

Unity Summit aims to entertain, educate and empower youth in dealing with police, law



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Name acts like rapper Bow Wow, comedian Damon Williams and country rockers Michael Alexander and Big Whiskey will be featured at a free event aimed at building unity among Dane County youth.

In addition to entertainment, the [Youth and Unity Summit](#) will feature workshops designed to empower and educate young people, and a Teen Peace Rally offering positive ways to manage emotions ahead of a decision on whether criminal charges will be brought in the killing of Tony Robinson, 19, by a Madison police officer.

The summit at Madison Memorial High School will be held 2–6:30 p.m. Sunday, April 26. Free transportation will be provided from pick-up points at Dane County high schools and community organizations. Information is on the

[website](#).

The summit is organized by community organizations including Boys & Girls Clubs of Dane County, African-American Council of Churches of Greater Madison, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and Umoja Magazine.

Area students -- at Middleton, Verona, Sun Prairie, and Madison East and Memorial high schools -- are taking a lead role in organizing the event, said project manager John Suggs. And their focus is not limited to Robinson's death and its aftermath, Suggs said. In planning the summit, the need to recognize day-to-day issues about equity on the street and in the schools emerged, he said.

"They said there are issues regarding police and injustice and also problems of lack of respect in our own hallways," Suggs said. The summit is intended as an opportunity for youth of all backgrounds to be heard, he said.

Suggs said the word is being spread through social media and he expects 800 youths in 8th through 12th grades to turn out. Students can register online, at school or at the door.

American Family Insurance is a major sponsor, having made a \$25,000 grant to the planning of the event. But organizers are still seeking financial support.

“We are appealing to the conscious of our fellow neighbors both in the corporate and civic sectors to help provide healing and support to our entire community by supporting this initiative and our local kids,” said Michael Johnson, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County.

The summit will be an opportunity for young people in Dane County “to show how in the midst of unrest we can unite and move forward,” Suggs said. “These young people just might teach adults some new things about community.”

Pat Schneider



Pat Schneider

Pat Schneider joined The Capital Times in 1989 and has written on a wide variety of topics including neighborhoods, minority communities and the nonprofit sector.



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