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February 24, 2000

For Immediate Release:

EIU INVITES PUBLIC TO MEET WOMEN OF HISTORY

CHARLESTON -- Nearly a dozen influential women from history will share their life stories this weekend as Eastern Illinois University gears up for Women's History and Awareness Month, a celebration of women, their contributions and accomplishments.

Admission to the Living History performance, which begins at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27, in the Coleman Hall auditorium (room 120), is free and open to the general public.

The program, now in its 12th year, offers Eastern students the opportunity to portray successful women -- past and present -- in area elementary schools throughout the month. Sunday's performance -- a "dress rehearsal" -- allows the general public the opportunity to view each student's presentation and to learn from them, as well.

Featured in this year's Living History program are:

**Jane Addams** (1860-1935), *presented by Katie Virtue, a freshman (undecided major) and daughter of Joe and Jeanne Virtue of Rockford.* President Franklin Roosevelt once referred to

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Jane Addams as “Chicago’s most useful citizen.” Born in Cedarville, Ill., Addams was the eighth of nine children in a wealthy, liberal family. Her mother died when she was two; her father was a state senator and committed abolitionist. Addams’ health was poor throughout her life, yet her social and political activism were very effective. In 1889, she and her friend, Ellen Starr, leased an old mansion which they eventually developed into what is now the famous Hull House. This settlement house, beginning with a kindergarten and aimed at assisting the underprivileged, eventually included a circulating library, an arts center, a boarding house, a nursery and a community center. Addams also helped found the American Civil Liberties Union and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

**Louisa May Alcott** (1832-1888), *presented by Lauren Keppler, a freshman Spanish major and daughter of Mark and Kathy Keppler of Roselle.* Money was scarce as Louisa May Alcott was growing up and, as Alcott had a flair for writing, she used her talent to help provide for the family. She published her first poem in 1852. As an avid abolitionist, Alcott later volunteered as a Civil War nurse and, afterwards, published “Hospital Sketches,” one of the best surviving accounts of Civil War hospitals. In 1868, she published “Little Women,” the book that made her famous. Alcott also was a woman’s suffragist and was the first woman to register to vote when Concord opened its school committee elections to women. By the time of her death, Alcott’s bibliography extended into hundreds of pieces, several of which are now considered American classics.

**Joan of Arc** (1412-1431), *presented by Stacey Fuhrmann, a freshman Spanish major and daughter of James and Patricia Fuhrmann of Decatur.* Joan of Arc, born in Domremy, France, to a peasant family, was raised in the Catholic Church. Religion played a major role in her life. During her childhood, the English invaded France in the Hundred Years’ War and she began hearing the voices of “angels sent from God” to tell her to help France defeat England. She met with the king’s commander and was put in charge of an army that would go on to lead the French to victory. During her final battle near Paris, Joan was captured and sold to England where she

was accused of practicing witchcraft. Subsequently, she was sentenced to death and burned at the stake. Twenty-four years after her death, the Pope had her re-tried and Joan of Arc was found innocent. In 1920, the Catholic Church named Joan a saint.

**Francesca Caccini** (1587-1640), *presented by Jillian Marie Klean, a sophomore speech communication major and daughter of Gary and Roxane Klean of Spring Grove.* Italian singer, composer and poet Francesca Caccini was the daughter of the famous composer Giulio Caccini. She was an accomplished musician who played the lute, harpsichord and guitar, and was the highest paid singer in the De'Medici court – especially rare in that women of that time were generally not employed in any line of work. She made her debut at the age of 13 in her father's opera, "Euridice," and composed numerous works of her own. She is best known for the opera that she composed and performed in – "La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina."

**Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886), *presented by Annie White, a junior English/women's studies major and daughter of Gary and Nancy White of Highland.* Poet Emily Dickinson wrote more than 2,000 poems, although only a handful were published within her lifetime. It was a time when most published authors were men and few in the literary world saw anything special in her poems because of their small size and recurring themes. Born in Amherst, Mass., Dickinson spent the last 30 years of her life living in the home she grew up in, rarely venturing outdoors. She spent her years in seclusion, baking prize-winning bread, gardening and, of course, writing poetry. Upon Dickinson's death, her sister Lavinia discovered an extensive collection of poetry and began seeking publication for her sister's great works.

**Queen Noor** (1951 to present), *presented by Diana N. Davis, a freshman (undecided major) and daughter of Leameal and Crystal Davis of Alton.* Queen Noor was born Lisa Najeeb Halaby to a distinguished Arab-American family and raised in America. She attended many different schools, eventually becoming a student in Princeton's first coed class. She received her bachelor's degree in architecture and urban planning in 1974, then traveled the world designing

and overseeing the building of houses and other structures. One of those projects gave her the opportunity to meet King Hussein of Jordan and, in 1978, they were married, making her Queen Noor of Jordan. Since that time, she has been active in efforts to improve the lives of children and protect the environment. Although she recently lost her husband, she continues to stand brightly as a guiding light to children, environmental preservation and the history of her people.

**Betsy Ross** (1752-1836), *presented by Angela Hawkins, a senior elementary education major and daughter of Victor and Mabel Hawkins of Grayville.* In 1776, Betsy Ross was a widow struggling to run her own upholstery business. In colonial times this type of business included all kinds of sewing work. Gen. George Washington's company was sequestered in Philadelphia at this time, and it was during a visit from him that a most important event took place in Ross' life. Washington drew from his pocket a sheet of paper showing a rough design of a flag and asked her if she would reproduce such a flag in red, white and blue. She completed the flag – 13 five-pointed stars in a circle on a blue field and a banner of red and white stripes – and it became a symbol to all of a country with a democratic government for its people.

**Sacajawea** (1787-1812), *presented by Katie Barnes, a freshman (undecided major) and daughter of Karl and Mary Barnes of Cherry Valley.* Sacajawea was an interpreter/guide for the U.S. explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, proving herself very helpful in the exploration of the West between 1804 and 1806. She was married to a French-Canadian trapper in the North Dakota Territory in 1804, just prior to joining the Lewis and Clark party and helping them obtain food and supplies from the Shoshone Indian tribe. Sacajawea was chosen this year to be on the 2000 gold-colored dollar coin.

**Laura Ingalls Wilder** (1867-1957), *presented by Carrie Miller, a senior early childhood/elementary education major and daughter of Jan and Jackie Miller of Springfield.* Laura Ingalls Wilder, born in Pepin, Wis., spent the first 22 years of her life moving from place to place with her family. At the age of 15, she gained her teaching certificate and began teaching in a very

small school outside of De Smet, S.D. It was during this time that she and Almanzo Wilder fell in love. They married in 1885 and, a year later, became the parents of a daughter named Rose. In 1911, Wilder began writing for a local newspaper. Later, at age 65 and fueled by Rose's insistence that she write stories about her life as a pioneer, Wilder published "Little House in the Big Woods." The book turned out to be so popular that Wilder continued to write her "Little House" series until she was 76 years old.

**"Babe" Didrikson Zaharias** (1914-1956), *presented by Amber Mauk, freshman secondary education/business major and daughter of Steve and Donna Mauk of Channahon/Minooka.* "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias grew up in a large family, the second youngest of six children. She knew at an early age that she wanted to become the greatest all-around American athlete who ever lived. "Babe" Didrikson set Olympic and world records in five events, was named an All-American basketball player in 1930, 1931 and 1932, and won 82 golf tournaments, 17 consecutively. She was nicknamed "Babe" by children who compared her to Babe Ruth because of her great baseball skills, including once striking out Joe DiMaggio in Yankee Stadium. "Babe" Didrikson was voted Woman Athlete of the Year six times before being diagnosed with terminal cancer at age 40. She died in 1956.

**Bernadette Maginn Zuber** (1899-1991), *presented by her granddaughter, Amanda Zuber, a junior speech communication major and daughter of Sam and Linda Zuber of Ste. Marie.* Bernadette Maginn Zuber's life exemplified the combination of old values and priorities and new ideas. Although she upheld the love of God and family before all else in her life, she dared to be different. At a time when many girls in rural areas received little to no schooling, Zuber attended an academy in Southern Indiana for her primary education. She later attended what was then known as Eastern Illinois State Teachers' College (EIU) and received her certificate to teach. She was the first woman in Jasper County – and among the first throughout Southern Illinois – to get her driver's license.