

Art Force Five superheroes confirm NYS summer library tour, booking school visits

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Alfred University (AU) students disguised as superheroes will present non-violence workshops at more than 20 New York State (NYS) libraries this summer to coincide with the state's "Every Hero Has a Story" summer reading program. AU's Art Force Five team, which uses creativity to promote equality, reduce violence, and strengthen communities, will be making the presentations.

The Art Force Five, the outreach arm for the University's Drawn to Diversity (D2D) program, has presented workshops to more than 100 audiences in educational settings ranging from elementary schools to college campuses. While the team has visited various cities for one-week tours, this three-month summer residency is its most ambitious yet and a precursor to a planned five-month Rochester residency in 2016.

The Art Force Five superheroes wear colorful aprons ("capas in reverse") and possess their own artistic power. The team consists of Graphite, the illustrator; Brushstroke, the painter; Zoom, the photographer; 3-D, the sculptor; and Runway, the fashion designer.

Participating libraries are located in various NYS library systems including the Southern Tier, Monroe County, the Finger Lakes, and Mid-York. With the summer library tour already serving as the impetus for building a summer Art Force Five team, the program is looking to add school and after-school visits in both mid-May and throughout June, said Dan Napolitano, D2D founder/Art Force Five coordinator, and AU's director of student activities. The University students have also been invited to present at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Washington, D.C. in late May, he noted.

The Art Force Five team will provide three services to partnering communities/organizations:

- "Creativity over Conflict" workshops which uses magic tricks, costume-play, games, and prizes to explore the power of creativity rather than the fight or flight reflexes which may not be the most productive solutions.
- Craft stations which allow youth to build their own clothespin superhero and design their own cape. College students interact with youth discussing desired powers, heroes' names, and inspiring the young artists.
- The Drawn to Diversity exhibit which features 40+ artifact comic books exploring issues of equality through the art form's history.

The 20-plus local/regional library visits already in place throughout the summer months include stops at the University of Rochester's Warner School of Education Horizons Summer Program; Wilmoughsian Library, Canisteo; the Hornell Public Library; Penn Yan Public Library; Central Library, Rochester; Lyell Public Library, Rochester; Steele

Library, Elmira; Horseheads Public Library; Utica Public Library, and Cuba Public Library.

The Drawn to Diversity program at AU, founded in 2006 by Napolitano, has received numerous national awards and participants have been invited to present throughout the country. Questions about the program can be directed to Napolitano at D2D@alfred.edu or by calling 607.871.2925. A continuously updated list of locations and performance dates may be found on the team&s website at www.drawntodiversity.com .