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Students Receive Weir Fellowship for Community Work

January 22, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University students Lindsey Haines and Kenny Woodard are the recipients of the Weir Fellowship that honors students who make a deep commitment to volunteering in the community.

The \$1,250 fellowships come through Illinois Wesleyan's [Action Research Center](#) (ARC), which links Illinois Wesleyan students and research projects for not-for-profit organizations. Students chosen as Weir Fellows must have previously worked closely with community partners and proposed collaborative projects with them.

Haines, a senior economics and political science major from Crete, Ill. is working with the West Bloomington Revitalization Project (WBRP), a local not-for-profit organization seeking to assist Bloomington's Westside neighborhood in a renewal effort. Haines' work is focused on securing a not-for-profit federal tax status for the WBRP, as well as certifying the organization. With this status the WBRP will be able to use grant money to purchase and rehabilitate houses. Haines said, "Bloomington's west side, one of the oldest parts of the city, is a great community of history. The WBRP wants to help community members preserve and maintain the housing stock."

Haines plans to continue her interest in community involvement by pursuing a master's degree in urban planning after graduating Illinois Wesleyan.

Woodard, a senior political science major from Chicago is working with Habitat for Humanity, to develop and implement a marketing strategy that would allow Habitat to improve their ties with members of the Westside churches. He is also assisting the Christ Temple Church with their neighborhood block party event. Woodard began his service work as a peer mentor with Project Rise at Heartland Community College, a program that gives low income, handicapped and first-generation college students a mentor to help them succeed in college.

Woodard says the fellowship fund will allow him to focus his attention and energy to show that the action research method can make a great difference. "I am always astonished at the few degrees of separation between a person who has a community project in mind and getting that project accomplished," he said. "With IWU's ARC programs, once a student begins to ask questions about community concerns they are pointed in the right direction to find the actionable answers."

The fellowship, which is in its third year, was founded by Elizabeth Weir, a 1950 Illinois Wesleyan graduate with a degree in sociology. Weir has continued her community service in retirement and has been a member of the community for Social Action since the 1960s.

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