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Contact:
Tom Clark
Director of Marketing & Business Development
(920) 380-2172
tclark@hoffman.net

Appleton Career Academy and Hoffman LLC
Collaboration Puts Students in the Spotlight
Winning Design to be Announced Wednesday Evening

Appleton, Wis. – Design students from Appleton North High School's Career Academy will learn this week which of their concepts will be included on a national promotional item for Hoffman LLC, a planning, architectural, and construction management firm headquartered in downtown Appleton. The reception to announce the winning design, scheduled for 5:15pm on Wednesday, April 23, will be held at the Hoffman offices in the City Center East building, 122 East College Avenue, Suite 1G.

Hoffman and the Design Academy teamed up in February to form a partnership advantageous to both groups. Searching for a fresh and sustainable promotional item to be given away at local and national industry tradeshows, Hoffman decided on 100% organic cotton, reusable canvas bags. But the question then became what to print on them.

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After Hoffman learned of a connection with the Design Academy, discussions with the Academy's art and technical education instructors followed and the idea was born to create a marketing contest for the design class students. Their mission—develop a logo or design based on Hoffman's sustainable business practices, with an emphasis on "sustainable living".

The class of twenty-five students and two teachers were invited to Hoffman's newly renovated headquarters to tour the highly-sustainable facility, learn about Hoffman's mission and goals, and receive project details. Students were provided facts on the "truth about plastic bags", "why organic cotton", and "why a reusable bag", helping them understand the purpose of the project and promotional item. From there, the students formed seven teams and began the conceptual and design process. Over the past three weeks, each team has met with Hoffman's marketing staff to present their concepts and receive feedback and direction.

Speculation ends for the students Wednesday night when Hoffman reveals the winning design at the reception for the students and their parents and teachers. The selected design will be screen-printed by the students on 1,000 reusable canvas bags purchased by Hoffman.

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Even though only one design will be featured on the canvas bags, the project has delivered on a main objective of the Design Academy. “One of the goals of the Design Academy is to not only teach students about design and design careers, but to give them opportunities to work on business ‘soft skills’,” explained Renee Ulman, an art and design instructor at the Academy and co-coordinator of the joint project. “Students are able to learn and practice business etiquette, effective communication, presentation skills and teamwork—all tenets of the professional workplace. This design contest provided them the chance to do just that. Teachers can try to set up simulations like this in the classroom, but real-life, hands-on experiences in the community are far more beneficial.” Added Tom Clark, Hoffman’s director of marketing and business development, “Our collaboration with the Design Academy benefited us in multiple ways. Not only did we receive incredible design concepts to choose from, but we were able to provide practical marketing situations for the students to experience. We wanted to give them a glimpse of what it’s like to work with a client and create concepts based on their direction, schedule meetings, and work toward meeting deadlines.”

Tracy Drechsel, a marketing specialist for Hoffman and the project’s

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co-coordinator, believes the competition was a success. “In meeting with each of the teams, it was great to see their enthusiasm and we feel very fortunate to be on the receiving end of their creative ideas and design capabilities. The task of selecting a winning design will definitely not be easy.”

With the project nearing completion, both Hoffman and the Design Academy reflected on the time spent working together. “We consider ourselves very lucky to have been able to partner with the Appleton Career Academy and their creative students,” stated Clark. “A project of this magnitude wouldn’t have happened without the efforts of Academy instructors Renee Ulman and Joel Edler, who guided students through the project. Hoffman will have a fantastic looking item, reminding clients of our commitment to sustainability and healthy living.” Ulman and Edler believe the project sent a positive message to their students. “It is important for our students to know that there are design opportunities in their home town and that community members care about their ideas and take them seriously. We thank Hoffman for giving our students this wonderful opportunity—it is invaluable to their futures.”

Hoffman plans to use the bags as promotional tools with current and prospective clients and as giveaway items at the numerous convention

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tradeshows it attends throughout the year. Upcoming conventions include the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (Denver, CO), American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (Philadelphia, PA), and the Wisconsin State Education Convention (Milwaukee, WI).

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***Hoffman LLC**, based in Appleton, Wis., is a planning, architectural, and construction management firm whose mission is to make a positive impact on people's lives and their environment by providing creative ideas and responsible solutions. Learn more about Hoffman at www.hoffman.net.*