

The Winning Formula

BY BRIDGET MCCREA



NPCA Educational Foundation scholarship recipient wins national collegiate contest for engineering design.

Never one to back down from a challenge, Aaron Ausen dug right in when the opportunity to design a wastewater treatment plant reared its head. A student at the University of Wisconsin at the time, Ausen was part of a team that wound up beating 13 other schools (two of which were graduate institutions) to win first place in the contest, which was sponsored by Metcalf and Eddy, one of the world's largest wastewater firms.

"The basis for the project was to design a wastewater treatment plant that had the ability to produce reclaimed water, and our design won," says Ausen, a third-generation pre-caster who works as operations manager at Janesville, Wis.-based Dalmaray Concrete Products Inc. The team won a cash prize and trophy, and had its accomplishment showcased in an Engineering News-Record magazine article.

Ausen attended the University of Wisconsin with the help of an NPCA Educational Foundation scholarship, which he initially learned about while perusing the NPCA Web site at www.precast.org. "I noticed that the scholarship was available, so I filled out the application," recalls Ausen, who studied civil engineering, with an emphasis on structural concrete. "I was lucky enough to receive the financial assistance, which helped out a great deal with my studies."

The scholarship provided Ausen with \$1,000 per year and

was renewable for three years (since he was already past his freshmen year when he signed up for it). He sees the program as being especially beneficial for students who need the extra financial boost to get them through the four years of school. It's also a great way to get students interested in the precast manufacturing industry, he says.

"It's a great industry to be in, and one that's constantly changing and growing," says Ausen. "I've always been fascinated by it, and I know that the more people who get involved in it, the more it will

grow."

That's exactly what the leadership team at the NPCA Educational Foundation had in mind when they drew up a five-year plan recently and called it the "Foundation for the Future" campaign. According to John Lendrum, partner at Norwalk Concrete in Norwalk, Ohio, and campaign chairman, the organization is currently in fundraising mode and focused on four specific areas: growing precast markets through education; the precast education of specifiers, owners and end users; workforce development, quality control and safety; and expanding the education of architectural and engineering students.

"Students like Aaron Ausen are precisely the type of people we want to support, and who we want to see take a continued interest in the precast industry," says Lendrum. "We also want to educate current NPCA members through an educational programming committee and cross-pollinate ideas back and forth in a networking environment that benefits everyone."

Ultimately, Lendrum says the fact that students like Ausen are benefiting from the foundation's efforts goes a long way in helping to further the precast industry. "Supporting students with scholarships elevates the industry as a whole," says Lendrum. "It helps familiarize people with precast concrete and its capabilities, and in turn makes it the product of choice throughout the industry. That's what we're looking for." **me**