



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

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## GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES GRANTS TO INA AND CARRIER MILLS THAT WILL STRENGTHEN TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

### *'Eliminate the Digital Divide' Program Will Prepare Workers for Better Jobs*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that Ina and Carrier Mills will receive technology grants as part of his *Opportunity Returns* plan for job creation in the Southern region. These grants, known as the *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program, fund technology centers in low-income communities in order to provide technology skills training and access to computers and the Internet. This program provides the critical skills that employees will need to succeed in today's high-tech workplace.

“This is an essential first step toward creating a computer-literate and highly skilled workforce and strengthening the local economy in Southern Illinois,” Governor Blagojevich said. “Unfortunately, in today’s marketplace, there is a great disparity between the computer and technology skills many lower-income residents have, and the tech-savvy qualifications businesses demand. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program provides a bridge between these two points; the skills it teaches are helping bring many Southern Illinois residents from where they’ve been to where they want to go. Region wide, it builds the foundation for a more diversified and thriving economy.”

Rend Lake College in Ina receives a **\$37,000** grant for its community technology center. The funds will be used to provide computer skills training to approximately 400 residents of Franklin, Jefferson and Hamilton Counties each year. Participants in the community technology center’s training services will range from elementary school children to retirement-age adults.

The Carrier Mills Stonefort Public Library will also receive a grant for **\$8,500**. The library will provide community technology services to the Saline County portion of the Carrier Mills-Stonefort Community Unit School District, with a particular focus on technology training for approximately 100 adult participants, mostly minorities and senior citizens.

“The grants being awarded to these two Southern Illinois communities will target resources to populations that greatly need them so that opportunities to pursue quality education and well-paying jobs increase; producing long-term gains that will benefit the individuals as well as the regional workforce,” Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Director Jack Lavin said.

(more)

In addition to providing basic technology skills training, grant recipients can provide a variety of technology-related services, including:

Access to career information, employment opportunities, and related Internet job searches

Computerized instruction in basic literacy skills, GED preparation, and English as a Second Language instruction, including distance-learning options

Professional development opportunities related to technology for teachers

Before- and after-school technology programs for students

Promotion of home access to computers

The *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. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business. The more than 40 specific projects that the Governor announced in November for Southern Illinois are designed to be flexible and effective. This plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

Interviews will be available at [www.state.il.us/iisradio/extras.htm](http://www.state.il.us/iisradio/extras.htm)

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