

I.D.

Denise Korn and Youth Design Boston

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by Shonquis Moreno



Denise Korn, founder of Youth Design Boston

July 29, 2008. Denise Korn is the principal of **Korn Design** in Boston, which she has built around the ideals of cultural awareness and activism. The firm has a history of commitment to community and to promoting design in contemporary culture. Korn has long been focused on the creative economy, serving as co-president of The New England Creative Economy Council where she helped bridge economic development initiatives with the creative and design sector, and as an active board member of AIGA Boston. This is why, six years ago, it seemed natural to her to found non-profit **Youth Design Boston** as a way to introduce high school students to design as a career opportunity by providing internships with local creative businesses during the summer months. As the program gets set to put down roots in both Denver and Providence, I.D. spoke with Korn about it. aigaboston.org/events/youth_design_boston, www.korndesign.com

Why did you decide to start YDB?

I founded Youth Design six years ago with the idea of providing young people with real-world career possibilities. Through this experience students learn that it is both possible and viable to focus on design as a profession and are encouraged to pursue a college education. Students at the high-school level are ripe for hands-on learning and eager to figure out our complex world. I see Youth Design as both a pathway and mentoring support system for talented students at this critical crossroads.

It sounds as if you're meeting with a lot of success, especially with Youth Design reaching new cities such as Denver and Providence.

The list of sponsoring firms and the diversity of projects the students have worked on at those firms is far-reaching. This summer, we have students working at Harvard University Press, at the in-house creative group at Met Life, in the graphics department of an architectural firm and at a number of boutique design firms.

Students contribute to the design process by working on everything from identity projects to product packaging, advertising campaigns and communication materials. They also work on typesetting, editing assignments and preparing digital files for pre-press. They learn technical skills and new design programs rapidly and are able to readily utilize these tools on assignments during their internships. Youth Design students consistently exceed the expectations of their sponsoring firms and continue to set the stage for future sponsorships.

We see how success in the Youth Design program influences and inspires the students involved on a continual basis. My first Youth Design student, Lydia Kardos, recently graduated from The School of Visual Arts in New York and is pursuing a career as a professional photographer. Last summer, a Youth Design intern worked with mentoring designers at CONTINUUM, our primary sponsor for the past three years, while there he contributed to a marketing campaign for a national cellular company. He was thrilled to see the work he collaborated on evolve and find its way into stores all over the country.

Did you have some experience early in life that helped you move towards design as a career?

I feel very lucky to have had open-minded and supportive parents who allowed me to explore my artistic interests at a very young age. The design world, however, was a big, gray, fuzzy place that seemed unreachable, at least to me, as an eager high-school student. Youth Design clears the way and introduces the variety of paths that students can take to pursue design and follow their passion.