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For Immediate Release:

EIU INVITES PUBLIC TO MEET WOMEN OF HISTORY

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

Admission to the Living History performance, which begins at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, in Buzzard Hall Auditorium, is free and open to the public. A punch and cookie reception, sponsored by the Girl Scouts of Troop 410, will follow the performance.

"This is a great experience for EIU students to bring to life both well-known and lesser-known women in history," said Gail Mason, this year's program coordinator. "Elementary students have a rare opportunity to interact with these important individuals."

The program, now in its 13th year, offers Eastern students the opportunity to portray successful women – past and present – in area elementary schools and before various other groups throughout the month. Nearly 100 individual performances are scheduled to take place during March, Mason added.

Sunday's performance – a "dress rehearsal" – allows the general public the opportunity to view each participating student's presentation and to learn from them, as well.

The women also will be in costume at this year's Women's History and Awareness Month awards ceremony, set to take place at 7 p.m. Monday, April 2, at the Tarble Arts Center on Eastern's campus. The public is welcome to attend; there is no admission charge.

Featured in this year's Living History program are:

-more-

Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

Sophia Brahe as portrayed by Lauren Keppler, a junior foreign language major from Roselle. Sophia Brahe (1556-1643), the younger sister of Tycho Brahe, assisted her brother with his astronomical observations that became the basis for modern planetary orbit predictions. Tycho Brahe was an astronomer, engineer, alchemist and physician who lived in Denmark. Sophia made her own career as a horticulturist, healer, historian and astronomer. Like Tycho, she became a legend in her own lifetime. Even today, some Danish and European universities use her chronicles as an example of exemplary methodology in research techniques.

Anne Frank as portrayed by Megan Glosser, a freshman art major from Springfield. Anne Frank (1929-1945) and other members of her Jewish family were forced into hiding when the Nazi's took over their homeland – the Netherlands. On July 9, 1942, the Frank family took shelter with four other Jews in the backroom office/warehouse (secret annex) of Anne's father's business. One month earlier, Anne had received a diary for her 13th birthday; this diary, named Kitty, was Anne's friend and confidant during the two years she spent living in the secret annex. Eventually, the Frank family was discovered and transported to a concentration camp in Auschwitz, Poland, where Anne died of typhus one month before the camp's liberation by Russian troops. Her father, Otto, was the sole survivor of the family and published his daughter's diary in 1947.

The Grimke Sisters as portrayed by Katie Ewing, a senior elementary education major from Atwood, and Amy Sparks, a senior elementary education major from Vandalia. Sarah Moore Grimke (1792-1873) and Angelina Emily Grimke (1805-1879) were very close sisters who lived on a South Carolina plantation during the 1840s. Although they were white southerners, both sisters believed that all people – black or white, men or woman -- should be treated equally. After a short period as Quaker women, the sisters branched away and became active through speeches and demonstrations. They spoke for the abolition of slavery and equal rights for all, writing many letters, pamphlets, books and speeches. After Angelina had children, she, her husband Theodore and Sarah lived together on a small New Jersey farm until their deaths.

Martha Matilda Harper as portrayed by Amber Mauk, a sophomore business education major from Channahon. Martha Matilda Harper (1858-1950), an international business visionary, launched America's first business format franchising system in 1891. Harper's new business model became her tool to transform poor women into business owners.

The result was a worldwide empire of more than 500 Harper Method health-conscious hair and skin salons and a team of thousands of women known as Harperites. Using her floor-length hair as an advertising tool, this image of her became identified with the Harper distinctiveness.

Helen Keller as portrayed by Krista Shoemaker, a senior elementary education major from Decatur. Helen Keller (1880-1968), a writer born in Tuscumbia, Ala., lost her sight and hearing after an illness at the age of 19 months. She was educated by Anne Sullivan who taught her to speak, read and write, and who became her lifelong companion. She obtained a degree in 1904, and became distinguished as a lecturer and a writer, publishing her autobiography, "The Story of My Life," in 1902.

Florence Kelley as portrayed by Amanda Penda, a senior political science major from Schiller Park. Social reformer Florence Kelley (1859-1932) was born in Philadelphia, Pa. While attending graduate school, she adopted Socialism and, in 1886, moved to New York City to become involved in the Social Labor Party. Years later, Kelley moved to Illinois and joined the Hull House, playing a major role in calling attention to working conditions of children and women. After receiving a law degree, she became the general secretary of the newly founded National Consumer's League, moved back to New York City and, for the rest of her life, she dedicated herself to using public pressure to force reform in labor practices. Her most well-known book, "Some Ethical Gains Through Legislation," was published in 1905, and she played a prominent role in federal legislation for child labor minimum wages. In 1909, she helped form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and, in 1919, she helped form the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. After World War I, she worked so hard to promote child labor legislation that she was often accused of being a communist.

Christa McAuliffe as portrayed by Becky Brown, a senior elementary education major from East Peoria. Christa McAuliffe (1948-1986), a history teacher from New Hampshire, was selected from more than 11,000 applicants to be the first teacher to fly in space. NASA selected McAuliffe for this position in the summer of 1984 and, in the fall, she took a year-long leave of absence from teaching, during which time NASA would pay her salary, and trained for an early 1986 shuttle mission. Her objective was to complete several experiments in space and document those experiments in a journal that could be shared with students across the country. Tragically, McAuliffe and the other six astronauts on the "Challenger" were killed when the shuttle blew up only seconds into the mission.

Evelyn Sharp as portrayed by Michelle Farrell, a junior speech communication major from Bridgeview. Evelyn Sharp (1919-1944), known to friends as "Sharpie," grew up in the small town of Ord on the edge of the Nebraska Sandhills. She was the youngest American woman to hold a commercial pilot's license. By the age of 20, she was one of only 10 women flight instructors in the United States. When the War Department organized the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron in 1942, "Sharpie" qualified as its 17th member. She served until April 1944 when the Lockheed P-38 fighter she was flying lost power on takeoff and she was killed. "Sharpie" left a lasting legacy in the pilots she taught and in the women pilots she inspired in Ord (where the local airport is named for her and where the community celebrates Evelyn Sharp Days each June).

Anne Sullivan as portrayed by Lauren Uzzo, a senior elementary education major from Chicago. Anne Sullivan (1866-1936) was born in Feeding Mills, Mass., and is best known as the teacher of Helen Keller. Nearly blind from a childhood fever, she was educated at the Perkins Institution in Watham, Mass., and returned there in 1887 to teach the newly admitted seven-year-old Helen Keller. Sullivan broke through Helen's isolation by spelling out words on her hand. For the rest of her life, Sullivan remained Keller's companion while establishing her own reputation as an author, lecturer and advocate for the deaf.

Women's History and Awareness Month activities are being sponsored on Eastern's campus by the university's Women's Advocacy Council.