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## **IWU Students Aim to Increase Homelessness Awareness**

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Participants in the Summer Enrichment Program pose for a group photo (below) and talk with Ann Harding (above, left), assistant director and internship coordinator at Illinois Wesleyan's Hart Career Center. *(Photos by Mark Von Brock)*



#### IWU Students Aim to Increase Homelessness Awareness

July 31, 2006

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. - Nearly 1,800 individuals in the Bloomington/Normal community are homeless, according to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - a statistic that has alarmed Illinois Wesleyan University ALANA (African American, Asian American, Latino American, and Native American) students participating in IWU's 2006 Summer Enrichment Program (SEP).

The program, themed "Developing Talent, Strengthening Character," began on May 30 and will continue until Aug. 4.

([Listen to students](#) being interviewed on local NPR affiliate, WGLT.)

In their search for answers, the 13 students, who were selected by a committee of IWU officials following a competitive interview process, devoted the better part of the summer to extensive research on poverty in the community. During their search, the students came across more unsettling statistics. Of the nearly 1,800 impoverished individuals in Bloomington/Normal, 10 percent suffer from severe mental illnesses, 35 percent have alcohol and other drug addictions, 13 percent are victims of domestic violence and one percent have HIV/AIDS.

The SEP participants recently shared their research findings in a presentation to Illinois Wesleyan administrative staff, as well as business and community leaders from Bloomington/Normal. During the presentation, the students stressed the importance of strong relationships between local businesses and homeless shelters, and also emphasized education about poverty and its causes.

"[Homelessness] can happen to anybody, including people who might have suddenly lost their jobs," says Stosh Eichenauer, a sophomore chemistry major from Decatur and a participant in the program. "It's a problem that needs to be addressed in order to strengthen our community."

The students also discussed their volunteer experiences at shelters in the community. Several of the students, for example, volunteered at Home Sweet Home Ministries, a shelter for impoverished individuals in Bloomington, this summer. "It was a wonderful opportunity to see how much good can come from volunteering your time," says Sandy Tun, a sophomore biology major from Spring Valley, Ill. "Even a few people can have a major impact."

The Summer Enrichment Program is sponsored by the IWU Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA). Under the direction of Nicole Brown-Davis, Class of 1999 and current director of OMSA, the 10-week program has evolved into a multi-faceted experience that includes an internship tailored to academic interests, an extensive group service project, and character development. Upon successful completion of SEP, each student is awarded a scholarship.

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