Mentors help build careers

Burke High students get boost in architecture, construction and engineering

Burke High School senior Travis Salley makes a short presentation to follow students and architects, construction managers and engineers during a mentoring tour at LS3P. A group of Charleston professionals in architecture, construction and engineering has formed to help students at Burke High School prepare for careers in their fields.

BY DMITRI COURREGE
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Burke High School senior Darryl Lee knows he wants to be an engineer or an architect, but he’s not sure which one.

He’s learning about them, though, through a new mentor program that encourages students to pursue future careers in architecture, construction or engineering.

“It’s a big opportunity to gain exposure to an area that I could be choosing as a career,” he said. “It makes me even more interested.”

A small group of Charleston professionals in those fields formed the state’s first affiliate of a national nonprofit program, ACE, and they kicked off the after-school program in January.

They’re working with about 10 students at downtown Burke High, a high-poverty, academically struggling school. Statistics show building and construction industries will have up to 2 million job openings in the next 10 years, and there aren’t enough skilled workers to fill those jobs, said Rob Turner, an engineer who chairs the local ACE board. Finding diversity within that pool is an even greater challenge, he said.

The ACE program addresses both issues.

“When I was a kid coming up in high school, I had no idea what was entailed in building a building,” he said. “I wish I could’ve gone through this program.”

The program has seven mentors from ACE fields, and they’ll meet Please see MENTORS, Page 7A
ACE mentors help build careers

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with students twice a month af-
ter school for two-hour sessions. They're introducing students to what's involved in those careers and taking them on field trips to local businesses.

On Wednesday, students vis-
ited LORD, an architecture firm on the peninsula. Ben Ander-
sen is one of the program's mentors and an LSIP architect, and he gave a student tour of the office, answering questions about everything from the in-
terior architects' sample library to whether employees have to pay for the MoonPie in their vending machine (they do).

Anderson was a mentor for a well-developed ACE program in California, and he's looking forward to expanding the pro-
gram here to more students in more schools.

"There's been so much enthusi-
asm (from students) so far," he said.

Students, such as senior Qui-
etra Gathers, said they had no idea that so much went into constructing a building.

Gathers has taken health sci-
cence courses and plans to be a pediatrician, but she's had little exposure to architecture and construction courses. This gave her a chance to learn more, she said.

"I like math, and they say en-
gineers do a lot of math," she said.

"I'm always excited to learn something new and dif-
ferent." Students soon will be working on a project in which they must design a senior lounge. With the help of their ACE mentors, Turner said they'd do every-
thing from researching cost estimates to figuring out the foundation needed to support a vending machine.

They'll present their project at the end of the year, and Turner said he'd love to find the fund-
ing to make it a reality. The pro-
gram doesn't require students to execute their plans, and research shows the model works. ACE participants nationally gradu-
ate high school at a higher rate than their peers, and 40 percent go into an engineering field, ac-
cording to an ACE report.

In the future, Turner hopes to take the program to multiple schools and raise money so ACE students could apply for scholarships.

"We need support," he said.

Reah: Dieeto Courtdge at 937-5546.

Obama: Israel unsure about strike

We are going to be sure that we work in lockstep as we proceed to try to solve this — hopefully diplomatically.

President Barack Obama on working with Israel

"States, Obama said, "We don't see any evidence that they have those intentions or capabilities right now." Obama said Iran is feeling the pinch of sanctions but Israel is

rightfully worried about its se-
curity.

On the economy, Obama was preoccupied about a prediction he made three years ago on Super Bowl Sunday: "If I don't have this done in three years, then I'm gonna be a one-term president," Republican lead-
ers, including Mitt Romney, the front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination, have relied on that remark as mil-
loons of people are still hurting econ-
ominally.

Obama said Sunday, "I de-
serve a second term, but we're not done.

In that regard, the econ-
omy has turned around signifi-
cantly since three years ago, pointing to a new jobs re-
port last week that showed a surge in hiring.

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