



ACE Mentor Program of Lehigh Valley

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PRESS RELEASE

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Opening Paths and Minds to Future Careers at Parkland High School Through ACE Mentor Program

It all started with a sleepless night in 2013 for Chip Rohrbach, Vice President of F. A. Rohrbach, Inc. (Allentown). Chip was serving as Chairperson of the Lehigh Valley Council of the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) of Eastern PA. After a career day presentation for his son's seventh grade class, Chip couldn't stop thinking about his presentation on his career as a concrete contractor and how it seemed so foreign to his son's classmates. He thought to himself how entering the construction field after graduation from high school or college seemed so abstract. He wondered, "How do we go about creating an interest or even an awareness of the construction industry as a successful career opportunity?" Chip took his internal dialogue to his ABC Council Meeting and laid the ground work for creating mentoring programs in high schools throughout the Lehigh Valley. But how --and where-- to start? "It all started with an Education Committee that we were lucky enough to have Kristy Pollock, from Klover Contracting, Inc. (Quakertown), serving as chairperson." According to Chip, "Kristy was on a mission to track down resources and she had the wherewithal to get a mentoring program off the ground." On an exploratory visit to Parkland High School, Kristy stumbled onto a buried treasure.

During his years as a Parkland High School student, Darpan Patel had a drive to learn from others' first hand experiences. "I shadowed various professionals within the medical, law, and business industries looking for a way to help people in need and in a creative fashion." The shadowing was rewarding but Darpan didn't find that satisfying career solution. "Through my early years in high school I developed an appreciation for architecture, through the classes I took. While taking those courses I was encouraged to take part in high school architecture competitions. While we competed and placed, yet I was still hungry to dig deeper and find out if this is one way I will be able to help those people in need that I was impacted by early on in life." This thirst for learning more about architecture led him to find ACE Mentor online and knew at that moment that he had to be a part of it. Unfortunately, ACE Mentor programs were not active in the Lehigh Valley then, but that didn't stop Darpan. Through his unstoppable drive and determination Darpan worked tirelessly to bring the first affiliated ACE Mentor program to Parkland High School during the 2007-2008 school year.



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Darpan reflects on the program, “Through my first year as an ACE student I not only learned what other disciplines such as construction managers, engineers, and landscape architects do but I also learned that there was an incredibly competitive friendly rivalry that was going on amongst each of the disciplines. I was able to network with professionals that not only helped me through high school but were also able to help me forecast a clear vision towards the future.” Darpan is a success story of the program. After graduating from Parkland in 2009, Darpan went on to Philadelphia University where he earned his Bachelor’s degree in Architecture in May, 2014 and is currently employed as an Architectural Designer for Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC (Philadelphia).

Unfortunately, do to time restraints and funding support, the ACE Mentor program at Parkland High School (as well as other ACE Mentor programs in the Allentown School District) fell on hard times and went dormant in 2011.

But that is about to change. Thanks to Rohrbach, Pollock, Patel and the Lehigh Valley area construction industry, ACE Mentor is returning this Fall to Parkland High School. Kristy Pollock states, “We made contact with the architects and engineers that were committed instructors in the previous program and they were more than interested in getting back in the classroom and sharing their knowledge.” Kristy added, “We also were very fortunate that Parkland educator, Jim Kester was still interested in helping to advise the students and overseeing the program from the high school’s point of view.” Chip Rohrbach sums up why this program is so important, “Students need opportunities to see everything that is available to them in the work force. Our infrastructure is the building blocks of our industries, lifestyles and future progress and the individuals creating fundamentals need to be nurtured and supported to go out there and explore...ACE Mentor Program is the perfect opportunity.”

For additional information on becoming an ACE Mentor and/or contributing to the ACE Mentor program, contact Kristy Pollock at kpolllock@kloverinc.com.