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# Global Amnesty International Event Succeeds at IWU

Dec. 4, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Dozens of members of the Illinois Wesleyan University community recently came together to write letters for the causes of 12 selected Prisoners of Conscience as part of the **Amnesty International** event Write for Rights.

This was the fourth annual Write for Rights event at IWU. Started by Amnesty International member Nicole Jovicevic '16, the event's goal is to write letters on behalf of Prisoners of Conscience who are imprisoned around the world as a result of their religious, political, or other peacefully held beliefs. Write for Rights is a signature event for Amnesty International.

"In terms of planning, the hardest part is narrowing down the cases," Jovicevic said. "Having to choose between one heartbreaking story or another is difficult. After that it is mostly logistics and creating innovative ways to recruit and excite people."

Write for Rights at IWU had a festive atmosphere, with holiday music playing in the background and refreshments provided throughout the night. Jovicevic, the Student Activist Coordinator of the organization, was excited about the progressive work being done at the event. "I think there is something so personal about writing a physical letter and getting to know these people and these circumstances," she said. "It humanizes the issue of human rights."

Numerous students who are not members of the **Amnesty International Registered Student Organization** (RSO) took time out of their busy schedules before finals to attend the event. "Human rights is something everyone should be passionate about," said Kali Lewis '15. Tina Fleres '16 was also excited to participate. "This is a very do-able thing I can do to help," Fleres said.



Matt Dang'18 (left) and Assistant Dean of Students Matthew Damschroder were among those writing letters for Write for Rights.



Working to festive sounds of holiday music, IWU volunteers composed more than 100 letters.

"If you sit and do nothing, you never even tried to begin with," said Elyse McCormick '17, who also attended the event. Human rights around the world are very important, and having people petition for change is a positive step, McCormick said.

According to Jovicevic, one of the goals of this year's event was to recruit more faculty members. Provost and Dean of the Faculty Jonathan Green attended this year. Although Green had attended other Amnesty events in the past, this was his first time at Write for Rights. He was impressed by the number of students participating, he said. Green stated that faculty attendance at such events is important because it is one of the most effective ways to encourage students to act progressively by setting an example and encouraging their efforts.

More than one hundred letters were composed by IWU participants and sent to sources of power around the world. Anyone who attended the event could choose to write letters for a missing family in Syria, for victims of early and forced

marriage in Burkina Faso, or for leaders of the student movement who are imprisoned in Myanmar. IWU's letters will be combined with others from around the globe in conjunction with Human Rights Day on Dec. 10.

Amnesty International is a global organization that is primarily dedicated to fulfilling human rights around the world. Numerous international chapters participate in the advocacy of human rights and community education surrounding this issue.

*By Lydia Hartlaub '16*