

ACE program to be offered in northwest Iowa

Sunday, June 17, 2018

By Joseph Hopper, Staff Writer

Mentorship program open to applications starting on July 1

A national mentoring program will soon be offered to northwest Iowa sophomores, juniors and seniors in high school interested in the fields of architecture, engineering and construction among others. The Architecture Construction and Engineering Mentor Program is a national program founded in 1994. It is offered free to students in 15 after school sessions where they are able to learn alongside area professionals. The program features 71 affiliates across the nation, its newest being northwest Iowa. The northwest Iowa chapter's board is a recently formed 501(c)(3) and is led by local professionals like Anna Harmon, president of the board for the ACE Mentor Program of Northwest Iowa and an architect for CMBA Architects in Spencer.

“In this area we are often looking for new employees, and the people that are most likely to work here are the people that are from here,” Harmon said. “We need to solicit early with high school students, and we’ve found that that’s also true for construction and engineering. Right now we actually exist as an affiliate, and we’re going to serve the broad northwest Iowa area. We’re making contact with area schools. We’ve made contact with Okoboji, Spirit Lake, Sioux Rapids, Graettinger-Terril. We’re trying to make contact with schools if they’re interested, and there has been some good, broad interest.”

Once the program begins, students will tour professional offices and job sites, utilize industry software, gain hands-on experience and learn about the various crafts of their mentors and industry professionals. Students will also have access to a variety of scholarship resources. The national ACE program states it has awarded \$16 million in scholarships to date.

“It’s a good opportunity to expose young people to different options in the construction and design industry. They don’t get much exposure here and especially in the smaller communities too,” said Jim Thiesse, treasurer of the board for the ACE Mentor Program of Northwest Iowa and engineer at Kruse Cate and Nelson. “They’ll get some real world exposure and in quite a bit of detail. That’s kind of the nice thing. It’s not like a career fair

or job shadow. It's even more in-depth, and they get a little hands-on experience. I think that gives them the opportunity to get a feel for whether that's something they're interested in and if they have an interest going into school or college, they have a little practical exposure.”

Donations toward the program can be made, with more information about ACE being available at acementor.org. Applications to participate in the northwest Iowa ACE program can be made starting July 1.