

Mentored as a teenager, architect now gives back

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From a young age, architect Joseph Cole was driven to explore the worlds of engineering and design. Through a bit of good timing, Cole found himself a student in the inaugural year of Nashville's ACE -- which stands for Architecture, Construction and Engineering -- teen mentoring program, where his passion for the field was stoked to a full flame.

Now a college graduate with a job at a prestigious firm, Cole is an ACE mentor himself, as well as a recipient of this year's Allstate Give Back Day Hero Award.

Where are you from?

I'm from Nashville. I went to John Overton High School, grew up in South Nashville. I played sports and I was in a band.

I went to the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and moved back to South Nashville.

Now, I work in Brentwood at Thomas, Miller and Partners. I'm a project coordinator there. We're an architecture firm.

Can you tell us a bit about your family?

Well, both of my parents were educators for the Metro Nashville Public Schools while I was growing up. My mother is Florestine Cole and my father is Samuel Cole. I have a younger brother as well. His name is Jerrime Fox. My mother currently works for the teachers union, and my father now works for the state. Jerrime is a mass communications student at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville.

Congratulations on being honored by Allstate as a Give Back Day Hero. What does that feel like?

I'm honored to be helping to carry on the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through my commitment to volunteering. I try to make every day meaningful by creating a positive impact on my community. And I hope to inspire my peers to do the same. By bringing attention to volunteerism, I will hopefully show people how easy it is to get involved in something like this.

I'm 27 years old, so I've been out of school going on five years now. As a student, I got really involved on campus. I helped re-energize our chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects and was fortunate enough to volunteer at a community design center.

What was the experience like, being a student in the ACE program, and what has it become now, as you are on the other side of things?

When I got involved, ACE was in its first year. I am the first student to come from ACE in Nashville as a mentee to come back as a mentor.

It is so rewarding. I see so much of myself in the students. I find it really easy to tap into their creativity and enthusiasm because I was in their shoes not too long ago. Having been in their footsteps has made me a better mentor because I feel like I can better relate to the students. I understand the perspective they have as students who haven't had exposure to the design and construction fields.

I can also relate to them how ACE helped me and prepared me to go on to the University of Tennessee as an architecture student. And moving onto the professional realm was also easy because of the exposure the ACE program gave me. Also -- I think this is pretty poetic -- I am a mentor in ACE at Martin Luther King Jr. High School.

Can you leave us with a few words about the impact Dr. King's legacy has had on you?

I'll say that Dr. King's legacy has really inspired me to give back to the community because so many people have invested their time and energy with me. His dream made my dream a reality, and now I can pay that forward by

helping others and mentoring youth through the ACE program.

I would also like to encourage everyone to be a Give Back Day Hero in their own community. Anyone can log onto www.allstate.com/givebackday and they can sign up to volunteer. There are opportunities in every neighborhood. Allstate is donating \$2,500 to each hero's charity of choice, and I decided to have that donated to ACE here in Nashville.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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