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Monica Taylor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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June 4, 1996

Contact: Monica Taylor, 309/556-3412 or Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

4th Annual Local Juneteenth Celebration Set for June 22

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--The fourth annual Bloomington-Normal Juneteenth celebration, marking the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation which freed slaves during the Civil War, will be held on the Illinois Wesleyan University Quad from noon to 5 p.m., Saturday, June 22.

Cassandra Veney, assistant professor of political science at Illinois State University, will deliver the keynote address at 2:30 p.m. on the stage at the main entrance to Sheean Library.

The Barrington Coleman Trio--led by IWU Assistant Professor of Music Barrington Coleman--will perform at 3:45 p.m. on the Sheean Library stage.

The Juneteenth celebration will include Gospel music choirs, Black history displays, and other activities. Celebrants are encouraged to bring lunches and picnic on the Quad. Some food items will be available for purchase.

The Juneteenth celebration, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, McLean County Historical Society, and IWU.

Juneteenth--or Freedom Day--was created by newly free slaves to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation, which was issued on Jan. 1, 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln. The proclamation applied only to slaves in territory under control of the Confederacy. It did not apply to areas occupied by Union forces or to the four slave states that had not seceded from the Union--Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri.

Juneteenth was celebrated at different times throughout the South for two reasons: First, slaves were not freed until Confederate strongholds were overtaken by Union Army forces, and second, word of liberation reached slave populations at different times.

The term, "Juneteenth," is believed to be a shortened version of the date June 19, when the day was first recognized by former slaves in East Texas. June 19 also is the day of celebration in southwest Arkansas, California, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. The day is celebrated on Jan. 1 in Alabama, Massachusetts, Georgia, Maryland, New York City, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. In other places, Juneteenth is celebrated on Feb. 1, May 8, May 20, Aug. 1, Aug. 4, Aug. 8, and Sept. 22.

Juneteenth, an unofficial holiday long celebrated in the South, has in recent years been marked in communities nationwide with festivities focusing on local history, family life, and African-American culture.