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Speedy hero artist visits Hood

By Julie Huss jhuss@derrynews.com

DERRY — A few theatrical sweeps of the paint, and the image of greatness came to life on the huge canvas.

For artist Rob Surette, it was not only an artistic creation, but his way of honoring the world's heroes.

Surette, known as the "fastest portrait artist in the world," came to Gilbert H. Hood Middle School on Nov. 4 to offer the students a lesson in how to "be somebody" and make dreams come true.

Jayme's Fund for Social Justice hosted the event. Jayme's Fund is named in memory of Derry student Jayme Lipkin-Moore, whose life was cut short in a tragic accident at the age of 17 but who worked hard in her short life to make a difference in the lives of others by tutoring students and supporting social and humanity issues in the world.

Surette brought not only his talents as a portrait artist to Hood, but almost lightning-speed as he created images of the world's heroes including Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Albert Einstein.

He speed-paints more than 3,500 paintings per year in his "Amazing Hero Art" performances around the world and, in Hood's case, the artist painted about 10 giant portraits during his hour with the students, adding in large visuals on a screen and pounding music to add to the effect.

In those 60 minutes, Surette told the students he wanted to change their lives and inspire them to use their talents to make the world a better place, conveying his message of positive thinking, respect, compassion and creativity to make those dreams come true.

"Lincoln wasn't afraid to stand up for what he thought was right," Surette yelled to the crowd as he completed the famed president's classic image in paint. "You guys can do the same thing."

Surette flung the completed canvas aside and took another large square to begin another portrait, set in sweeping motion to a background of "O Fortuna" from Carl Orff's masterpiece "Carmina Burana."

This time, the image took shape quickly and became the tousled hair and head of music genius Beethoven.

"Beethoven is everywhere," Surette said. "He's classic; he's timeless; he's a genius."

Surette told the students that people like Beethoven, Einstein and Lincoln worked hard to make a difference in their lives, all traveled different life roads, but all were successful and heroes to many.

"If you want to be successful, you have to love what you do," he said. "The best scientists are the ones who love what they do. The best artists are those who love their art. Don't let anyone tell you, you can't do anything."

Surette concluded his hour-long paint fest saying students should find the passion in their lives, get excited about it and then work hard to make dreams come true, no matter what they love to do.

"Take chances, take a risk, follow your dreams and don't give up," he said.

More on Surette's hero art is found online at www.amazingheroart.com. To learn more about Jayme's Fund, visit online at www.jaymesfund.org.