

By Gary Scott Frankel, AIA
President, ACE Mentoring Program of Maine

ACE, an acronym for architecture, construction, and engineering, was founded in New York in 1994 by a group of construction related firms which recognized a growing need to recruit and interest new talent in a construction related career. Professionals within the organizing offices volunteered as mentors to 90 students introducing them to the various professionals involved in building projects and the role that each performs in planning, designing and constructing a project.

From its beginning, ACE Mentoring has adopted the mission of increasing the awareness of high school students to career opportunities in architecture, construction, engineering and other construction related career paths through mentoring; and to provide scholarship opportunities toward higher education for students who participate in the program. Today, the ACE program is the construction industry's fastest-growing high school mentoring program and is open to any high school student interested in learning more about a career in the building industry and its allied trades.

ACE, as a totally donation driven non-profit organization, is a unique partnership among industry professionals including architects, interior designers, engineers, contractors, construction managers, college and university representatives, all of whom work together to mentor student participants. Industry professionals volunteer to become mentors to high school students in order to introduce them to the industry and encourage them to pursue studies and careers in a construction related field. In return, the industry gets a much-needed boost of new talent. Nearly 90% of the tax deductible donations go directly to the student scholarships with the rest going to providing needed project supplies and materials to the students throughout the year and a small portion going to maintaining the 501(c)3 corporation.

Since its inception, the ACE Mentor Program has grown into more than 80 cities from Florida to Alaska and Maine to Honolulu – and it continues to grow. Thanks to the dedication of ACE's volunteer mentors, the support of local schools, industry supporters and student participants, the program has afforded many who might not have otherwise had an opportunity to explore their interest in a construction related field.

With the volunteer professionals from WBRC Architects Engineers and The Cianbro Corporation, the 2008/2009 school year saw the first ACE Program take place at Hampden Academy in Hampden, Maine. Proudly, four students graduated and were awarded \$2000.00 in scholarships making the first ever program of its kind in Maine a huge success. As a result, with the help of Consigli Construction the program has expanded into Bangor High School and Deering High School in Portland. With over 30 students between the three schools, it is clear word about the program is spreading and interest is growing. Given the increasing interest and the dedication of the mentor volunteers, the ACE Mentoring Program is looking forward to another successful school year. We hope you will consider joining the growing list of firms which support this very important and dynamic program. For more information about the Maine program affiliates or to contact us, please go to www.acementor.org/813 and click on Bangor, Hampden or Portland.