



Spring 4-12-2006

IWU Students to Culminate Urban League Volunteer Experience

Rebecca Welzenbach
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Welzenbach, Rebecca, "IWU Students to Culminate Urban League Volunteer Experience" (2006). *News and Events*. 5282.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/5282>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

April 12, 2006

Contact: Rebecca Welzenbach, (309) 556-3181

IWU Students to Culminate Urban League Volunteer Experience

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Nine Illinois Wesleyan psychology students, under the supervision of Assistant Professor of Psychology Kira Hudson Banks, have spent the semester working with local middle school girls at Bloomington's Urban League (510 E. Washington St., Bloomington). The IWU students, all women, have met with the younger scholars twice a week all semester, encouraging the girls, who came from four area junior high schools, to pursue higher level math and science studies.

However, at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 13 the tables will turn as the middle-school students take the floor, presenting to their parents, friends and mentors the results of their semester-long social science projects through a series of PowerPoint presentations.

The program, GO-GIRL (Gaining Options: Girls Investigating Real Life), seeks to increase confidence in math and science among the seventh grade participants by engaging them in social science issues that are relevant to them. According to Hudson Banks, who coordinated the program at IWU this year, there is no difference between the grades and abilities of male and female students. However, in middle school their attitudes start to differ and girls often drift away from the math and science fields.

GO-GIRL is funded by a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant originally awarded in 2000 to Pamela Reid, who was then a professor at the University of Michigan and now teaches at Roosevelt University in Chicago. The program is one of a series of six nationwide.

The IWU students, who have served as mentors for the program all semester, also earned credit in the classroom for a 300-level psychology course on the social and academic

development of middle school-aged girls. In addition to daily readings, course projects included designing career exploration activities to be conducted at the Urban League and teaching the techniques of statistical data interpretation, which are often challenging even for college students, to the younger girls.

The middle school students then examined survey data collected and posted by other students on the Web site smartgirl.org, forming hypotheses about social science issues that attracted their attention, such as bullying at school. Using the mathematical techniques they learned over the semester, the girls interpreted the on-line data in order to determine whether or not their hypothesis was supported.

“We hope that they can see that in their everyday lives, there are questions to be answered using math and science and they have the tools to answer them,” Hudson Banks said of the program participants.

The Illinois Wesleyan student mentors were: junior Laura Curtis of Dolton, Ill.; senior Heather Kwoka of Lansing, Ill.; senior Christine Lassandrello of Hinsdale, Ill.; sophomore Elizabeth Mraz of Apple Valley, Minn.; sophomore Jennifer Nichols of Normal; junior Lisa Schaumburg of Bloomington; junior Melissa Serritella of St. Charles, Ill.; senior Kavita Shah of Hoffman Estates, Ill.; and senior Rebecca Skupien of Hickory Hills, Ill.

The IWU mentors partnered with the Bloomington-Normal Urban League, which is a satellite of the larger Peoria tri-county branch. The organization is dedicated to improving educational, social and economic opportunities for individuals in Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford and McLean counties at minimal or no cost to the participants.