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Bob Aaron
Illinois Wesleyan University

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March 10, 1995

Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

Illinois Wesleyan Math Contest

Springfield Lutheran High School Wins Award

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Springfield Lutheran High School won an award at the first annual math contest for 9th to 12th graders, sponsored by the Illinois Wesleyan University Mathematics Society, a student group.

The award won by Springfield Lutheran High School was:

- Missy Olinger placed in the top 20 percent of juniors competing in the contest.

IWU President Minor Myers, jr., handed out awards to winners in various categories at a post-test ceremony that followed a pizza luncheon.

Michael A. Votava, a sophomore math major from Bradford, Ill., who developed the test questions and obtained copyrights and permissions for various math problems from various authors and publishers, told the students at the awards ceremony:

"Do you want to be part of the future? Well, I've got news for you. Math is everywhere. You can't escape it. But before you can see the applications of math in college, you've got to have down the basics from high school. We designed the tests hoping to show you a glimpse of math at work and a few of the places where math is applied in our universe. Math is in computer science . . . Math's in biology, too . . . I wish I had time to tell you about the millions of mathematics applications that exist in the college curriculum."

Kara Rocheleau, a senior majoring in mathematics and economics from Minneapolis, chaired the five-person group, which worked for a year planning the event.

"First and foremost," Rocheleau said on the eve of the contest, "the high school students participating in the contest will get a taste of math competition. One thing we're aiming for is to get students to realize the various applications of math. The test will have applications on it--not just math theory."

Upwards of 200 high school freshmen through seniors from 11 central Illinois high schools participated in the Feb. 25 contest organized by the 40-member IWU Mathematics Society, founded in 1992.

The high school freshmen and sophomores took an exam geared toward algebra and geometry. The test for the high school juniors and seniors was oriented more toward math at the pre-calculus and calculus levels. Each exam had 30 multiple choice questions;

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IWU Math Contest-Springfield Lutheran/2

students were given 60 minutes to finish the exam. One non-multiple choice problem was on each exam to be used as a tie breaker. Although freshmen and sophomores took the same test, they were graded separately, as was the case with juniors and seniors.

Students from these Illinois high schools participated in the math contest: Canton; Central Catholic (Bloomington); Fieldcrest (Minonk); Marquette (Ottawa); Metamora; Normal Community; Prairie Central (Fairbury); Sacred Heart-Griffin (Springfield); Springfield Lutheran; St. Teresa (Decatur); and University High (Normal).

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,800 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. In recent years, the university's endowment has grown to more than \$92 million; a \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$24 million science building will open in 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 164 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *U.S. News* ranks IWU the second most efficient national liberal arts college--a key gauge of the campus' quality academic program and relatively reasonable cost. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition. IWU's 1994 freshman class scored an average 27.9 on the ACT exam, compared to the national average of 20.7.