

Antinozzi Associates leads local high school students to Third Place Honor in CIRT/ACE National Design Competition

Bridgeport, CT - In 2002, Antinozzi Associates was asked to lead one of two teams from the Greater Bridgeport Chapter of the ACE Mentor Program of Connecticut. Since then, numerous employees have volunteered their time with other industry professionals as mentors to Bridgeport and Stratford high school students through hands-on participation in a mock design project.

Based on this truly unique experience, it is the hope of these mentors, and the program they represent so passionately, that these students stay interested in the fields of building design and construction and return to Connecticut after graduating from college - providing a much-needed boost of new talent in the future.

During the 2009-2010 school year, nine mentors and 15 high school students formed the Bridgeport/Stratford team and participated in this free after school program, sponsored by the ACE Mentor Program of America. "ACE", which stands for Architecture, Construction, and Engineering, is a nationally-based, group mentoring program whose mission is to enlighten and increase the awareness of high school students, especially women and minority students, to career opportunities in the design and construction industry. Currently, ten teams of approximately 150 high school students make up the five ACE chapters operating in Connecticut, located in Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and Stamford.

During the 40-hour long program year, more than 1,700 volunteer mentors nationwide engage 8,000 high school students in hands-on activities that teach skills used in the industry. 'Project meetings' take place every two weeks during the school year guiding students through realistic simulations of designing a building or taking tours of construction sites or local firm offices. The program culminates each year with a final presentation of a simulated design project in May, providing an opportunity for students to prepare what they have learned and present to their parents, peers, school faculty and local officials. This past year's final presentation took place on May 20 at Housatonic Community College.

"Throughout the year, each student was encouraged to actively engage him or herself in the project they selected to work on and contributed their own ideas. Ultimately, the students learned how to integrate their individual thoughts into one cohesive project", stated Jose Cardoso, a staff member of Antinozzi Associates and ACE Team Leader. Seven high school seniors participated on the Antinozzi Associates' Bridgeport/Stratford team this year, with at least five entering architecture, construction, or engineering degree programs this coming September.

Several of these senior year students formed a team and entered a national design competition sponsored by the Construction Industry Round Table (CIRT) and ACE Mentor Program of America. Led by team members Erik Wengenroth, Anthony Rizzitelli, Aaron Ho, and Michael Lindsey from Stratford High, and Ryan DeSilva from Fairfield Prep, the team's entry for an 'Arts Center/Theater Building' won third place in the competition. The project, designed at the former Army Engine Plant location along the Housatonic River in Stratford, included program elements such as an indoor/outdoor theater,

exhibition spaces, and classrooms. It was also designed to meet the LEED-Certification criteria established by the United States Green Building Council.

A second team of Connecticut high school students, from the ACE Greater New Haven Chapter, won second place in the competition for their design of a 'Green Housing Row' in East Haven. In April, the Greater Bridgeport and New Haven Chapters joined forces and held their annual ACE Scholarship Event to honor student scholarship winners, and mentors, for their dedication to the program. The two teams from Greater Bridgeport and New Haven presented their national award-winning submissions to attendees. It was the first time in the four years of the competition that two teams from the same state have taken top honors.

The first place winner of the national ACE competition hailed from Colorado's ACE Denver Green Mountain Team for their 'Ideal School' entry.

While the designs offered were innovative and creative, the true goal of the competition was to judge the ability of the students to make coherent, well-thought out, and clear presentations on their team's design and construction approaches to meet the project's competition objectives. The submissions also had to be fully responsive to the four major competition package elements which included creativity, construction elements, design process, and design aspects.

All three finalists competed for the top prize of \$3,000 before a judging panel composed of CEO-level members of CIRT on April 26 in Washington, D.C. After their win, both Connecticut teams had the opportunity to meet with Senator Christopher Dodd, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, and Congressman Jim Himes to discuss their projects.

In his letter to the mentors who led the competition team, and selected him as one of three local ACE chapter scholarship recipients, Stratford High School Senior Erik Wengenroth wrote, "Having been involved in the ACE Mentor Program has built confidence in me that I am choosing the right path for college and for my future." Local ACE chapter affiliates, in coordination with the national program, award high school student scholarships to help them advance their careers in the design and construction industry should they choose that path. Last year alone, ACE student participants across the country received \$1.2 million in scholarships. The ACE affiliate chapter in Connecticut was established ten years ago and has involved more than 1,200 students and distributed more than \$300,000 in scholarships.

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