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Volunteers Make It Happen

Illinois Wesleyan Students Reach Out During Volunteer Weekend

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Approximately 300 Illinois Wesleyan students will participate in the fourth annual Illinois Wesleyan University Volunteer Weekend.

"An amazing amount of students participate every year," explains sophomore Katie Tucker, event coordinator. "Many are exposed to volunteering for the first time and get turned on for life to the rewards they receive by helping the less fortunate."

The weekend's activities begin with a noon kick off lunch on the Quad, April 9. Volunteers will participate in a pep rally for volunteerism, with the slogan, "Volunteers Make It Happen." Participants will be treated to a picnic and discussion on IWU's historic commitment to volunteerism.

IWU Provost Janet McNew and Lynn Hruska of The McLean County Red Cross will speak about the importance and heritage of volunteerism at IWU.

Many campus organizations will participate, including: Alpha Pi Omega, Alpha Tau Delta, all of the Greek social organizations, Circle K, and Habitat for Humanity.

Some of the agencies the students will work at over the weekend include: The Children's Foundation, Easter Seals, McLean County Juvenile Detention Center, Arthritis Foundation, McLean County Nursing Home, McLean County Red Cross, and McLean County Health Department.

The benefits of the weekend are a two-way street. Tucker says not-for-profit organizations are provided with a pool of talented and energetic IWU students, who want to make a difference. Those same students get real world experience in fields many might consider as careers.

But, more important, according to Tucker, "The weekend exposes IWU students to lives in the community around them. It opens their eyes to the problems and challenges of the outside world. It bursts the, "Wesleyan Bubble," Tucker adds, "Being in the bubble, we as students, tend to forget those who suffer and are struggling. The weekend helps students reach out to the community and get involved."

Many times a one-time weekend of volunteering changes students' lives. "The weekend is designed to instill a lifelong commitment to volunteerism," according to Tucker.

Senior and two-time volunteer Jason Spoor described the weekend this way: "The opportunity to work with the community and get great feedback was awesome! It was just a great experience to get out and help."

Spoor and many others like him find themselves involved in the community for more than one weekend each year.

IWU has a year round and long standing commitment to volunteerism. For example, each fall IWU conducts its "Make a Difference Day," which is an event similar to Volunteer weekend.

IWU has many organizations that maintain year round volunteer activities. Some of these include: Circle K, Habitat for Humanity, and Alpha Phi Omega, all of which have memberships pushing 100. In addition all social Greek organizations have philanthropy committees and conduct events throughout the year.

A new development on IWU's campus is the creation of courses with service learning components. For example, Dean of Students and professor of French Jim Matthews taught one of the first courses with this component, a freshmen "gateway" course on citizens with disabilities.

Typically students who choose to take these elective courses serve 10 hours of volunteer work and use their experiences in classroom discussions and other assignments.

About IWU

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since

1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.