

## Art Force Five to bring their message to Rochester, planning to build residency

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A team of real-life superheroes from Alfred University (AU) is in the early stages of establishing its new headquarters in Rochester!

The Art Force Five, colorfully costumed college students, will provide a unique “creativity over conflict” workshop for Khieta Davis & fifth grade class at Flower City Flower City School #54 Thursday, Nov. 6.

The students, part of the University’s Drawn to Diversity program, tout creativity as the ultimate super power in promoting equality, reducing violence, and strengthening communities. Last month the Art Force brought their message to the Henry Hudson School in Rochester.

AU, located 75 miles south of Rochester, is investigating a more permanent presence for these heroes in the Flower City which would take the form of a cooperative work experience/education (co-op) program for five students from January to May 2016. Dan Napolitano, program director and adjunct professor, has already begun meeting with various Rochester agencies and companies to discuss hosting the heroes.

“These five students would live in Rochester and work for five companies as interns,” Napolitano explained, “but then they would join forces, jumping into action as the Art Force Five, and visit several schools per week, teaching nonviolent conflict resolution skills to Rochester youth.”

Napolitano calculates that 50 schools could be visited during that timeframe resulting in more than 5,000 students exposed to the workshop.

This academic year’s school visits are being carefully assessed to measure whether students are more inclined to address conflicts creatively due to the outreach of the Art Force Five, said Napolitano. Pre-visit and post-visit lesson plans are also available to reinforce the messages, as one-shot workshops are proven most effective when incorporated into ongoing classroom curriculum, he added.

The Art Force Five have previously performed at the Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester Public Library & Central Library, and nearly 100 schools throughout New York’s Southern Tier and New York City.

The program’s use of superheroes is more than a gimmick, said Napolitano.

“The history of comic art is filled with creativity as a nonviolent means to address conflict,” he explained. “The original comic strip, the ‘Yellow Kid,’ was a response to New York City immigration diversity in 1895. Superman was a direct result of Nazi oppression. Wonder Woman mirrored women joining the workforce in World War II.”

The Art Force Five features heroes wearing colorful aprons (capas in reverse) and each with his/her own artistic power. The team consists of Graphite; the illustrator, Brushstroke; the painter; Zoom; the photographer; 3-D; the painter, and Runway; the Fashion Designer.

Questions about the program can be directed to Napolitano, at [D2D@alfred.edu](mailto:D2D@alfred.edu), or by calling 607.871.2671.