

Tutu to lead AIC lectures

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SPRINGFIELD – Renowned humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize honoree Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa will visit Springfield in April as the inaugural speaker of a lecture series on public health issues to be hosted by American International College.

Representatives of the college and the Medical Knowledge Institute, who are the copresenters, announced the lecture series Thursday during a press conference at the college at Lee Hall.

Harold E. Robles, co-founder of the Medical Knowledge Institute, a nonprofit health-care education and information organization, and a personal friend of Tutu, said he expects a “fantastic event” scheduled April 20.

Robles asked the archbishop to participate in the lecture series during a visit in South Africa and said Tutu was excited to come and will be armed with knowledge about the college, its diversity, and the public health challenges facing Springfield and the region.

“I think it will be, first of all, an injection for the college, a tremendous recognition for AIC,” Robles said. “Having a Nobel Peace Prize winner on campus is putting AIC immediately on the map. And giving an injection to the communities around here, the people who are living in poverty to see that a man of their own color is coming to town, and to talk about how they can make a difference.”

Tutu, who rose to worldwide fame during the 1980s as an opponent of apartheid, received the Nobel Peace Prize



Desmond Tutu

in 1984 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.

College President Vince M. Maniaci referred to Tutu’s visit as a “great shot in the arm” for Springfield, saying it will serve to inspire students and the community.

“The Archbishop’s humanitarian spirit, joy of diversity and love of youth reflects the mission of the college,” Maniaci said.

The college and medical institute are working together as partners in education, representatives of both organizations said. Other speakers are being lined up for future dates.

Robles said Tutu will spend the full day and evening in Springfield, including a morning lecture for local college and high school students, followed by a lecture later that day with details still being developed. A convocation ceremony is planned at Griswold Theatre, where the archbishop will be awarded an honorary degree and deliver the first lecture of the series.

