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Chinese Activist to Speak at IWU

Sherry Wallace
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Contact: Sherry Wallace, (309) 556-3792

Chinese Activist to Speak at IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—Gao Yaojie, a Chinese gynecologist, academic and AIDS activist will give a talk on AIDS in China on March 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall (1210 Park St., Bloomington).

Sponsored by the international studies and Asian studies teams, the event is free and open to the public. Assistant Professor of Computer Science Jinqiao (Victor) Yu will be the translator.

The 80-year-old retired doctor and professor at the Henan College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, in the province of Zhengzhou, Henan, is well known in China and worldwide for her AIDS prevention work during the HIV epidemic in Henan. She is also known for advocating greater attention to people suffering from AIDS and for children orphaned by the virus.

Gao, who specializes in ovarian gynecology, began her AIDS work in 1996. She has been honored by the United Nations, and has reportedly visited more than 100 Henan villages and treated more than 1,000 people afflicted with AIDS.

She works to educate the public about the disease through her writings. Gao has distributed around 300,000 copies of her self-published book “Prevention of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” and has written 15 issues of her newsletter “Knowledge for HIV Prevention.”

Known for her personal dedication to fighting AIDS, Gao has used money from her pension to purchase medicine for those afflicted with the disease. She also faced political turmoil within her own country. While under house arrest in China for her work, Gao’s detention attracted international attention. Many prominent figures, including New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, wrote personal letters to the president of China asking for Gao’s release. Bowing to international pressure, the government gave her permission to travel to the United States. On March 14, 2007, Senator Clinton presented the “Global Leadership Award: Women Changing the World” to Gao and others at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington.

Gao was also awarded the Jonathan Mann Award for Health and Human Rights in 2001, a \$20,000 prize from the Global Health Council, and in 2003 she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service in Manila, Philippines. She was denied permission to travel outside China to accept the awards.

For additional information, please contact Yu at (309) 556-3535.

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