

Outside the Box: New board chair at Artists for Humanity explains the art of his nonprofit

TITLE: Chair of board, Artists for Humanity

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in interior design, **Wentworth Institute of Technology**, 2000



AGE: 36

RESIDENCE: Jamaica Plain

Patrick Planeta, the principal and owner of Planeta Design Group, an interior design firm headquartered in Boston, was named chair of the board of directors for Artists for Humanity in December. The mission of AFH, a nonprofit located in South Boston, is to bridge economic, racial and social divisions by providing under-resourced urban youth with the keys to self-sufficiency through paid employment in art and design.

For those not familiar with it, briefly describe AFH's nonprofit model.

"We take sectors of people who either have had no previous interest in art or never taken a pen to paper, and through art, we teach them effective social skills that will

make them become effective leaders. Our model is very different. We don't do direct handouts. You come. You are put on a team. You are paid. A lot of times these youth come from a part of Boston where it's the only paycheck coming home. And the other part I love about (our model) is that you have to keep your grades up to continue in our program, and if you don't, you get tutoring and if you don't show up for the tutoring that's it. You're out. Honestly, it's not an issue.

*The BBJ's **Joe Halpern** recently sat down with Planeta to learn more about the organization's goals and successes.*

Can you provide us some metrics that support AFH success? AFH has an enormous impact of the youth it works with. They see 100 percent graduating from high school — 95 percent of them graduating on time — and 95 percent of those kids move on to advanced education of some kind. Once they are in a college program, 60 percent of them successfully earn a college degree. That's significantly better than the national average of under 50 percent of college students earning a degree.

We understand that AFH is about to undertake a \$28 million capital campaign that will expand the current space. What is the latest timeline for that project? We are excited to break ground this spring and expect that we'll be in construction for about a year making spring 2018 our target for a grand opening of the expansion.

What will be the immediate impact of this completed project? When completed the EpiCenter Expansion will allow AFH to double youth engagement/employment for high school teens — from 250 jobs to 500 jobs each year. It will also mean hiring more artists and social entrepreneurs to drive additional programming. From a production point of view, we have goals in place to increase access to technology and increase studio revenue. On a broader level, we want to expand in the community with Maker Studios, a gallery and more event space. Then, there are education partnerships, apprenticeship programs and continuing to pioneer sustainability efforts and leadership for environmentally responsible business practices. It's a long list, but we have a lot of momentum going into these next few years and I believe we will accomplish what we've set out to do.

Where can we see the results of the work that AFH has done in Boston? You can find their work in almost every corner of the city — from bike racks designed by the 3D team in Hyde Square, Jackson Square, East Boston and Mattapan to murals like a 95-foot by 55-foot one on the Charlesgate Bridge underpass that can be seen from the Mass Pike. There are also quite a few corporate projects like a 12-foot by 16-foot sculptural mural in the Bank of America lobby on Federal Street and mobile sculpture suspended in the lobby of the State Street building on 1 Iron Street.