

Students build rapport, and a bus shelter

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Alfred University and Alfred State College students arriving by bus for the start of the fall semester in a couple of weeks will be welcomed at the Alfred Plaza, a new bus shelter completed by students at the two schools that share this small Southern Tier village. The project began nearly two years ago when Bland Hoke, a May 2007 graduate of Alfred University with a degree in Fine Arts from the School of Art & Design, part of the New York State College of Ceramics at AU, obtained a Community Initiative Grant offered by Joseph S. Lewis III, dean of the art school. The grant, said Hoke, who is now living in Colorado, "was targeted at working with the community. I gathered a group of students, and we researched a public amenity within the Village of Alfred that would be revitalized with the integration of public art." The bus stop was an obvious target for improvement. Highly visible, it is located on the corner of South Main and West University streets, across from the University's main gate and adjacent to the community library, the Box of Books. It's well-used by students from both campuses, and it was badly in need of repair or replacement. Built some 30 years ago, the former bus stop was constructed of tongue-and-groove floorboards, and had become so flimsy it literally shook when jostled, the students found. After conducting a charrette to solicit comments from the community, COTTA - the Community Outreach Through The Arts group of AU students - and the Alfred State Architecture Club members went to work, developing designs. Once they had finalized the design, building the shelter became another joint project, with students in Alfred State College's building trades (timber framing) program taking the lead through the Timber Frame Club under the supervision of Leon Buckwalter, instructor in building trades, who consulted with students throughout the design phase to explain requirements of timber frame design and volunteered to oversee the construction phase. Framing work was completed by Buckwalter's historic preservation carpentry students during the spring 2008 semester, with other AU and ASC students volunteering when they could. The new structure features the terra cotta roof tiles that are the signature of many historic Alfred buildings. Hoke designed the new benches for the shelter. "This paralleled my management of a newly formed material reuse program with the art school called RePo (Reusable Materials Depot)," explained Hoke. DuPont supported RePo "with a large donation of off-spec Corian sheets." When working on the design for the new benches, Hoke recalled his tour of the Corian manufacturing facility, and knew he wanted the "parameters of the design (to be) centered on locally and sustainably sourced materials." "I was familiar with the variety of waste materials created by the production process, and began designing the benches based on the mold flashing created by the injection molded Corian sinks," Hoke said. "A couple of specific scraps of flashing were shaped in the profile of a bench, and with these, I proposed to use approximately 2,000 pieces of flashing to create the benches, using nearly 1.5 tons of waste."