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ORANGE PARK HIGH SCHOOL TEAM WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR BEST BRIDGE DESIGN

Jacksonville, Florida, May 11, 2016 – For the second straight year, the Orange Park High School (OPHS) team earned a trip to Washington, DC after judges selected their entry as one of 9 finalists from 55 entries from across the nation. In the afternoon round of judging, OPHS student, Tom McClymont presented their project to a panel of judges. OPHS was selected as the best entry for the “Bridge Design / Redesign & Construction Challenge” category. After the evening round presentation, the OPHS team was ranked 3rd overall of the 55 national entries. The event was held on April 25th. The entire team was present, as well as mentors, Joe De Marco, Mary Ellen De Marco and Crystal Markley, and teachers, Doug Barrows and Ted Jahn.

Pictured left to right: Kenny Windham, Doug Barrows, Ted Jahn, Michael Mancil, Camden Dean, Brian Reed, Liam De Marco, Tom McClymont, Christopher Osborne, Natalia Cordero, Michael Nee, Destiny Childress, Joe De Marco and Mary Ellen De Marco

The proposed Unity Bridge will connect Jacksonville’s sports and entertainment district just east of the downtown business district with the Southbank and most of Jacksonville’s population via the I-95 corridor. The bridge will help connect and enhance proposed mega-developments on
both banks of the St. Johns River. Automobile and truck traffic will use 4 lanes designed and built to interstate highway standards. Local traffic will have ramps to access the stadium area and the Southbank. Two dedicated lanes will provide a river crossing for Jacksonville’s Automated Skyway Express monorail system. The skyway expansion will connect stadium parking areas to downtown during the work week and downtown parking areas to the stadium during football games and other special events. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic will have a separate dedicated lane and observation decks. The pedestrian lane will connect existing sidewalks known as River Walks on both sides of the river. The overall construction budget is estimated to be $357 million.
The National teams start earlier and are on a much more rigorous schedule than the other ACE students competing locally. The hours they and the mentors pour into competition is simply astounding, and this year we had two teams in the race – OPHS and a group of Homeschool students. Truly amazing work done by both teams. They have made the rest of the nation stand up and take notice of this Northeast Florida affiliate.

Our annual Year-End event will be held on May 20, 2016 from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the UNF University Center, 12000 Alumni Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32224.

We’ll be honored at our Year-End event to view the presentations from both our National teams. You’ll be blown away!

Founded during the 2006-2007 school year with significant support from the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) and Haskell, the ACE Mentor Program of Northeast Florida, helps high school students explore potential careers in architecture, construction and engineering (ACE). Scholarships are given each year through the continued support corporate and personal donors, totaling over $130,000.

This school year we had 90 registered students and 53 mentors. In addition to homeschooled students, local public high schools from three counties included Lee, Orange Park, Middleburg, and Creekside. Also, for the third time in our affiliate history, one of our mentors, Crystal Markley, was selected as one of six 2016 ACE-ENR Outstanding Mentors.

Through the program, mentors from local industry professional firms meet with students for two hours once a week for 16 weeks. During these sessions, students work in teams to create practical solutions for “real-world” projects. It’s an effective way for students to experience the reality of what architects, contractors and engineers do during a typical working day.

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