

## **Former fraternity house transformed into Cohen Center for the Arts**

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Five years ago, the house on Main Street in the Village of Alfred was a dilapidated wreck, symbolic of a Greek system gone so wrong that the Alfred University Board of Trustees banned fraternities and sororities. Today, the former Zeta Beta Tau house has a new look and a new purpose as the Cohen Center for the Arts, thanks to AU Trustee Michele Cohen and her husband, Marty Cohen. Speaking at the opening of the Center for the Arts, Alfred University President Charles M. Edmondson praised the Cohens for their gift that allowed the transformation of the property "from a dilapidated eyesore into a great cultural resource for Alfred University, the Village of Alfred and the region." More than that, the Cohen Center for the Arts will provide Alfred University students a place to hone their entrepreneurial skills, to learn "the business of art," said Joseph S. Lewis III, dean of the School of Art & Design. The first floor of the house is now a gallery that will be jointly operated by students from the School of Art & Design and the College of Business under the guidance of the Career Development Center. Work by alumni, faculty and visiting artists will be displayed in the gallery. "Our students will now gain hands-on knowledge, real-time experience," something that is unique among art schools, said Lewis. He explained students will develop business and promotional plans and design the materials for those campaigns as part of a capstone course taught by Prof. Michelle Lockwood. Other students will curate the shows and develop the exhibitions, under the guidance of faculty and Sharon McConnell, director of the School's Fosdick-Nelson Gallery. In addition to the gallery, students will also run an e-commerce Web site coordinated with the gallery, allowing it to extend its audience - and its potential customers - internationally. "I cannot express my gratitude to Marty and Michele Cohen for doing this for us," said Lewis. "It will change the way we prepare our students to move out into the world by creating an entrepreneurial environment where they can learn about design, exhibitions, marketing and public relations." The project "couldn't be a success without the students," said Marty Cohen. "We look at this as a place where they can show their art for the first time, and get their start." For the Cohens, the Center for the Arts expresses their appreciation to the School of Art & Design for the education their son Adam, who graduated in 2003, received. And creating the Center "has been a very rewarding experience." Upstairs is the gallery office as well as two studio apartments for visiting faculty or artists. Conversion of the Victorian house was phase two of the project. In phase 1, the original barn behind the house was demolished and a new building for Freshman Foundation, the first-level course all entering students in the School of Art & Design are required to take, was constructed. That facility opened during the 2005-06 academic year and was dedicated a year ago.