



Spring 3-14-2006

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Rebecca Welzenbach
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Recommended Citation

Welzenbach, Rebecca, "Student Association Raises Money to Purchase Cow For Charity" (2006). *News and Events*. 3335.

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Student Association Raises Money to Purchase Cow For Charity

March 14, 2006

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. -- "If you would have told me two years ago that now I would be raising money to buy a cow, I wouldn't have believed you," said Ameer Patel of Buffalo Grove, Ill., a junior psychology major at Illinois Wesleyan University.

However, as a third-year member of IWU's South Asian Student Association (SASA), Patel is doing just that. Through a variety of fundraisers, the group hopes to purchase a cow for a South Asian family through Heifer International, a charity that provides needy families in developing countries with sustainable livestock, rather than consumable goods, as a means of support.

The group must raise \$500 to purchase a cow. Over the last month, close to \$400 (enough to purchase a goat and a water buffalo, Patel pointed out), has been raised. Patel and Pat Halloran, a junior history and religion double major, co-chairs for the philanthropy project, are enthusiastic about their progress. "It doesn't sound like a lot, but for a penny drive, it really is," Halloran said.

According to Heifer International, the gift of a cow would provide a family with four gallons of milk a day, more than enough to nourish their own family and share with neighbors. A family can then increase its income by selling extra milk. Additionally, a healthy cow can give birth to one calf each year. Because the recipient family pledges to give their cow's offspring to other families in need, over time a single cow can benefit an entire village.

Throughout the spring, SASA members will continue to collect money at tables outside of the Bertholf Commons. The fundraising will culminate Sunday, May 7 with SASA FEST, a recreational and cultural event on the IWU mini-quad (the area between Magill, Dodds and Dolan halls and Harriett Fuller Rust House.)

The event, which is open to the public as well as all members of the IWU community, will feature cultural music and food, as well as a Chinese yo-yo demonstration, a cricket game, henna (dye traditionally used in India to elaborately decorate the body) and a celebration of Holi, the festival of colors. The Holi celebration, which commemorates a legend from Hindu mythology, will include the traditional colored powder and water which celebrants of all ages throw on one another.

Heifer International was created as Heifers for Relief in 1944, when founder Dan West returned to the U.S. after witnessing the destruction and hunger caused by the Spanish Civil War. The first shipment sent 17 heifers from York, Penn., to Puerto Rico. Over the last 60 years, Heifer International has helped millions of families in over 115 countries.

"We want to get the entire Illinois Wesleyan community involved with something we can give as a whole," Patel said.

Contact: Rebecca Welzenbach, (309) 556-3181