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## Challenging Students

The Academic Challenge for Excellence (ACE) Foundation supports the numerous after school academic clubs and teams.

By [Trista Morin](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 2, 2011

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In these times of deep educational budget cuts, over 500 Trumbull public school students have the Academic Challenge for Excellence (ACE) Foundation to thank for supporting the numerous academic clubs and teams they take advantage of after school.

The ACE Foundation was originally conceived in 2003, to provide support to [Trumbull High School](#) students and teachers interested in going above and beyond activities traditionally available in the classroom.

Today, the Foundation offers some type of assistance to over 50 competitive academic teams and academic enrichment initiatives, as well as formalized local/global civic service and awareness programs at the high school, middle school and elementary levels.

“The teams and clubs ACE supports open doors to the future for so many students that they didn’t know were possible,” said Dan Neumann, an ACE founding member and board member.

From the Mock Trial Team to the CSI Forensic Science Team to the Economics Challenge Team, each and every club and team offers students an opportunity to explore an area that could turn into a potential career for them.

“I joined the Robotics Team last year as a freshman,” said Greg St. Germaine, “because I was always interested in computers and electronics.”

“I’ve had the opportunity to learn programming and many of the other kids in the club who are graduating now want to get into video game design and engineering because of what they learned in this club.”

In addition to enriching the lives of the students, the teams and clubs sponsored by ACE have achieved local, state and national attention.

Trumbull High School's (THS) "We the People" Team has been Connecticut State and National Champions and THS *Trillium* yearbook has won numerous Press Association Awards.

There are six groups that are current state champions and many of the teams have done the best they have ever done this year. "They are all on an upward trajectory," said Neumann.

"We take such pride in the number of students who are engaged in the groups ACE supports," said Neumann. "Just participating make us happy, but doing well makes us really happy."

Being victims of their own success is something the foundation is now facing. "As the school budget tightens, the demand for funding is growing, which places a greater burden on raising money," said Neumann. "When teachers make requests, we try to find a way to offer support."

And the challenge of fundraising is even harder because many of the students and their parents have no idea who is paying for these activities to even offer support.

The ACE Foundation is a non-profit organization with an all-volunteer board. ACE works in partnership with the school district. While the district funds advisors and transportation and allows for these groups to exist, it is ACE that provides the supplemental assistance that allows them to thrive.

"We offer an outlet for kids who aren't traditionally supported like sports or the performing arts," said Neumann.

The students in the ACE clubs and teams drift in and out week to week. "It's tough to have a focused parent group when that happens," he said. "We are a booster club with an unspecified kid or parent base."

Fundraising is how ACE grants the numerous requests these clubs and teams make. ACE accepts donations, and helps to meet their own budget by working with organizations and events like [Westfield Trumbull Mall](#)'s July 4 Celebration and Trumbull's own summer concerts.

In an effort to reach out to parents and students, the ACE Foundations recently hosted participants from [Hillcrest](#) and [Madison Middle School](#) and Trumbull High competitive academic teams/groups, their parents and advisors at their seventh Annual Recognition Celebration.

"It's an opportunity for everyone to interact with one another and make connections," said Neumann, "It's also a time for us to celebrate what we have accomplished."

For more information on the ACE Foundation visit their website at [www.trumbullace.org](http://www.trumbullace.org).