

Art Force Five to bring their message to New York Comic Con

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As the Javits Center welcomes thousands of fiction fans to New York Comic Con 2014 this fall, five real superheroes will be deployed from the conference to connect with local NYC school students.

The Alfred University (AU) Art Force Five team, which promotes that creativity, is more valuable than super strength or spider senses, will provide non-violence workshops for Manhattan's Cascades High School and Henry Street School for International Studies on Thursday, Oct. 9 and the Bronx's Grand Concourse Academy on Friday, Oct. 10.

The AU program is being included as part of ReedPOP's inaugural New York Super Week as an initiative to expand the program's positive impact throughout the city.

The Art Force Five is the outreach branch of AU's Drawn to Diversity program which fuses social justice education with creativity development. The five colorful heroes each wear an apron (referred to as a "cape in reverse") and each represent an artistic medium - Graphite the Illustrator, Brushstroke the Painter, Zoom the Photographer, 3-D the Sculptor, and Runway the Fashion Designer. Their workshops feature highly interactive activities, magic tricks, creativity challenges, and relatable examples of conflict resolution. Participants realize that the power of creativity reaches far beyond the fine arts and impacts their relationships, perspectives, and problem-solving skills.

"Our college students truly are heroes to the kids in the audience," shares Drawn to Diversity Program Director Dan Napolitano, who also serves as the University's student activities director. "Many of the college students hail from New York City and provide relatable role models, overcoming similar challenges."

In conjunction with the three school visits, the team will be offering craft stations daily at New York Comic Con and presenting their workshop at 10:45 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 11 in the Family HQ section of the event.

The team has presented over 100 interactive workshops to audiences ranging from kindergarteners to professional educators. Additionally, the team specializes in leading "community-based art projects" where most needed. As their visit grows closer, the team may develop a site-specific topic and engage a community directly where they live.

"Community-based art is not about the Art Force Five demonstrating their power," adds Napolitano. "It is an art therapy approach to helping a community find its *own* voice and giving everyone an opportunity to express their viewpoint on a chosen topic." Examples of past projects can be found at www.drawntodiversity.com.

Questions about the program can be directed to Napolitano, at D2D@alfred.edu, or by calling 607-871-2671.