

Commencement speaker urges world peace

5/14/05

World peace is "not a quirky option, but an imperative," Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, a noted expert on race relations and the dynamics of prejudice, told Alfred University graduates this morning during commencement ceremonies in McLane Center. Poussaint titled his speech, "A House Divided Cannot Stand," which is based on an 1858 address by Abraham Lincoln just before the Civil War. Lincoln, in turn, had taken his title from a biblical verse. What Lincoln referred to in his speech was a nation deeply divided by the issue of slavery. As a youngster growing up in New York City, Poussaint said he aspired to see an end to racial discrimination and inequality in the United States. While progress has been made during his lifetime toward achieving that goal, "Our 'house' covers much more than the United States," Poussaint said. Today's 'house' is "all the globe. Much of the world is acutely divided." As advances in telecommunications and transportation shrink the distances between peoples and countries, each must "develop the ability to work and live in a multicultural and pluralistic environment," he said. A graduate of Cornell University's School of Medicine and a psychiatrist, Poussaint noted that biomedical advances have extended life expectancy from 47 years in 1903 to 77 years just a hundred years later. Yet the violence rampant in many parts of the world "is the antithesis of heaving and makes a mockery of the advances we've made in medicine." But, Poussaint reminded the AU graduates, "violence is not an inevitable part of the human condition." As individuals, they may not be able to "direct the affairs of nations, but as individuals, if you live non-violent lives, you can change the world one person at a time," Poussaint said. He is director of the media center of the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston, as well as a professor of psychiatry and faculty associate dean for Student Affairs at Harvard Medical School. The University bestowed an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree upon Poussaint. "It is an honor to have someone with Dr. Poussaint's contributions to social justice, mental health, and education with us today," said Dr. Edward Gaughan, professor of School Psychology, who presented Poussaint for the honorary degree. "There are many paths for those who seek a more just, healthy, and tolerant society. Some provide the knowledge needed through their scholarship, others dig in at the street level to support those denied access to the benefits of our society. Still others find a way to reach out widely through the productive use of our pervasive mass media. Some spend their lives preparing and inspiring others to take up the challenge. It is rare when one person combines accomplishments in all of these areas," said Gaughan. Poussaint is one of those rare people. Joel P. Moskowitz, a 1961 alumnus of Alfred University, who is founder, president and chief executive officer of Ceradyne, Incorporated, a manufacturer of advanced technical ceramics, including the plates for body armor used by U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Presenting Moskowitz for the honorary Doctor of Science degree was Jeff Maurer, a 1969 graduate of Alfred University, as well as a fellow trustee and close friend of Moskowitz's. "What Joel - and the other ceramic engineers at Ceradyne - have done is provide a definitive answer to that age-old question: 'What do ceramic engineers do?' Their answer is simply: 'We save lives,'" said Maurer. He drew applause for Moskowitz from the standing-room-only crowd that filled the gymnasium when he explained, "Ceradyne manufactures the ceramic plates for the body armor worn by U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The armor is credited with protecting thousands of lives with Ceradyne's lightweight ceramic plates that are capable of stopping an AK-47 bullet," said Maurer. Student speakers were Monica Edmiston, an art and design major, and Soukthavanh (Tim) Inthirakoth, a communication studies major with a minor in business administration, who are this year's recipients of the Marlin Miller Outstanding Senior Awards. Edmiston is the daughter of Terrence and Elaine Edmiston of Second Street, Youngville, PA, and is a graduate of Youngsville Middle-Senior High School. A graduate of Bishop Kearney High School, Inthirakoth is the son of Amphay Inthirakoth of West Henrietta Road in Henrietta, and Somkith Inthirakoth of Jewel Street, Rochester, NY. Top students for the class of 2005 were: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences: Kazumasa Takeuchi of Alfred, who earned a perfect 4.0 grade point average with majors in mathematics and geology. Takeuchi is the son of Dr. Takao and Keiko Tekeuchi of High School in Alfred, and is a graduate of Alfred-Almond Central School. School of Art & Design: Megan Tanneke Bisbee-Durlam, who had a 3.92 grade point average. She is the daughter of Dr. David and Tamara Bisbee of New London, NH, and is a graduate of Cedar Falls High School. School of Engineering: Katherine Eileen Sieg, who earned a 3.88 grade point average. A graduate of Bishop Brady High School, Sieg is the daughter of Christopher and Janet Sieg of Hillsborough, NH. College of Business: Mary C. Stermole, who earned a 3.93 grade point average as an accounting major. Stermole, a graduate of Corning-Painted Post High School, is the daughter of Mark and Kathleen Stermole of Gorton Road, Corning. At the conclusion of its 169th year, Alfred University conferred Ph.D. degrees in ceramic engineering, glass

science and materials science and engineering, as well as 10 Doctor of Psychology in School Psychology. It also awarded 71 master's degrees and 327 baccalaureate degrees.