



Merrimack College students 'dared' to go green as three-day festival kicks off

By Brian Messenger

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NORTH ANDOVER — Students painted a sprawling green vine on the sidewalks of Merrimack College yesterday, its leaves stretching across campus from Cushing Hall to the freshman dormitories at Deegan West.

"This is awesome," said Chelsea Hildebrandt, 20, a sophomore from Methuen. "It looks way better than I ever imagined. You can't miss this."

Sidewalk Sam looked on with pride, the famed artist offering both instruction and encouragement to those armed with brushes and rollers.

"Great job!" he said. "You have to admit the impact is gorgeous. I want you to dare your friends to join in and follow your lead."

Sidewalk Sam, whose name is Robert Guillemain, came to Merrimack College yesterday to help kick off the three-day Blue, Gold and Green Festival in anticipation of Earth Day on April 22.

Featuring lectures, films, music and other activities focused on sustainability and environmental awareness, the festival also highlights some of the college's green projects like expanded recycling and the use of solar power and biodiesel fuel.

The sidewalk painting of the vine serves two purposes — the first is to grab students' attention; the second is to get them involved.

Dave MacLaren, a Merrimack biology professor and the college's sustainability coordinator, said buckets of chalk will be left by the painting so students can share their own messages on the pavement.

"People can write anything and everything they want about the environment," said MacLaren. "The vine is the muse."

Parked outside Sakowich Campus Center in his wheelchair, the 71-year-old Guillemain could hardly contain his enthusiasm as he watched the students paint the vine.

"It will wind everywhere and envelope everyone," he said.

Guillemain was born in Cambridge and lives in Newton. He earned a master's degree in painting before studying for two years in Europe and working as a copyist for the Louvre Museum in Paris, where he

recreated the great works of master artists like Rembrandt.

Guillemin said Sidewalk Sam was born 40 years ago, along with his nonprofit Art Street Inc., when he decided to take his art out of museums and galleries and into the everyday lives of people.

"I always thought that art was inclusive," said Guillemin. "Art should be the expression of everyone in society ... everyone in a community. That's what I see here.

"I'm buoyed up by the spirit of these creative students," he said.

The festival was organized by a student-led Green Team and the Merrimack College Campus Sustainability Initiative.

Formed in 2007, MacLaren said the initiative is now made up of more than 60 students, staff members and alumni, all working toward the common goal of "greening Merrimack."

"The past couple of years it's really exploded," said MacLaren. "We want to raise awareness. We want this to be an annual thing."

Earth Day Events

April 22 marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Here's how you can participate locally:

Andover

The Andover Recycling Committee hosts its annual Zero Waste Day May 8 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Brickstone Square parking lot on York Street. All items go to charitable organizations that donate, reuse, or recycle.

Haverhill

The city's annual Earth Day Cleanup is Saturday, April 24, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Citizens Center, 10 Welcome St., will serve as the registration and information center. Please bring gloves and tools. Trash and leaf bags and refreshments will be available for the duration of the event. To sign up, call 978-374-2388, ext. 28, or e-mail cleanup@cityofhaverhill.com, giving a contact person, phone number, e-mail address, and approximate number of volunteers.

Lawrence

Volunteers will meet April 24 at 8 a.m., on the North Common, across from City Hall, 200 Common St., to plant trees, transform blighted lots, build community gardens and clean up. Free lunch served from noon to 1 p.m. Call Rose Gonzalez at 978-974-0770 for more information. City residents also can pick up recycling bins at this event.

Gagnon Park cleanup April 24, 8:30 a.m. to noon, sponsored by the Tower Hill Neighborhood Association. Prepare the park on Providence Street for the Little League opener May 1. Cleanup might include parking lot on Ames Street next to the Engine 8 fire station.

Volunteers are needed to restore and preserve the lawn at the John R. Rollins School, 451 Howard St., April 24, from 8 a.m. to noon. Food and refreshments will be served.

Methuen

Annual neighborhood spring cleanup on May 8, from 9 a.m. to noon. Volunteers receive a Methuen T-shirt. To find a cleanup location near you, call Jill Stackelin at City Hall at 978-983-8578. Trash bags will be provided, and there will be a cookout for the volunteers from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at the Tenney Grammar School playground.

North Andover

The annual Earth Day Town Clean Up is May 1. Volunteers needed to clean up debris in neighborhoods, around schools, or to accept specific assignments in town. Supplies of sturdy trash bags, buckets and gloves may be picked up at the DPW Building at 360 Osgood St. from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. To sign up, call Keith at 978-683-9454 or e-mail recycle@townofnorthandover.com.

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Photos



Robert Guillemin, known as Sidewalk Sam, is helping Merrimack College and its students decorate college walkways with environmental messages. Staff Photographer