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IWU Celebrates 150 Years in Education with Birthday Party

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. --Illinois Wesleyan University plans to celebrate 150 years in education with a birthday celebration following the President's Sesquicentennial Convocation on Wednesday, Sept. 27.

The party for IWU students, faculty, staff and their families will begin at 8 p.m. or immediately following the convocation. Those in the community attending the President's convocation featuring James D. Watson, a Nobel Prize-winning geneticist and biophysicist, are also welcome to attend the birthday celebration.

It will be held in the activity center adjacent to the performance arena at the Shirk Center, 302 E. Emerson St., Bloomington. Birthday cake, ice cream and beverages will be served.

IWU's Jazz Ensemble will provide music for the event, and student dancers will be present to perform and encourage dancing. The Jazz Ensemble is under the direction of Professor of Brass Instruments and Theory, Tom Streeter. The ensemble's repertoire includes music from the swing era.

Door prizes will be awarded every 15 minutes. Prizes will include cash, dinners at local restaurants and credit at the university bookstore among others.

The grand prize will include an autographed copy of James Watson's book "Passion for DNA," and an autographed copy of a book written by his wife, Elizabeth Watson, entitled, "Houses of Science." The books will be autographed and personalized upon the winner's acceptance.

"Passion for DNA" is the author's reflections on his life as a scientist and administrator, his work in molecular biology and the Human Genome Project, a topic of great interest in the past few months due to the successful mapping of the human genome.

"Houses of Science" describes the restoration of Cold Springs Harbor Laboratory, a 95-acre campus where four generations of genetic researchers have lived and worked.

The Watsons

James D. Watson graduated from the University of Chicago in 1947 with a bachelor's degree in zoology. In 1950, he received his Ph.D. in zoology from Indiana University.

In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick proposed the double helical structure for DNA, what was deemed "the greatest achievement of science in the 20th century," by Sir Peter Medawar. The mapping of the human genome project was an effort that began 10 years ago under his direction. Watson was a co-recipient of the Nobel-Prize in medicine in 1962.

Elizabeth Watson comes to the university to present "Preservation of Cultural Landscapes" on Wednesday, Sept. 27 at 4 p.m. in Evelyn Chapel, 1301 N. Park St., Blomington. She is a noted historic preservationist and a 1999 New York State Historic Preservation award-winner.

James and Elizabeth Watson will speak at various engagements throughout the week on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University.

IWU's 150th Birthday

Classes began at IWU on Oct. 29, 1850, with two teachers and a handful of students in Bloomington's Methodist church. Attendance soared to 135 by the end of the second year. The university's first building, the College Building (also known as Old North) opened in 1854. IWU President Clinton W. Sears also wanted a "substantial sidewalk" constructed, linking the school with Bloomington -- and spent \$500 of his own money to build the walkway.

Since the fledging campus' early years with "one building, one sidewalk" it has grown to more than 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, a \$5.1-million Center for Liberal Arts and a \$1.65-million baseball stadium. A \$26-million library and a \$6-million student center are under construction.