

AU business students to hear from "prisoner of the truck"

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When Fred W. Sarkis was 8, his father made him start working on his vegetable delivery truck during the summer vacation. Freddy didn't want to go. He didn't get paid. He wanted to play with his friends. He wanted to be free, like the other kids in his Rochester, NY, neighborhood. Moreover, he didn't just spend summer days in the back of the truck. His father forced him to go during the winter too, during school holidays and on weekends. The bed of the pickup, roughly roofed by a local carpenter, became Fred's prison - especially on Saturday nights, when his father locked him in the truck bed and went into Hedges Bar & Grill until 11 p.m. Rochester gets cold on winter nights. Fred was cold, miserable, and rebellious. Today, Fred would be called a victim of child abuse. But with a push from a father who seemed cruel but deep down, wanted the best for his children, Fred turned an apparently hopeless situation into an opportunity. On Tuesday (Oct. 1), Fred Sarkis will visit the Alfred University campus to speak to business students. He will speak three times: in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening. Before attending a session, each student is assigned to read Sarkis's book "Yes Pa!" Later, students will write a one-page paper on the influence of a positive attitude on human behavior. A resident of Canandaigua, Sarkis, 76, has dedicated the rest of his life to inspiring children and young people. In 135 talks, he has spoken to more than 15,000 students. In the coming year, he hopes to reach 100,000 students. He is in process of establishing a foundation - the Prisoner of the Truck Foundation - to spread his message nationwide. The foundation, a not-for-profit organization, plans to offer resources in character education, including books, videos, teacher-parent study guides, assembly programs, and links to other resources. On his web site, www.prisonerofthetruck.co..., parents, teachers, and students can read and download the book "Yes Pa!" for free. To learn more, call Sarkis at (585) 396-2046 or send e-mail to fred275@aol.com.##