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September 19, 2008

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Illinois Wesleyan to Honor Exceptional Alumni at Homecoming

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University will honor the recipients of annual alumni awards during Homecoming activities on campus, Oct. 3-5.

Stephen Ondra '80, Distinguished Alumnus Award

Stephen L. Ondra is known as one of the most renowned neurosurgeons in the nation. Director of spine surgery in neurosurgery at Northwestern University in Chicago, he has consulted on health care issues with members of Congress, the Department of Defense, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Department of Health and Human Services, which appointed him to the Medical Coverage Advisory Committee. He is currently also an advisor on health-care and veterans' issues to Presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama. [D-Illinois]. Along with his duties at Northwestern University, Ondra is helping to establish a school in China for neurosurgery.

Ondra completed his internship and residency in neurological surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. A decorated veteran of the Gulf War, Ondra earned a Bronze Star while serving as commander of a medical unit in Saudi Arabia.

During Homecoming, Ondra will present a talk entitled "Health Care Reform and the 2009 Presidential Election" at 2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 3 at Beckman Auditorium of The Ames Library (1 Ames Plaza East, Bloomington).

Raymond Berger '70, Loyalty Award

Raymond Berger is known professionally for his ability to rejuvenate a business, which he has done repeatedly over his 40 years in retail. He has done the same with Illinois Wesleyan alumni, founding both the Chicago and San Francisco alumni chapters. His involvement with the University has come at all levels, from attending and hosting alumni events, to serving on committees, such as the Capital Campaign Committees in both Chicago and San Francisco, the Class of 1970 Reunion Committee and the IWU Golf Outing Committee. Since its revival nine

years ago, he has served on the Executive Board of the Alumni Association for Illinois Wesleyan.

Berger's work has taken him across the United States and around the globe. He has worked for as a buyer for Bloomingdale's Department Store, as vice president of Merchandising for Williams-Sonoma and helped revitalize the company BevMo.

He continues his active involvement with Illinois Wesleyan as the first co-chair of the new Pride Alumni Community.

Joe Herzog '98, Robert M. Montgomery Outstanding Young Alumnus Award

Joe Herzog is the principal architect and director of the [merz]project design studio, which he founded in 2004. The studio creates environmentally friendly designs in Phoenix for residential housing, governments and businesses, as well as working on an international stage. Projects include designing an International Center in Abuja, Nigeria, that houses a conference center and resort hotel, as well as the headquarters for the country's Red Cross and the National Peace Forum. The studio will soon begin a new project with developers from Santiago, Chile.

Through his studio's work, Herzog has been recognized by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for designing the 2008 Home of the Year, and also received the AIA 2007 Sustainable Award, as well as the 2007 Valley Forward Award for Environmental Excellence. He was nominated for the AIA Young Architect of the Year Award and named to the Hot List of 100 Architects in the Southwest from *Desert Living Magazine*.

The Illinois Wesleyan award holds special meaning for Herzog, because his father, Tobey Herzog, a 1968 Illinois Wesleyan graduate, was the recipient of the award in 1981. They are the first father-son recipients of the award. His father plans to attend Homecoming.

During Homecoming, Herzog will present a lecture titled "Architecture of the New: searching the spaces in between," at 3 p.m. Friday, Oct. 3 at Beckman Auditorium in The Ames Library (1 Ames Plaza East, Bloomington).

Mary Ellen Simpson '91, 2008 Distinguished Alumna for Nursing

Mary Ellen Simpson is the director of Program in Population and Community Health at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria. Along with her administrative and teaching duties to the college, she has been active in research and investigating the cause of illnesses for the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration.

After earning her doctorate from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1998 in nursing health promotion and epidemiology – the study the health of populations – Simpson applied for a highly competitive fellowship at the Centers for Disease Control. From 1998 to 2000, she became an epidemic intelligence service officer and worked with groups such as the Carter Center, which sent her to Ghana to help investigate and eradicate Guinea Worms plaguing the nation. She also journeyed to the Middle East, assisting the United Nations Relief Works Agency in testing and investigating widespread anemia affecting people in the Gaza Strip.

Simpson, also a lieutenant colonel in the United States Army Reserves, Army Nurse Corps, received commendations for her work as the community health and chief of infection control at the Combat Support Hospital in Tikrit, Iraq, in 2007.

Illinois Wesleyan will honor Simpson on Saturday, Oct. 4 at the School of Nursing Homecoming Brunch and Awards Program. She will speak at the brunch on the topic of “Expanding Roles for Public Health Nurses at War, Home and Abroad.”

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