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Illinois Wesleyan University Celebrates Kwanzaa in Sixth Annual Celebration

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Illinois Wesleyan University will celebrate Kwanzaa, a holiday based on African traditions, Sunday, Dec. 2 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Main Lounge of the Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St., Bloomington. The event is sponsored by IWU's Office of Multicultural Affairs.

A band of African drummers will perform at the celebration, which is free and open to the public. African storytelling will be demonstrated, and traditional Kwanzaa foods such as chicken, rice, and fish will also be available.

Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday with no religious affiliation that offers participants an opportunity to reflect on the past year, while looking forward to the upcoming year.

It focuses on seven universal principles--unity (Umoja), self-determination (Kujichagulia), collective work and responsibility (Ujima), cooperative economics (Ujamaa), purpose (Nia), creativity (Kuumba), and faith (Imani). IWU students will offer further explanation of Kwanzaa's seven principles at the event.

Traditionally, Kwanzaa is a seven-day celebration, occurring from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. A candle lighting to represent each principle marks each day of the holiday.

Maulana Karenga, who visited IWU in 1998 for the third annual IWU-sponsored celebration, created Kwanzaa in 1966. Karenga, who is professor and chair of the Department of Black Studies at California State University wanted Kwanzaa to serve as an aid to building community, and to enrich African-American consciousness.

Monica Taylor, IWU director of multicultural affairs, encourages all to attend, saying, "This is an opportunity to educate the community about different cultures, and welcomes people of all religious or ethnic backgrounds to share in the celebration."