

Alfred University students look to recapture spirit of Greensboro lunch counter sit-in

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Alfred University students are planning a number of activities in hopes of reawakening the spirit of student activism in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Greensboro, NC lunch counter sit-in, a monumental day in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. The Greensboro sit-in was especially significant because it marked the beginning of the emerging college student movement, as four freshmen from Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina sat at a white-only lunch counter at a Greensboro Woolworth's. Over 50 similar college-led sit-ins would follow throughout 1960. AU students are planning several programs to commemorate the anniversary. A Monday evening (Feb. 1) "breaking barriers" dinner will challenge students to cross self-imposed barriers and randomly sit with new people for dinner and conversation at Powell Dining Hall. "Too often today, we continue to segregate ourselves into groups based on major, color, or other characteristics," said Kevin Carr, a sophomore art & design major. "If the Greensboro Four risked their lives to eat at the same counter as those different from themselves, we hope AU students can at least find the courage to sit beside a stranger at dinner." Other students are also using food to bring attention to the anniversary. One group, led by senior marketing major Ashley Fantigrossi, will be distributing coffee and hot cocoa with civil rights milestones printed on the cups. Another group will recreate the lunch counter scenario and allow students to decorate cookies with their own personal activism goals written in icing. Ana Devlin-Gauthier, a sophomore environmental studies major, explains the significance. "Students are quick to complain but slow to take action. These 'action snacks' are intended to start students thinking about small steps toward becoming an activist rather than a complainer." Photographs will be taken of students with their goal and an exhibit will be created. The AU activities coincide with the opening of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, NC at the site of the original sit-in 50 years ago. More information can be found at www.sitinmovement.org. The Alfred University student efforts are part of AU's award-winning Drawn to Diversity program which uses art and creativity to achieve a five-point mission to "promote equality, teach history, inspire artists, cultivate dialogue, and fight ignorance." For more information, contact program Director Dan Napolitano at Napolitano@alfred.edu.