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News Release

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Visiting artist inspires IU Kokomo students

KOKOMO, Ind. — Nicole Brubaker aspires to be a working artist when she graduates from Indiana University Kokomo.

She feels more positive about her prospects after meeting visiting artist Bryan Tisdale, who spent two days working with students on campus.

“It’s good to see someone who recently earned the same degree I am working on, who is a successful artist outside of school,” Brubaker said. “He is able to continue producing art, even though he has another job, and that other job is art-related. That is inspiring to me.”

Tisdale, 39, Greenwood, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the IUPUI Herron School of Art and Design in May. He visited classes in the fine arts building talking about his inspiration, his print making process, and the equipment he uses. He also critiqued student work individually, providing encouragement and tips for improvement.

These kinds of interactions were important to him when he was a student, Tisdale said, and he wants to pay it forward with younger students.

“If I can inspire at least one person, that would be awesome,” he said. “I want them to know there is life outside of art school. I spent so much time when visiting artists came to my school, trying to soak up as much information as I could.

“Print making is all about trouble shooting, and we have to learn from each other, and bounce ideas off each other, to grow as artists.”

Tisdale left his job in medical billing to return to school in his 30s, describing himself as a “full time student and Mr. Mom,” during that time. He is grateful to his “awesome wife” Aaren and their sons, ages 13 and 10, for supporting his dream.

"I always had a creative side," he said. "I wanted my children to know it's OK to pursue what you love."

The family garage serves as Tisdale's studio, where he creates his own prints to place in galleries and sell. He also is a screen-printer for the Adidas group, and hopes that leads to a job in the company's art department, creating original designs for clothing.

Brubaker, from Flora, said being able to meet and talk to an artist one-on-one is a rare opportunity, and one she appreciates.

"Even if you go to a museum or an art show, you can look at the art, but you can't talk to the artist and ask questions. This allows us to touch the work and really find out in-depth how it was created."

Tisdale uses his own photographs in his work, which new media communications major Mark Thompson finds exciting.

"I like how he works from Photoshop to screen, which is what I do," he said. "I'm excited to watch him create a print while he is here, and to get my hands dirty and help."

Tisdale is IU Kokomo's third visiting artist, and Minda Douglas, assistant professor of fine arts, said faculty want to host artists in various mediums each year.

"We hope meeting working artists will provide inspiration to our students," she said. "It is a good experience for them to meet artists other than our faculty, who may have expertise in areas we do not, and can provide new ideas."

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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