

Illustration student wins honorable mention in USA TODAY

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Ethan Sinnott, an outgoing, ebullient person on his way to "renaissance man" status with his embrace of the world and its diverse people, has won an Honorable Mention in USA TODAY's annual All-USA College Academic Team contest. Sinnott, nominated by one of his illustration professors, Jack Slutzky, wants people to find common ground.

One of 64 honorable mention winners across the nation, Sinnott thinks everyone should seek ways to communicate and interact productively. He worked to draft both hearing and fellow deaf students for his successful RIT production of Romeo and Juliet two years ago.

Sinnott, a Rochester native about to graduate with a bachelor's degree in illustration from the School of Art and Design, has never shirked meeting new people and pursuing new ideas, says his mom, Joanne. "When friends ask me if I worry about him off on his own, I think about all the things he's already done," like being a part of the Rochester Community Players and backpacking through Europe alone last summer. "He's had more to overcome, being deaf, but that never stops him," she adds.

"I like to blend bits of many lifestyles with my own," explains Sinnott, who feels that's how people can learn to see through differences. "We're people first--deaf or hearing, who cares?" As one of his career goals, he wants to create "painted graphic novels" to inspire the "MTV generation" to read. Classics by Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy and Irving Stone top the list of written works he'd like to make into visual tales. He plans to finish a watercolor book on Scottish folklore this spring, begin a painted adaptation of Beowulf and continue painting his series on Beethoven, inspired by a visit to the deaf composer's home town.

Above all, stresses Sinnott, "I want to feel that I made a difference, when I'm gone, that more of our past will not be lost--that my painted stories give people a new appreciation of the past."