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Hoffmann wins Conn. AIA's J.E.D.I. award

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Prospect, CT Hoffmann Architects received the Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) Award from the Conn. Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Conn.) at the annual awards gala on November 16 at Aria.

The J.E.D.I. Challenge, launched in November 2020, offers member firms the opportunity to commit to actions in each of the challenge areas, which include:

Justice: Acknowledging and denouncing racism and sexism, removing barriers to opportunities, and promoting the success of all individuals in the profession.

Equity: Providing balanced resources and opportunities to ensure every practitioner can reach an equal outcome.

Diversity: Encompassing an array of practitioners who represent varied experiences and perspectives.

Inclusion: Fostering a sense of belonging for all voices and perspectives to feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate.

Eleven firms participated in the J.E.D.I. Challenge, signing a pledge to promote J.E.D.I. outcomes in architecture, engineering, and construction, with voluntary action items related to staff, firm, education/community, and innovation.

From among these participants, Hoffmann Architects was singled out for special recognition.

“Hoffmann Architects was awarded the inaugural J.E.D.I. Award for their outstanding strategies and efforts in creating an environment for the future of the architecture practice,” said Gina Calabro, Hon. AIA, executive director of AIA Connecticut.

Calabro and Angela Cahill, AIA, president of AIA Connecticut, recognized Hoffmann Architects for the firm’s ambitious initiatives, including:

- Established a Diversity Advancement Scholarship with the Connecticut Architecture Foundation for students of color pursuing architecture and engineering careers.
- Initiated a Student Loan Repayment Program for employees to assist in paying down student debt, which disproportionately impacts people of color.
- Conducted an Inclusion and Belonging Survey to establish a baseline on employees’ feelings about the workplace culture.
- Created a dynamic, interactive internal Diversity & Inclusion Blog.
- Started a D&I Book Club for staff to share conversation about challenging topics.
- Connected with ACE Mentor Program affiliates to provide volunteer mentorship opportunities for staff.
- Participated regularly in online Diversity Challenges from the United Way and other organizations.
- Provided a J.E.D.I. Education Training session with an outside consultant for firm leadership and will host a session for all employees in January.

Hoffmann Architects’ Diversity & Inclusion Committee includes Alison Hoffmann, communications manager and committee chair; Russell Sanders, AIA, president of Hoffmann Architects; Cindy Lattanzio, human resources manager; Donna Rehm-McCabe, controller; and five members of the firm’s technical staff, Guilherme Pinho, Kelsey Greenleaf, Nupur Khadilkar, Rob Fraguada, and Merlyn Rivera. Also in attendance at the gala were John Hoffmann, FAIA, executive chairman, and Avi Kamrat, CFO, who have championed the actions of the committee since its inception.

“I am proud of the work we have done and honored to be recognized by AIA Connecticut,” said Alison Hoffmann, in remarks at the Awards Gala. “These steps, while admirable, are just the beginning. We need to do more – as a firm, as a profession – to build a pipeline for talented students of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and cultures to enter the design fields. We need to do more to attract, retain, and support architecture graduates entering the workforce, and to create a work culture that supports diverse viewpoints and experiences. Let’s all use this moment as a challenge to do more and be better.”

More information on the AIA Connecticut J.E.D.I. Challenge is available at: <https://aiact.org/committees/diversity-equity-inclusion-community/>.

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