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Diggs Const. work on SMSA wins award from CBC - New K-12 Const.

July 21, 2009 - Front Section

Sport and Medical Sciences Academy (SMSA) was recently recognized by the CBC, an organization founded in 1952 that consists of prominent leaders in the construction industry. Members gather each year to recognize project teams who exemplify close collaboration in various categories. This year, SMSA won first place in the category of New K-12 Construction.

Eduardo Genao, former principal of SMSA who presided over the school during the programming, design and early construction phases of the project, accepted the award on behalf of the Hartford Public Schools. While accepting the award, Genao said that "for many years, this project seemed like smoke and mirrors." He remembered a conversation he had with mayor Eddie Perez asking him if the project was ever going to happen and what he should tell the teachers and staff. Mayor Perez's response was that of commitment and promise that the project will happen.

As promised, on August of 2008, thanks to the hard work of all the team members, the school opened on time and under budget. The facility was designed by DuBose Associates, O&G Industries managed the construction, and Diggs Construction served as program manager.

Founded in 1997, the Sport and Medical Sciences Academy program began as a charter school whose mission was to prepare middle school and high school students for the array of careers revolving around the Sport and Medical Sciences, from sports journalism to physical therapy, to medicine. After the school achieved magnet status in 2002, the city of Hartford, in fulfillment of the Sheff vs. O'Neil, submitted a grant application to the state for the construction of a new facility.

Today, the school houses 553 students from grades 7-12 in a 158,000 s/f building at 280 Huyshope Ave. that includes 9 labs, a field house, a gymnasium with a climbing wall, 2 fitness rooms, a library media center, and a television studio. The total project cost is \$71.9 million.

This award is quite fitting for the successful program that boasted a 100% graduation rate with 95% of its students continuing on to 2 and 4 year college programs in 2008.

U.S. News and World Report mentioned in 2008 SMSA as "one of America's best high schools" and Magnet Schools of America awarded in 2009 the program an Award for Distinction (only 70 schools received this nation wide).

"We are truly pleased to have had the opportunity to manage this project for the HSBC and be a part of its success," said Joseph DeSanti, program director for Diggs Construction, program manager for the city of Hartford. This success is not only evident by the project being on time and under budget, but there were 17 MWBE firms that were awarded contracts in the amount of \$7.7 million and 32% of the personnel on site were city residents. On June 15, 2009, the Program Manager and School Staff Advisory Committee officially presented the award to the Hartford School Building Committee and chairman John Motley at their regular monthly meeting.