

January is mentoring month - ACE DC participates all year long

January may be National Mentoring Month, but the ACE Mentor Program of the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area, Inc. (ACE DC) specializes in mentoring all year long. What does ACE stand for? Quite simply ACE stands for architecture, construction and engineering. Primarily geared toward youth in grades 9 – 12, the ACE Mentor Program gives high school students the opportunity to learn about the integrated construction industry.



ACE DC is in its tenth year of providing service to the community. They

currently have over 268 students in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia area. With the help of industry professional partners, ACE DC provides hands on mentoring in the fields of architecture, engineering and construction. The students get the opportunity to experience, first hand, a professional industry environment and work with their mentors on “real world” projects.

An exciting example of the projects done by students in this program, is the Coolidge Senior High School revitalization of its historic greenhouse. The campus greenhouse was originally donated to the school by the class of 1945. Years of neglect and the lack of budgeting caused the greenhouse to fall into decay. The ACE Coolidge Team decided to take on the rehabilitation as their project by turning it into a thriving, sustainable greenhouse.

A lot of work needs to be completed in order to get the greenhouse up and running. Once complete, Coolidge Senior High School will have the unique distinction of being one of only two LEED certified greenhouses on a campus along with Portland University. With strong support from the community, teachers, fellow students and a host of others, the project planning is continuing. The Coolidge team hopes to eventually be able to host a farmers market and encourage healthier eating habits in the local Takoma Park community. This is just one way that they hope to give back.

ACE DC has done a remarkable job providing opportunities to young people who would not ordinarily experienced have them, but their work does not stop there. ACE DC also has a scholarship program for selected students wishing to attend college, and pursue a career in the design and construction industry. ACE DC has been able to provide \$272,000 in college scholarships to 84 high school graduates. Out of the 17 students that recently applied, a remarkable 12 were given \$4000 scholarships to college.

Like many nonprofit organizations, ACE DC continues to struggle with the economy. They are constantly searching for industry professionals to volunteer their time or supplies to provide opportunities for the students. ACE DC also hopes that local firms will be able to provide in-kind advertising to the program to help spread the word. They further hope that the success of ACE DC and projects such as the Coolidge High school revitalization project, will draw even more attention to the organization and their work.

The economy has also caused the organization to scale back on some of the programs offered to the students. For example, ACE DC provides field trips to construction sites. While some field trips have been cut, the organization continues to provide as many field trips as funding allows. Many hands-on sessions have also been scaled back. This is particularly disheartening because of the increase in the number of students applying for the program. Mentors have also had to drop out as they struggle with their own issues concerning the economy.

The vision of ACE DC for the future is an organization that will be able to provide stronger internship programs and summer jobs in local companies. Their number one goal is to expand to other schools and grow in the region.

Please visit their website for more information on ACE DC at www.acementor.org/592 to read more about the program and how you can help.

You can also contact [email Trisha Grant](mailto:Trisha.Grant@acementor.org) for additional information. Ms. Grant is the Executive Director of the ACE Mentor Program of Greater Washington Inc.