

“Placemaking at Clarke Park” at the ACE Northeast Florida End of Year Event

After successfully presenting their response to the placemaking RFP at the ACE Northeast Florida End of Year Event held at The University of North Florida last spring, the Orange Park High School ACE team, Architects Anonymous, was invited to present “Placemaking at Clarke Park” to the Town of Orange Park local government on May 21st, 2019.

Lead mentor Joe DeMarco introduced the team members and spoke about the ACE Mentor program. He described how students had the opportunity to work with professionals in the Architecture, Construction and Engineering fields on a real-life RFP, and the valuable experience and skills the students gain from participation in the ACE Mentor program.



The team did an outstanding job sharing their ideas with the mayor, town councilmen and over 100 local citizens. The Town of Orange Park officials were so impressed with their presentation that they invited them to participate in committee meetings that would determine how money from grant funding should be spent.

The first committee meeting was held on September 21st. Discussions were spirited as different groups discussed other competing projects around the community. The students had to defend their ideas and try to convince the attendees as to why their improvements to Clarke Park were the best use of grant funding. The students gained valuable real-life experience dealing with local government and the funding process for such community improvement projects as well as dealing with the strong opinions from the town’s residents.



Senior McKenzie St. Vilus stated that he “loved the intense atmosphere and the opportunity to defend the team’s ideas.” Several team members are planning to continue to attend subsequent committee meetings with the hopes of making some of their concepts a reality.



When asked what she learned from the entire process senior Alanie Mojica shared that the ACE program taught her so much, and that despite presenting at both UNF and the Town of Orange Park was at times “nerve-wracking”, the whole experience was worth it, that she improved her presentation skills and enjoyed the entire design process.

The team is very grateful to their mentors and to the Northeast Florida ACE Mentor program for making this entire experience possible. They are already excited and ready to go for this year’s project!