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IWU Gets State Grant Money for Track Surface

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- Future NCAA Division III men's and women's outdoor track champions at Illinois Wesleyan University will have state auto drivers to thank for their successes.

The top surface of the Titans' eight-lane running track, completed in November 2000 as part of the renovation at IWU Stadium, is comprised of recycled tires from Illinois autos. As a result, IWU received a check for \$176,700 from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs to defray half of the track's costs.

"We have awarded over 250 grants for running tracks since the summer of 1996," said Ed Hosey, energy and natural resource specialist for the DCCA Used Tire Recovery Program in Springfield. "We've been surprised at the popularity and tremendous response we've received."

Hosey said those who have used the tracks made from recycled tires have found them to be more durable, shock-absorbent and capable of withstanding more wear and weather than traditional track surfaces.

The Illinois Wesleyan track required 50,600 pounds of scrap tire rubber to construct. Hosey said the average passenger car tire weight is approximately 12 pounds of rubber and estimates around 4,280 car tires were used in composing the IWU track, as well as the areas for field events such as high jump and pole vault.

The total cost of the track's renovation was \$353,400 and the University was responsible for paying for the track's asphalt base, gravel sub-base, polyurethane and other improvements.

"It's been a way to sort of 'close the loop' as recyclers," said Ken Browning, Illinois Wesleyan's vice president for business and finance. "As consumers we recycle cans, glass or plastic but never really see the end result or product when they are recycled. As drivers using tires, the IWU track is a visible way we see how our recycling efforts come full circle."

"The track has been a good one for us so far," said IWU track coach Chris Schumacher. "In our meet last spring there were some fast times and the track hasn't produced any injuries during training. It's a great combination when a track surface allows fast times and safe training."

Used Tire Recovery Program

The Used Tire Recovery Program is administered through the Illinois DCCA Bureau of Energy and Recycling. This program provides financial and technical assistance for the purposes of reusing, recycling or recovering energy from Illinois' used/waste tires. The program's mission is to develop self-sustaining markets for Illinois scrap tires by:

- Providing assistance to units of local government and private industry in the establishment of facilities and programs to collect, process and utilize used/waste tires and tire-derived materials;
- Demonstrating the feasibility of innovative technologies as a means of collecting, storing, processing, and utilizing used/waste tires and tire-derived materials;
- Applying demonstrated technologies as a means of collecting, storing, processing and utilizing used/waste tires and tire-derived materials.

In the spring of 2000, 23 Illinois high schools received more than \$800,000 in state grants to aid in building running tracks surfaced with recycled rubber from scrap tires. In making the announcement, Governor George H. Ryan said, "The Used Tire Recovery Program is a great example of what we can accomplish when various sectors of the community -- including government, education, and environmental groups -- work together to come up with common-sense solutions.

"Discarded tires are an environmental hazard and an eyesore," Ryan added. "By transforming them into running tracks, we are making Illinois a better place to live."