



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF AND FUNDING FOR THE SOUTHERN ILLINOIS TOURISM EDUCATION ALLIANCE

Unprecedented Coordination Between Local Colleges Will Produce Tremendous Economic Gains for Nearly \$400 Million Regional Tourism Industry

SPRINGFIELD – In an innovative effort to promote and enhance tourism throughout Southern Illinois, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich announced the formation of the Southern Illinois Tourism Education Alliance and **\$300,000** in *Opportunity Returns* funding to support this unprecedented initiative. The consortium, which includes Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, John A. Logan College, Rend Lake College, Shawnee Community College, Southeastern Illinois College, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, and the Carbondale Convention and Tourism Bureau, is coordinating a regional effort to develop and operate a comprehensive set of nationally recognized hospitality and tourism education programs to promote the growth of this important Southern Illinois industry. In 2003, the economic impact of travel and tourism in the *Opportunity Returns* Southern region was more than \$383 million. Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin made the official announcement today, along with other state and local officials, at John A. Logan College in Carterville.

“We must continue capitalizing on the vast wealth of tourism and vacation resources throughout Southern Illinois. The Southern Illinois Tourism Education Alliance is an unprecedented collaborative effort to bolster this critical economic engine by ensuring that these noted institutions of higher learning are offering the courses and programs to students looking for careers in the tourism and hospitality industry. By producing highly trained and educated graduates in a variety of fields, from tourism management and culinary arts to e-commerce and lodging management, we are laying the foundation for even more economic growth,” Governor Blagojevich said.

As part of this collaborate effort, each partner institution has agreed to offer specific degree and certificate programs. The \$300,000 grant, which is coming from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in cooperation with the Illinois Community College Board, is helping these schools with program/curriculum development, realignment of existing curricula, marketing of travel/tourism programs and opportunities, student scholarships and entrepreneurial efforts. The Alliance also offers students the ability to participate in courses at any or all colleges at in-district tuition rates.

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Illinois Eastern Community Colleges will provide Health and Safety Training for the industry. **John A. Logan College** is offering a brand new Tourism Management Associate Degree program, which has been tailored to specifically meet the needs of the regional workforce. **Rend Lake College** will concentrate in the areas of Culinary Arts, Culinary Arts Management, Hospitality Management, Business Management and Marketing. **Shawnee Community College** will provide programs in Aquaculture, Enology Assistant (winemaking), Applied Viticulture (cultivation of grapes), Wildlife Technology and Business Management and Marketing. **Southeastern Illinois College** will prepare students for careers in Game Preserve Management, Shooting Complex Management, E-Commerce, Business Management, Marketing, Forestry Technology, Outdoor Recreation Management and GIS/GPS. Finally, **Southern Illinois University-Carbondale** continues to offer programs related to Hospitality and Tourism Management, Business Management, Outdoor Recreation Management, Lodging Management and Marketing.

“*Opportunity Returns* is all about working together to find creative ways to promote economic growth. Governor Blagojevich and I know that the Southern Illinois Tourism Education Alliance is a great vehicle for supporting our tourism industry, which will continue playing an important role in the economic prosperity of Southern Illinois,” State Senator Gary Forby (D-Benton) said.

“We want to thank Governor Blagojevich for all of his support for the Southern Illinois Tourism Education Alliance. This is certainly a very important beginning, but the fruits of this innovative collaboration by these noted educational institutions, along with our other important local partners, will continue paying important economic dividends throughout the region for a long, long time,” Southern Illinois Collegiate Common Market Executive Director Jack Hill said.

“The Southern Illinois Tourism Education Alliance is ensuring that the tourism industry will have the kind of educated employees it needs to support this growing sector of the local economy. Governor Blagojevich is keenly aware that the collaborative spirit that these education programs require will play an enormous role in attracting more visitors to Southern Illinois - creating more jobs today, tomorrow and for many years to come,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Governor Blagojevich’s *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort for the Southern region is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. This plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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