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Antinozzi Associates leads local high school students to Third Place Honor

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In 2002, Antinozzi Associates, an architectural and interior design firm based in Bridgeport, 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 unique experience, it is the hope of these mentors, and the program they represent, 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 afterschool 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.

"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," said 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.