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## Student Groups Sponsor "Walk" to Observe Sexual Assault Awareness Month

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April 9, 2009

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### **Student Groups Sponsor “Walk” to Observe Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Two Illinois Wesleyan student groups, Choosing Healthy Options In Collegiate Environments (CHOICE) and IWU Pride Alliance, are collaborating with Bloomington organization YWCA Stepping Stones to sponsor Walking the Walk in observation of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), the month of April has been designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence, focusing on sexual assault and rape, and to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence. CHOICE has also placed teal ribbons around the campus to commemorate SAAM throughout the month of April.

Walking the Walk, which will take place in two sessions at the Hansen Student Center (300 Beecher St.) on Wednesday, April 15, seeks to give participants the chance to “navigate the paths and face issues that are often experienced by sexual assault survivors and their loved ones” said CHOICE president Jessica Madigan, a sophomore mathematics major and business administration minor.

The sessions, offered at 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., will each last for 45 minutes. After participants are divided into groups and given direction cards, they will choose one member to lead them through the activity, which takes the “choose your own adventure format,” said Madigan. “As the group leader goes through the cards, the other members of the group are only onlookers and they cannot help the group leader make decisions. This represents people who are involved in a situation but cannot do anything to help.”

Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their experiences after completing the activity and will also be able to speak with Stepping Stones counselors at any time during the event.

Stepping Stones, YWCA’s sexual assault program, provides 24-hour assistance for sexual assault and sexual abuse victims and their families in McLean County. Services focus on

empowering survivors, their families and their friends on the path of healing, building relationships with professionals and agencies that will be part of the healing process, and educating the community about sexual assault.

CHOICE is a group of peers devoted to health education across campus. The organization works through programs, campaigns and events to promote awareness and encourage both discussion and healthy decisions regarding alcohol use, sexual activity, healthy relationships, stress management, body image and other high-risk behaviors.

The IWU Pride Alliance is a student-run organization dedicated to equality for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It seeks to help ensure safety and equality for all in the community.

For additional information about Walking the Walk, contact Madigan at [jmadigan@iwu.edu](mailto:jmadigan@iwu.edu). To learn more about SAAM, visit <http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/>.

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