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## Alumnus Aids Bloomington Police Department

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## Alumnus Aids Bloomington Police Department

February 22, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The doorbell rings. You peer outside your window to see if it's anyone you know. No. It's a well-dressed young man holding papers....It could be a door-to-door salesman or someone handing out pamphlets. You may choose not to answer the door, but many residents on the west side of Bloomington did, and met Illinois Wesleyan University student, and now alumnus Ryan Lambert '10.

Lambert was conducting a crime survey as part of his Spring 2010 internship with the IWU **Action Research Center** (ARC), which coordinates research projects undertaken by IWU students, faculty and staff in partnership with groups in the larger Central Illinois community. A political science and history double major while at IWU, Lambert walked door-to-door, asking over 200 west side residents nine questions regarding crime in their neighborhood.

"The survey focused on why the residents in this neighborhood have a higher rate of fear and anxiety regarding crime and why they have a higher rate of victimization," said Lambert, who noted that the parameters of the survey were south of Empire St., west of Roosevelt St., north of Oakland St. and east of the railroad tracks in Bloomington.

Although Lambert had no previous knowledge or attachment to the project, he quickly became devoted to his work. "Initially, you hear that the neighborhood isn't the best and you shouldn't venture there at night," said Lambert. "But after getting to see the neighborhood, it's really just another neighborhood. It opened my eyes to a different part of Bloomington that I didn't appreciate before."

Lambert worked in conjunction with ARC Coordinator Deborah Halperin, IWU librarian and Bloomington alderwoman Karen Schmidt, Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science James Simeone, Professor of Political Science Tari Renner, the Bloomington Police Department (BPD) and fellow student Drew Wolschlag '11 to compile the survey questions. Questions included rating on a scale of 1 to 10 how safe one feels in their neighborhood, whether the respondent has ever witnessed a crime, the type of crime and what crimes are most frequent in their neighborhood.

After finishing the survey in the fall of 2010, Lambert compiled a report entitled, Westside of Bloomington: Crime Climate Survey, which detailed the results of the survey. According to the report, "ethnicity and age played a major role in predicting how residents felt in their

neighborhood. Middle-aged residents felt the least safe in their neighborhood, while younger and older residents felt much safer.”

While the BPD expected these results, there was one unexpected finding concerning victimization. The victimization rate in this area was a mere 23.7 percent, which Lambert describes as “respectable when compared to other equally-sized urban areas.” He also says that while, “there may be a heightened sense of fear in the neighborhood, it seems that the solution is within sight, if the BPD and the community residents can just conquer a few specific crimes in the neighborhood.”

At the beginning of December 2010, Lambert presented his findings to the BPD.

“It was outstanding work on Ryan’s part,” Bloomington Police Chief Randy McKinley said. “With Ryan’s research, we now have additional information for focusing our resources.”

The BPD plan to use this information to validate the need for more police involvement in the neighborhood and to create more door-to-door contact with police and residents to encourage residents to attend local neighborhood watch meetings.

Lambert also plans to report his findings to two community groups, the GAP Neighborhood Association and the West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Task Force. Although Lambert will begin graduate school for secondary education in Chicago this summer, he says that he would be “more than willing to help out with other aspects of the project” and that he “would like to do more of this type of work in the future.”

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