

Alfred University's Art Force 5 announces summer outreach program in New York City

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ALFRED, NY A team of student from SUNY Schools, overseen by Alfred University's award-winning Art Force 5 program, will spend this summer in New York City, using art as a tool of outreach to youngsters.

According to program director Dan Napolitano, assistant dean of the Alfred University School of Art and Design, the Art Force 5 has been granted a three-month lease of a rowhouse on Governor's Island, which will serve as headquarters for the group's summer outreach, from May 15 through August 15. A mission of Art Force 5 is to use art to convince youth that creativity is the solution to conflict.

The Art Force 5's summer team is made up of students from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, the University at Buffalo, SUNY Purchase and SUNY Morrisville, with one last spot held for a City University of New York (CUNY) student transferring to a SUNY institution. Students will regularly go into the city to provide outreach in residential neighborhoods and schools through its "Creativity Over Conflict" workshop program.

The workshops will be held once a week at elementary schools. The Art Force 5 team will also host various studio talks for high school students interested in the visual arts. This college-bound focus reflects the team's primary sponsor, SUNY (State University of New York) who awarded the program a two-year Performance Improvement Fund in 2017 to encourage collaboration across the SUNY system.

On Governor's Island, the team will offer their "Heroes Within" craft stations, inviting visitors to build their own clothespin superhero or design a colorful cape and mask. Their "Drawn to Diversity" exhibit will trace the history of comic books alongside the path toward equal rights. The team will also ask visitors to paint one tile in a "Mystery Mosaic" series which builds mobile mosaic portraits of significant individuals. This year's portraits celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of New York City's Harlem Hellfighters and their contributions during World War I.

Founded in 2006 at Alfred University, the Art Force 5 has received national recognition for their unique diversity training and their interactive community-based art and has a proven record of engaging communities through creativity. In 2016, they were awarded the Unite Rochester Challenge grant and designed opportunities for the Rochester Police Department to make art alongside community members.

Throughout 2017, the team conducted a statewide tour building mosaics and raising awareness of 1917's East St. Louis Riots through portraits of the leaders of the subsequent 1917 Silent Parade. The final works were exhibited at both the NAACP National Convention in Baltimore and at the State University of New York (SUNY) Central Administration in Albany, NY.