefits in Southern Illinois," said Kathy Lively, Executive Director at Man-Tra-Con, "and really have an understanding of how much we need them. The majority of our youth leave and we can't go and be the best we can be until we show them there is a role for them here."

LEAD SI is a youth engagement strategy designed to foster among regional young people a deep appreciation of Southern Illinois by engaging them in peer network-

ing, and helping them to learn important leadership and community development skills; and, to expand the existing leadership base to support the future of Southern Illinois, according to the organization's Web site. The LEAD SI initiative was designed to ensure a continuous supply of home-grown leaders for the future of Southern Illinois.

Following completion of the Institute, future leaders will continue through a year-long schedule of events focused on continuing social networking, leadership development, and appreciation of southern Illinois. LEAD SI sponsored events will take participants across the region, exposing them to the beauties and challenges

facing future leaders of southern Illinois.

LEAD SI has expanded to include all 20 counties involved in Connect SI. Each year, a new class of future leaders will be selected from those entering their junior and senior years in high school.

"When I learned they were moving it to the southern 20 counties in Illinois I was excited," Knutson added. "They'll actually bring these students from each county together, and I suspect they will solicit ideas from these young people about what Southern Illinois needs."

"We hope they will realize most of today's leaders all face the same decisions and challenges they are facing as youths," Lively said.

The Class of 2009-2010 LEAD SI Institute will be held June 10 through 12. More information about the program may be found at www.leadsi.org.



Fields



Frisby



Morgan



Weber



Weston