

Building a dream

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All it takes to bring a dream into existence is some wood, some nails and a good plan.

That's precisely what high school students from across Monroe County are learning twice a month in the ACE (Architecture, Construction and Engineering) Mentoring Program at The Pike Company on Circle Street.

About 18 students from the Greece, West Irondequoit, Rush-Henrietta, Rochester and other school districts attend the course, which runs from October through March.

The 4-year-old after-school program "really lets the students learn how to draw drawings, all of the detail that has to go in, and the different materials," said program co-director William J. Ketchen, executive vice president at The Pike Company.

Ketchen added that along with design and construction skills, students learn surveying, grading and elevations, and how to determine the best spot to put a building.

"It's a great career for them if they choose. There are so many opportunities in these fields," said Terri Anne FERENCE of the Pike Company, who also coordinates the program.

So far, the class has designed four playhouses.

For safety reasons, Pike employees cut the plywood and beams for each house. On Thursday, it was a cacophony of hammers and nails as four teams of students fastened 2-by-4 studs, framed walls and started assembling the playhouses.

The construction also will teach students how to put on a roof, asphalt roof shingles, siding and drywall.

Each of the designs is different, with varying types of roofs. Some even have stairwells.

Sarah Travers, 17, a student at Rush-Henrietta High School, is on a team that is building a castle.

She wants a career in architecture and construction and said the course is "a great chance to work with professionals and see what they do every day. ... I love it."

Alan Palermo, 17, a second-year program participant, learned about the program from a career counselor at Irondequoit High School.

He said what excites him about the program is "seeing what you are building, and seeing that almost anything you imagined in CAD (computer-assisted design), you can build. It's really cool to see your idea become real-life actual stuff."

When completed, each of the four playhouses will be donated for auction by the United Way.

Kurt Melvin, 20, is a Rochester Institute of Technology student majoring in civil engineering and technology. He attended the ACE program as a senior at Churchville-Chili High School in 2010.

He is now one of about 10 program mentors and works part time at The Pike Company.

The program "helped me gain relationships and contacts in the field," Melvin said. "It's always valuable to talk to someone and learn firsthand."

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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