

THE DAILY REPORTER

Registration deadline nearing for ACE program

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By Joseph Hopper , Daily Reporter Staff

Mentorship program hopes to grow in region

Nearing the start of its first year, the northwest Iowa chapter of the national Architecture Construction and Engineering Mentor Program is accepting applications to enter the free career experience-focused activity until Sept. 16.

“ACE is active now,” said Anna Harmon, president of the board for the ACE Mentor Program of Northwest Iowa and an architect for CMBA Architects in Spencer. “We’ve got our 501(c)(3) status now and have mentors who are already signed up. Right now we’re forming teams and need students to sign up by the end of fair. The program is going to begin with students actively participating by the end of September. There’s 17 sessions and they take a project from inception to final presentation. It’d be like what we do in our (CMBA) office but in conjunction with the engineers and contractors, all of the different areas that they do. We’ve formed three different projects for the teams to select so that way they have a level of interest and commitment to it. We’ve been invited to the Central Iowa ACE presentation in March so we’d like our students to go to that.”

The program, which is open to sophomore, juniors and seniors in high school across northwest Iowa, not only offers job experience but also offers the opportunity to network and earn local and national scholarships.

Harmon said she and other ACE mentors are hoping for a few more students interested in the fields of architecture, construction and engineering to participate in the program’s inaugural year. Harmon stressed the program is available across northwest Iowa.

“If we have enough kids say, in Milford, we’ll have a Milford team,” Harmon said. “Otherwise if we have one kid from Milford, Spirit Lake and Spencer we’re going to have to find a meeting in between because we can’t meet individually with kids. Everybody that is an adult member of ACE either providing the mentorship or part of the board we’re background checked, we have all of our security clearances to work with the kids. They would also be insured as part of the program, so we carry our own insurance so your kids will be safe.”

The architect said she hopes to see the program grow further after its first year, noting a possibility in the future of ACE students having the ability to earn school credit possibly as early as the program's second year.

“There is statewide a program called (Iowa) BIG,” Harmon said. “It’s a for-credit high school way to do an open curriculum where high school students are able to get credit for stuff that they do outside of school, say for professionals or self driven learning. Also the northwest Iowa school districts are forming this ‘No Boundaries’ program. That program is to align and be part of BIG, which is a state of Iowa program. They are forming that right now and writing grants for it. So ACE, what we’re doing will align very well with what they’re doing, like it will be under the umbrella easily. So ‘No Boundaries’ will be kind of this area wide depository of options for students to do to get credit and it’ll all be organized and managed by the school district in the state of Iowa to get credit. ACE can fulfill that easily with the 32 contact hours that we provide, so they can get credit for participating in our program. (But) that program won’t start until next year at the earliest.”

Students interested in participating in 2018’s ACE program can contact harmon.a@cmbaarchitects.com and find more information about the program at acementor.org.