

CAMP NURTURES MINORITY ARCHITECTS

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Architect David Kirk wants more minorities to make a living doing what he does. Kirk, 54, is owner of DNK Architects in Clifton Heights. He hopes Summer CAMP - a program he runs mainly for eighth- and ninth-grade minority students - encourages them to pursue a career in architecture. Known as the Cincinnati Architecture Mentoring Program (CAMP), Kirk teamed with three colleagues to launch it in 2005, targeting students with a passion for art and science.

Kirk said the community service effort was started after discussions with local and national architectural professional groups that were alarmed by the lack of minorities in the industry.

For example, of the 120,000 licensed architects in the United States, only 1.5 percent are minorities. Kirk said the numbers show that the African-American community has not been exposed to the work of architects.

"We need to change the dynamic because it creates another job opportunity for minorities and influences how everybody lives," Kirk said.

The camp typically accepts up to 32 students per year who attend the week-long program at the University of Cincinnati to gain practical experience in the profession.

Kirk estimates more than 150 students have attended the camps. Of those, two are enrolled in college architectural programs. Starting salaries for new architects run from \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year, according to industry sources.

Students spend time in a studio at UC's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning. They learn every-thing from how to design a building to developing design ideas, Kirk said.

The camp includes tours of significant buildings in Cincinnati. Campers meet with professors, students and architects who share their knowledge and expertise.

Kirk said he volunteers time to the camp because architecture is a "profession worthy of our involvement."

He said three other local architect Michael Pride, Associate Professor, Architecture and Interior Design at Michael Burson, Director of Facilities Cincinnati Public Schools; and Alan Warner, a partner at GBBN Architects downtown - helped him launch the camp.

Students typically pay \$50 in tuition to attend the camp, a bargain consider it costs organizers \$400 to \$500 per student to operate the camp, Kirk said Organizers put on fundraisers to make up the difference.

Amit Ghosh of Mount Adams said the camp benefited his son Ben, Walnut Hills High School junior who attended the camp in 2007 and 2008 when he was joined by classmate Chris Smith.

Ghosh, Chief Building Official for the City of Cincinnati, said his son took Chris Smith, an African-American classmate the second time he went to the camp the pair could learn more about the profession.

"The camp gave them a real architectural project to design and build a model like a practicing architect would," Ghosh said.

"David was insistent about keeping the cost low for families," Warner said.

"This camp is essential for the future of the profession, and David is the one who has the keen eye for understanding the opportunity for the children."