

# ACE Mentor News

July 2010

ACE Mentor Program of Northeast Florida, Inc.

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## ACE Curriculum Opens Doors for Students

The ACE Mentor Program of Northeast Florida is an after-school mentoring program that has completed its fourth program year in our area. Founded in 2006, we are an affiliate of the ACE national organization whose mission is: *“to enlighten and increase the awareness of high school students to career opportunities in architecture, construction and engineering and related areas of design/construct industry through mentoring; and to provide scholarship opportunities for students.”*

### A Structured After-School Program

ACE is a 16-week after school program that is presently in two area high schools: A. Phillip Randolph and Orange Park High. The program is led by nearly 50 volunteer mentors from the design/construct industry.

Students spend two hours after school for 16 weeks, working closely with their mentors who are paired with teams of students. Using real-world examples, the students learn about career opportunities in each of the A/E/C disciplines. They apply this knowledge by working in teams on a design project outlined in a mock Request for Proposal. The teams formally present their projects at an end-of-year event, and the winning team takes a school trophy.

One session features a field trip to local construction sites and A/E/C companies. The 2009-2010 session included a tour of the Duval County Courthouse under construction and visits to Haskell, KBJ and Breaking Ground Contracting.



### Scholarship Opportunities for Learning

Graduating seniors may apply for college scholarships, and awards are presented to the seniors at the year-end banquet. Scholarships are awarded to qualified students who plan to continue their studies in the disciplines of architecture, construction and engineering. Students interested in related trade studies, such as apprenticeships in welding or mechanical/electrical/plumbing, are also eligible for scholarship awards.

### Enthusiastic Support from the Community

ACE is a non-profit organization funded exclusively by sponsoring companies, organizations, and private donations. The Board of Directors volunteers their personal time, as do the mentors who are the backbone of ACE. Without these commitments and personal contributions, ACE could not exist.

We proudly acknowledge and sincerely thank our sponsors who are recognized within this newsletter. Special thanks are extended to our National Sponsors who have local ties: **Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC); American Institute of Architects (AIA); Associated General Contractors (AGC), The Haskell Company, and U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).**



**Career Directions for  
Students in Architecture,  
Construction and Engineering**  
[www.acementor.org](http://www.acementor.org)

# ACE MENTOR PROGRAM OF NE FLORIDA

## A MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE: KEN DUNCAN, DBIA, LEED AP

I joined the ACE Northeast Florida program during its inception in 2006. Volunteering

provides such a great opportunity for a win-win situation, and I enjoy those types of interactions—ACE seemed like just the right kind of fit.

Over these past years, meeting other discipline professionals from around the city, seeing how the students began to understand our professions and being with them as they worked through their projects has all been very enjoyable and enlightening for me.

I remember when I was in high school with no idea of a career path, and I want to help students understand all of the opportunities that are available out there. Finishing high school and continuing on into a higher education or craft school is so important. The ACE program does a great job of providing this exposure.

It's impressive to see these students' abilities grow. Leadership skills, teamwork, and logic are all flushed out by the time they present their final products. Every year I am more impressed with the outcome!

It is very fulfilling for an adult to impart some of their knowledge and skills to an eager young person, or coax a kid who's hesitant to participate into being a successful team player on a proposal effort.

We need more mentors to step up and volunteer their time for this most worthwhile effort to assist the kids and help our industry develop new growth.

*"ACE is an experience that I will definitely never forget – having the opportunity to work with engineers, architects and construction managers, and actually designing a building.*

*Every time you attend a meeting, there is no doubt you'll learn something. Especially if you're looking to major in any of those fields."*

*– Annabella Villarreal, Freshman, Orange Park H.S.*

*"ACE has opened my eyes to the career and future into which I have been investing my academic studies.*

*I understand now more than ever that engineering isn't just some job for good pay, but instead it is a way of life."*

*– Abel Villarreal, Sophomore, Orange Park H.S.*

*"I learned about making a stable structure, how to shape a building, how to use materials wisely, and how to use sustainable materials to help the environment ACE was really fun."*

*– Nick Germann, Sophomore, Orange Park H.S.*

## A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE: CHRISTINE ACKERMAN

The ACE Mentoring Program at my son

Connor's high school has been a wonderful experience for our family. My husband and I have been so impressed with the way these professional men and women volunteer their time and talents to work with the students at the school.

The program greatly increased Connor's confidence and gave him the skills to work with others on a professional level. My son left each ACE meeting excited about the projects he worked on and looking forward to the next week.

I watched Connor transform from a shy, introverted teenager to a young man who was confident enough in his work to present it to a room full of professional businessmen and women, educators, and parents. I also witnessed my son go from preferring to work alone, to being able to work well with a team of students and mentors to create outstanding projects.

I recommend ACE to any family looking for a supportive, yet challenging enrichment program for their student!

*"Your ACE mentor will help you and teach you to understand the concepts. Along the way, you learn teamwork, organization, and your own individual skills."*

*– Shanna Xia, Sophomore, Orange Park H.S.*

# IMPACTS STUDENTS, MENTORS AND FAMILIES!

*"It surpassed my expectations!  
Our mentors always offered us  
good advice and were never too  
far away in case we needed help. I  
learned more than I ever thought I  
would in this program."*

*– Jason Muniz,  
Junior, A. Phillip Randolph H.S.*

## A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

**ERIN SAUNTER**

**SENIOR, ORANGE PARK H.S.**

I started in the ACE program as a junior.

Right from the beginning, I could tell that ACE was going to impact my life. Throughout high school, I was a member of many clubs that required extra hours after school, but ACE required the biggest commitment of them all.

There were many people who depended on me to show up and do my best work; I could not let my mentors and my teammates down. As teenagers, we are often reluctant after a long day at school; but for ACE, we always showed up ready to learn, with no complaints.

What I loved about the ACE program is that we could learn what we wanted to learn. In school, we have to study what the teachers think is important—there are no options. The ACE mentors actually care about what we are interested in and help us learn more about that specific field. I loved working on the interior design part of the projects, and being able to learn about architecture and construction management.

ACE also accustomed us to working in groups and giving presentations. We might have given a few class presentations before, but it is taken to a whole new level knowing that hundreds of eyes are going to be on you.

ACE infuses everything a student needs to learn for the future into one amazing program. For students already interested in these fields, ACE helps reassure them that this is the path they want to take.

For other students, ACE may spark an interest and hopefully guide them into a new career path.

Thanks to the ACE Mentor Program, I walked away with great memories, great friends, and lifelong connections!

*"Working on the assigned project teaches students the importance of deadlines, the benefits of leadership, and the bright salience of confidence.*

*It also teaches skills on plumbing, LEED, electrical planning, structural engineering, etc. each year I am introduced to a new opportunity."*

*– Houston Needham,  
Junior, A. Phillip Randolph H.S.*

## A MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE: JENNIFER KLICH, E.I.

When you were in high school? What was important to you? Of course classes were the reason you attended. But to many 15 to 18 year olds, the Friday football game and planning for prom seem more significant.

A select group of students at Orange Park High and A. Philip Randolph Academy have another item ranking on that list—ACE Mentor Program.

An after-school program focusing career choices, ACE offers these students an application for what they learn in class. ACE students spend one afternoon a week staying at school a little longer than the rest, learning the basics of site design, green building, and construction.

As a mentor in this program, being a part of ACE has given me a chance to serve as a role model to the students and to give back to the community. The students are eager to learn and it is truly rewarding to see their new ideas reflected in their final projects.

To me, this is not just the chance to meet professionals from related disciplines, but rather a simple way to share my favorite parts of my career. I urge anyone interested in being a part of this growing program to volunteer and spend just a few hours a week with the students that make it all worthwhile.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ACE

- Q.** What if I want my child to get involved with ACE and he/she does not attend one of the participating high schools?
- A.** If the child has transportation, a student can join the program at any participating high school in Clay or Duval County. Since schools have different hours, the program operates at different times at different schools.

- Q.** What is the commitment required to be a mentor?

- A.** Mentoring occurs 2 hours after school most Thursdays from January through late May (15-16 sessions) at the participating high school.

Mentors are expected to attend as many sessions as possible during the program to be there for their student team. Mentors must also attend a mentor training program as well as pass a background screening check.



- Q.** Who do I contact for more information about ACE?

- A.** Email [NortheastFL@acementor.org](mailto:NortheastFL@acementor.org) or call Kimberly Hansen at 904-265-5292.

- Q.** Will your program expand to other schools beyond A. Philip Randolph and Orange Park High School?

- A.** Expansion is planned to at least one additional high school in the 2010-2011 school year. Englewood High School or Jackson High School are the schools under consideration for Duval County. We will need additional mentors to expand the program.

- Q.** What is the benefit to my child to participate in ACE?

- A.** Students learn more about careers in architecture, construction and engineering from practicing professionals. The students develop skills to work together in a team environment to successfully respond to the group project. Seniors are eligible to apply for scholarships offered at the local and national level. We also conduct a field trip to see a local project(s) under construction.



- Q.** Where does my money go if I become a sponsor?

- A.** Some donors specify all donations go to scholarships, which are our largest expense. Funds are also needed to fund the affiliate operations including expenses for field trips, supplies for student activities and insurance. All sponsors are acknowledged and appreciated, regardless of level.

- Q.** Is my contribution to ACE tax deductible?

- A.** The ACE Mentor Program of Northeast Florida, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation. Confirm with a tax professional the extent to which your donation is deductible. ACE is a completely volunteer organization with no paid staff.



## ACE Mentor Program Awards Over \$15,000 At Annual Banquet

Forty-nine high school students spent 16 weeks this past school year learning about careers in architecture, construction, and engineering firms as a part of the ACE Mentor Program. The students use this new knowledge to work closely with their mentors on a final project.

This year's project was to create a proposal for the planning, design, and construction of a sustainable building on their respective school campus at A. Phillip Randolph High School or Orange Park High School. The in-depth proposals included details on interior design, structural issues, construction costs and scheduling for the work.



### Team Presentations of Projects

All of this hard work culminated in a luncheon and awards ceremony at the University of North Florida on May 21, 2010. At the ceremony, seven teams of students presented their projects to a room packed full of industry leaders, including their ACE mentors, teachers, school board members, as well as parents, grandparents, and family members.

Following the presentations, Duval County School Board Member Martha Barrett addressed all attendees during a luncheon and ceremony: "The ACE

students are outstanding and the mentors are so very impressive in that they give of their time. It is programs like ACE that offer students a real chance to meet their goals and dreams in their lives."

### Scholarships For Continued Learning

The highlight of the luncheon event was the award of over \$15,000 in various scholarships to graduating students. The recipients plan to continue their studies in one of the professional disciplines or related construction trades.

The 2010 scholarships bring the total

scholarships awarded by the ACE Mentor Program of Northeast Florida to over \$44,000 since it began in 2006.

"It would be impossible to award scholarships without the contributions from area companies and personal donations of time and money," explains Kimberly Hansen, P.E., North Florida ACE Affiliate Chairman. "We are ever so grateful to our business partners in the community. At each annual banquet, the experience of acknowledging the work of the students and the mentors is incredibly, personally fulfilling and a proud moment for all participants."



An example of a computer-generated design produced by an ACE student team.

### ACE AND USGBC PARTNERSHIP: A SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AWARD

The US Green Building Council (USGBC) and the ACE Mentor Program have a new partnership which will result in ACE students being able to attain a Sustainable Design Award.

This program will be available to juniors and seniors and operates virtually through a specially designed website. The Award should differentiate students on college applications.

The ACE Mentor Program of Northeast Florida is participating in the pilot program during the summer of 2010. The full roll-out of the program is expected in the 2010-2011 school year.



## Sincere Thanks to Sponsoring Companies and Contributors!

Your generosity makes the ACE Mentoring Program possible, and positively impacts the lives of tomorrow's industry professionals and tradespeople.

- ▶ *Associated Builders & Contractors*
- ▶ *ABC Women's Council*
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