

Aurora celebrates native son, acclaimed designer, illustrator, painter

Aurora officials celebrated Aurora native and internationally acclaimed artist Wendell Minor in a homecoming Tuesday and Wednesday, May 28-29.

Minor, 74, of Washington, Conn., is a designer, illustrator and painter for trade fiction and non-fiction books, young adult books, children's books and private and corporate commissions.

At Tuesday's city council meeting, Aurora Mayor Richard Irvin presented Minor with a key to the city. On Wednesday, the city dedicated a block of New York Street in front of West Aurora High School, Minor's alma mater, as "Wendell Minor Way."

In a final appearance Wednesday evening at Aurora's Santori Public Library, Minor presented an hour-long slide show chronicling his life and answered audience questions. According to Minor, he decided on a career as an artist while a fourth grade student at Aurora's Greenman Elementary School.

Minor is a graduate of the Ringling School of Art and Design. He received an honorary doctorate from Aurora University in 2004.



His work is in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress, the Museum of American Illustration, and the NASA Art Collection at the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

Minor is the author and/or illustrator of nearly 50 award winning books for children. He has collaborated with many accomplished authors, among them Newbery Award winning naturalist Jean Craighead George, Charlotte Zolotow, Mary Higgins Clark, Robert Burleigh and astronaut Buzz Aldrin. Several of his books, including two with Buzz Aldrin - Reaching for the Moon and Look to the Stars, and Mary Higgins Clark's Ghost Ship - were New York Times bestsellers.

In addition to children's books, his illustrations and design have enhanced over 2000 works, including the covers of David McCullough's Truman, John Adams and 1776, Pat Conroy's The Prince of Tides and South of Broad, and To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.

PHOTO: Aurora native and acclaimed artist Wendell Minor, left, greets a visitor before presenting a Wednesday slide show chronicling his life at Aurora's Santori Public Library Wednesday, May 29. On May 28, Minor received a key to the city at a city council meeting and later had a street named "Wendell Minor Way" in his honor. (Al Benson photo)