

July 25, 2007

**Contact:** Rachel Hatch, (309) 556-3960

## **State Farm® Joins Illinois Wesleyan to Provide Unique Internship**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – State Farm Insurance Companies® and Illinois Wesleyan University have joined together to create a unique internship.

This summer, ten Illinois Wesleyan students are working as interns at State Farm Insurance Companies in Bloomington, which sponsors the program. The internship pays for students to split their time, working three days a week at a State Farm office, and two days a week at a local not-for-profit organization.

“It’s an amazing chance when not-for-profits and for-profits work together to serve the community,” said Deborah Halperin, coordinator for Illinois Wesleyan’s Action Research Center, which pairs the students with local organizations after judging their skill level and eagerness to learn.

The decision to start the program, now in its first year, stemmed from State Farm’s conviction that students are the future of communities, according to Kathy Havens-Payne, director of education leadership at State Farm. “At State Farm, we have long believed that for communities to thrive, young people must be empowered as leaders and decision-makers who are challenged to address real issues and problems,” said Havens-Payne, who added that students “aren’t just tomorrows leaders. They are helping lead us now by impacting today’s issues.”

With her internship, junior Emily Meade found the perfect fit for her interests with an internship with the Unity Community Center. “I would love to be able to work for a not-for-profit arts organization, maybe even as an executive director someday,” said Meade, who has double major in music and business administration. “The internship gives me a chance to get my feet wet in both worlds. Plus I have the added benefit of continuing to work with kids.” The Canton, Ill., native has spent several years volunteering with her local YMCA.

On her days at the Unity Community Center, Meade spends mornings helping the children with writing and crafts projects. In the afternoon, she works on the business end for the not-for-profit, writing grants, setting up expense reports and logic models for their various

programs. Then three days a week, she returns to State Farm to work on budgets for the Life/Health Division.

“What an incredible perspective it is to work at a not-for-profit organization and see the visible results of your work, the smiles on the faces of children,” said Meade. “Then you go back to the corporate world where perhaps you don’t always see the results, but you know you are an important part of the process.”

Other students are working with such local organizations such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, PATH, the Hispanic Families Work Group and the American Red Cross. In planning the internships, Halperin said she asked for “meaty” projects. “I asked the executive directors, ‘Give me something off your wish list that you want accomplished. Something that will help you move forward,’” she said.

For his internship, Chris Burrichter is helping to create a strategic plan for Western Avenue Community Center, which works primarily with lower-income youth and families. “I’m essentially doing two internships in one summer, and it is incredible. I could not be more interested in my projects,” said the senior political science major from Batavia, Ill. His community service work easily complements Burrichter’s internship project for State Farm’s human resources department, where he conducts research on the new generation of young people entering the workforce. “I enjoy challenges that really allow see the practical aspects of my research, what new things I can share with those around me,” he said.

Halperin said the combined internships give the students more than work experience. “It’s wonderful to see people like Emily and Chris out there and all fired up,” said Halperin, who noted both students plan to continue with their not-for-profit organizations as volunteers when their internships end. “They are dealing with social problems and, more importantly, when they graduate, they will remember those problems and how to be an active citizen to initiate change.”

-30-