



Remarks and Messages

Richard F. Wilson

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For the Pantagraph: Annual Report

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Community part of IWU's heritage



Richard Wilson

March 15, 2015 7:00 am • Richard Wilson

In December, I announced plans to step down as Illinois Wesleyan University's 18th president this coming July, or as soon thereafter as a new president is in place.

One of my priorities over the past 10 years has been to sustain the relationship that Clinton W. Sears, Illinois Wesleyan's first president, forged with the community when he insisted as part of accepting the presidency that a sidewalk be built between our campus and downtown Bloomington.

The priority we place on our relationship with the community was never more apparent than over the past year, as students, faculty and staff have devoted thousands of hours working with a number of McLean County partners on a wide range of projects.

- Give A Day Program: Our Action Research Center began a program last year where individual students and organizations pledged to give a day of service to the community. The result was 37,491 hours of community engagement that we estimate reached 117,883 people.
- Habitat for Humanity: Our Habitat chapter works collaboratively with Illinois State University and together they have built more than 30 houses in the Twin City area. Every Saturday, our students and professors come together to build for Habitat, and we raise funds throughout the year to donate back to our McLean County affiliate and another overseas.

- Clare House: Our student athletes collected more than 5,100 cans of food to be donated to Clare House, the Bloomington food pantry and soup kitchen. A week later, Wesleyan students and other community volunteers sorted and boxed 16 pallets of food for the nonprofit organization's annual holiday food drive.
- Home Sweet Home Ministries: Through a donate-a-meal program with Sodexo, the university's food service provider, students donated meals from their meal plans toward the purchase of ingredients for an Illinois Wesleyan-prepared dinner at Home Sweet Home. Sodexo's executive chef and several of our students prepared the holiday dinner for 144 Home Sweet Home residents.
- Special Olympics: Special Olympics honored us with a Hero Award in 2014. Our support of Illinois Special Olympics dates back 14 years, and over that time we have provided facilities and staff during competitions, worked as volunteers, invited their athletes to scrimmage with our Titans, and participated in the Bloomington Polar Plunge fundraiser.
- Summer Camps: We added two new summer camp programs last year that offer hands-on science learning experiences for area youth. The IWU Young Scientists Camp and Myth Busting from Nature to Man Made Camp give fourth to eighth graders the opportunity to work on fun science projects with IWU faculty and our students.

Other longstanding camps that enroll students from the community include Cello Camp, Chamber Music Camp, Summer Music Composition Institute/Camp, Titan Athletic Camps, and On Stage Theatre for Youth Summer Camp.

We're pleased the spirit of the sidewalk built by President Sears continues to connect us to the many McLean County communities, and we hope our friends and neighbors will take advantage of opportunities to visit our campus to view the public art exhibit on the Eckley Quadrangle, take in an exhibit at the Merwin & Wakeley Galleries in the Ames School of Art, attend a music performance at Presser Hall's Westbrook Auditorium or the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, attend a theater production at our McPherson Theater, or cheer on the Titans at the Shirk Center.

Wilson is president of Illinois Wesleyan University.