



Would You Encourage Your Child to be a Craft Worker?

Steve Stouthamer, Executive Vice President and Carolinas/Virginia General Manager, Skanska USA

The benefit of today's recovering economy is that there are more buildings to construct. The downside is there are fewer skilled craft workers to build them. Reasons for this worker shortage include increased retirements, more lucrative opportunities in the energy sector, and workers lost to other industries during the recession.

Our industry's challenge is to demonstrate that there are significant benefits to being a skilled construction worker. We need to maximize training efforts for those interested in the building trades.

We all know the benefits associated with being a skilled construction worker: the ability to support a comfortable lifestyle without a college degree, creating something every day

with your hands and the mobility construction provides.

Despite those benefits, the college route has become the default choice, even though it might not be right for everyone. For those of you with young sons or daughters, would you encourage them to pursue careers as skilled workers? If not, why?

Our industry needs to step up its training efforts for those who want to become skilled craft workers. Too often, craft workers arrive at jobsites on their first day of employment with a trade contractor. That tells me they've received no training from their employer about doing their work competently and safely.

These situations could lead to safety hazards and quality issues. Trade

contractors say they can't afford to hire workers early to train them. But is such training a cost or an investment?

Certainly, individual companies can't bear the entire cost. I'm encouraged by developments such as the \$10-million federal grant that a Miami Dade College consortium recently received to train skilled construction workers. And perhaps there are more resources that firms could be providing to groups such as Associated Builders and Contractors and Associated General Contractors of America to help them with their craft training efforts.

Whenever there's a demand, solutions arise. I'm confident that before too long construction will have the training solutions we need. ■



Mentoring Helps Build the Next Generation Of Leaders

Thomas Gilbane, Jr., ACE Mentor Program Co-Chairman, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Gilbane Building Co.

For more than a decade, the ACE Mentor Program has helped inspire thousands of high school students across the country to become professionals in the building and construction industry. To date, over \$14 million in scholarships have been awarded since the ACE program began.

In a recent survey of ACE high school seniors, 93% of respondents said they are heading to college in the fall. If the current trend is an accurate indicator, many of these future architects, engineers, contractors and trade professionals will return to ACE in the next five to 10 years to mentor another generation.

What's sometimes missed in our excitement to talk about the great kids that come out of this program and move into careers in our industry is the professional

edge and personal satisfaction gained by those who mentor.

We believe mentoring builds better professionals. Many leading companies use ACE as a leadership development program for emerging professionals. ACE provides a platform that enables our thousands of mentors to gain just as much as our students.

The program provides volunteers the opportunity to lead teams and to gain experience in project management, delegation, public speaking, networking and much more. Through the mentoring process, these young professionals gain vital leadership skills. The ACE mentoring framework requires interaction with many disciplines, which builds communication and teamwork. ACE is

a confidence-building, career-forward initiative for all involved.

Many of the current ACE sponsors have embedded the mentoring spirit into their corporate cultures. It's something we want our people at Gilbane to do if they are so motivated. ■

\$14 Million+
ACE MENTOR
SCHOLARSHIPS