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February 1, 1999

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ANNUAL DINNER TO LAUNCH EIU AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION

CHARLESTON -- More than a dozen diverse cultural, social and educational programs will be offered by Eastern Illinois University in commemoration of its 1999 African-American Heritage Celebration, scheduled to take place during the month of February.

Features of the celebration -- a cultural tradition held annually to pay tribute to African-American history, culture and contributions and programs -- are presented for the enjoyment of the EIU community and the public-at-large.

A highlight of this year's celebration will be the annual Heritage Dinner, scheduled for 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, at the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union Grand Ballroom. Featured entertainment this year will be a performance by multicultural storyteller Vernell Ball-Jackson. In addition, the celebration, titled "In the Spirit of Kwanzaa: Celebrating the Seven Principles," will feature a Kwanzaa candle-lighting ceremony.

Kwanzaa, one of the fastest growing holidays in the country among more than 10 million African-Americans, has its roots in African harvest festivals and, like the festivals on which it is

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based, celebrates life and creation, commemorates the past and promotes fundamental principles to guide people in their daily lives.

Tickets for this year's dinner -- priced at \$12 for adults, \$6 for Eastern students (with ID) and \$3 for children six and under-- are available from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. through Thursday, Feb. 4, at the EIU ticket office in the Union. All tickets must be purchased in advance.

This year's menu will include a traditional food cuisine of fried chicken, fried catfish, greens, yams, black-eye peas, fried cabbage, tossed salad, corn bread, dinner rolls, sweet potato pie, banana pudding and cake.

Also as part of the month-long celebration, Eastern's Booth Library will feature a special commemorative display of Negro League Baseball memorabilia titled, "Yesterday's Negro League Baseball Players," Feb. 7 through 22. The display will feature memorabilia from the personal collection of former Negro League Baseball Pitcher Dennis "Bose" Biddle, formerly of the Chicago American Giants.

The Martin Luther King Jr. University Union will host "Heritage Daze" throughout February by featuring specials and specialty items. Monthly features will include hair salon specials, an African-American Heritage Month book display in the Union Bookstore, Rathskeller "Soul Food Buffet," Craft Depot African jewelry and pottery craft workshops.