

Conference examines definition of diversity

by Shane Arman - Friday, January 30, 2009

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Planning to surprise someone special on Valentine's Day?

Those who attend the 2009 Diversity and Leadership conference Feb.14 at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh might surprise themselves and others — and still have time for a romantic evening.

The third-annual conference, held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Room 227 of Reeve Memorial Union, has the theme “Becoming a Diverse City through Sharing Our Stories” and will encourage participants to find a deeper meaning of themselves and others through storytelling.

Without understanding yourself, it's hard to identify with others, Sara Ann Suwalski said.

“I don't think many people realize what makes them a diverse person,” said Suwalski, the Leadership Program development manager in Reeve. “Our conference is meant to help students understand more about who they are so they can understand the stories of others.”

The conference offers interactive sessions in the morning, a keynote speaker after lunch and educational sessions in the afternoon.

Options for the two-and-a-half-hour morning session include reading with children from Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Boys and Girls club to learn about their background.

Participants also can visit a retirement home to talk with the elderly and complete Valentine's Day activities or attend a campus workshop on LGBTQ awareness.

“We're trying to touch a lot of different aspects of diversity and give students new ideas and thoughts about who they are,” Suwalski said.

After the free lunch, professional storyteller Mama Edie Armstrong will give a keynote presentation about the world's attitude toward diversity. For more information about Armstrong visit, www.storytelling.org/MamaEdie.

Afternoon sessions consist of two 45-minute student-, staff- and faculty-led presentations. The 12 different topics range from “The N-Word: What Does It Mean Today” to “The Write to Succeed — Connecting Across Cultures.”

Seventy-seven students already have signed up. For more information or for registration, visit <http://reeve.uwosh.edu/get-involved/leadership-opportunities/training>.