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Legacy showing how some can get college

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LAKE STATION -- In the ever-confusing college application process, money is never the issue about which students should be worried.

The College Readiness Fund could help.

Established through a partnership between the Legacy Foundation of Merrillville and Indianapolis-based Lumina Foundation and funded by a three-year, \$900,000 Lilly Endowment, the Readiness Fund has been set up to guide low-income and first-generation students in the right direction through various services.

During a Thursday news conference at Lake Station Edison High School, representatives from the Legacy Foundation explained to a group of seventh-graders what they need to do in order to be successful. When Legacy initiative officer Eddie Melton asked the room how many of them wanted to go to college, all yelled enthusiastically.

"How do you get to college? You need a plan," Melton said. "You need to find help in the form of a mentor, you need to push yourself academically, you need to find the right school with the right program, and you need to get your hands on some money."

Getting hands on money always sounds like the hardest part, but it's not because money is available to every student regardless of whether they have the best grades. The key, however, is that students need to turn in their Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form, Melton said, and they have to do it on time.

The FAFSA form is not an easy endeavor, but there are resources to help parents fill it out, said Seana Murphy, director for Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program, which funds low-income and first-generation students.

A group of the students -- Courtney Fulton, Brianne Powers, Britney Tharp, Emmanuel Ellis, Meagan Taylor and Ayisha Triplett -- said they learned a lot from the talk. Next year, when they're eligible to join the 21st Century Scholars program, the goals will be easier.

FYI

For more information about the College Readiness Fund, log on to <http://KnowHow2GOIndiana.org>.

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