

Pa.-Based ACE Mentor Program Trains Future Workforce

The American Subcontractors Association recently warned that workforce shortages will be one of the lasting problems resulting from the recession. Industry studies confirm a downward trend coupled with rising demand. A recent McGraw-Hill Construction (MHC) *SmartMarket Report* noted that the combination of workers lost due to economic conditions and aging demographics of the workforce could have serious implications in as few as two years.

The ACE Mentor Program's Central Pennsylvania Affiliate is doing its part to reduce the gap.

ACE, which stands for architecture, engineering and construction, is an after-school mentoring program designed to introduce high school students to the construction industry. The Central Pennsylvania Affiliate, which includes 190 students from 39 high schools, runs four consecutive ACE programs in Cumberland, Dauphin, Lancaster and York Counties each year. Two of the counties, Dauphin and York, also offer a skilled trades program focused on the crafts. The skilled trades program runs in parallel with the professional architecture, construction and



High school students in the Central Pennsylvania ACE Mentor Program build a masonry block wall as part of an innovative skilled trades program.

consulting firm in New Cumberland, Pa., and chair of the Central Pennsylvania ACE Affiliate. "Right now, over 50% of our students are exposed to both the professional and skilled trades programs through integrated crossover opportunities or additional sessions added to the curriculum."

The Central Pennsylvania Affiliate's skilled trades program is likely to grow considerably in coming years. The board of directors is currently working out a partnership with Mid-Atlantic BX trade association to expand the skilled trades program to a larger demographic. ■

engineering track. Mentors within the skilled trades track spend two hours a day for 16 to 20 weeks during the school year introducing high school students to some of the most critical construction trades including carpentry, concrete, masonry, site excavation, mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems and much more. On any given week, students might have an opportunity to mud up a wall or operate heavy equipment from a simulator.

"We've found that students really enjoy working with their hands," says Timothy Przybylowski, PE, LEED AP, vice president of Century Engineering, an engineering

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