Many people know Steve Harvey from his work as an entertainer on television, radio and the stage, or from his writing of books such as “Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man.” Fewer know of his work with the Steve and Marjorie Harvey Foundation, to uplift youth through education. It was that serious mission that caught the attention of the National Society of Black Engineers.

This past Nov. 15th, NSBE partnered with the Steve Harvey Mentoring Program for Young Men (steveharveymentoring.com) to bring a taste of NSBE’s unique Summer Engineering Experience for Kids (SEEK) to 100 young black men from Chicago. The mentoring program was a three-day, regional event designed “to share, teach and demonstrate the principles of manhood to young men, enabling them to achieve their dreams and become men who are strong, responsible and productive.” The goal of the weekend was “to break the misguided traits of manhood and introduce role models who provide positive examples of manhood.”

Those positive examples included 10 NSBE collegiate members from the Chicago area, who volunteered their time to learn the curriculum for a “Fuel Cell Challenge” — created by SAE International — and present it to the 100 mentees who gathered at Chicago State University for the program. Each NSBE volunteer worked with a group of 10 young men to increase the mentees’ understanding of engineering and its basic principles, and how to apply them.

As the NSBE volunteers began introducing themselves and the Fuel Cell Challenge, many of the young men were immediately engaged, ready to learn more. The teamwork necessary to complete the task was evident when the groups began building their vehicles: each group worked well together. However, when it was announced that the groups would be racing their vehicles, the competitive nature of the young men increased their diligence a notch. Excitement and anticipation filled the air, as the groups made their final modifications to the vehicles and the start of the competition drew near.

Then it was on to the track, where the vehicles were tested for endurance. After the competition, the winning group presented what they learned, and I left the young men with a few words of wisdom.

The NSBE volunteers agreed that working with the young black men from Chicago was a wonderful experience. Seeing the young mentees’ initial expressions of skepticism change to looks of excitement and confidence during the event was simply priceless.

Chinedu Ndum was the Summer Engineering Experience for Kids (SEEK) site leader for Washington, D.C., in 2011, San Diego in 2012 and Houston in 2013.

Ten NSBE collegiate members volunteered at a Steve Harvey Mentoring Program for Young Men event in Chicago. (Nov. 15, 2013)