



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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news

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## GOVERNOR HELPS STRENGTHEN TECHNOLOGY LITERACY IN FREEPORT

### *'Eliminate the Digital Divide' Program Will Prepare Workers for High-Tech Jobs*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that Freeport will receive a technology grant as part of his *Opportunity Returns* plan for job creation in the Northern Stateline region. This grant, known as the *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program, funds 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.

"Providing people with technology skills gives them the tools they need to compete in today's evolving economy," Governor Blagojevich said. "By improving technology literacy in areas that have traditionally lacked access to computers and the Internet, the *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program is supporting and strengthening our efforts to build a more highly-skilled workforce throughout this region and grow the local economy."

The Boys and Girls Club of Freeport is the recipient of this **\$38,000** grant. They will use the funds to provide a community technology center where low-income minority youth will be trained in computer literacy, job acquisition skills, youth multimedia courses, academic assistance and life skills.

"This grant to the Freeport Boys and Girls club helps ensure that we are not leaving those from low-income communities behind in our efforts to build a more highly educated, skilled, and competitive workforce. The Governor is committed to positioning our workforce to excel in the 21st century economy, and this grant program is really a key element to realizing that objective," Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said

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  
(more)

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 region was the 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 30 specific projects that the Governor announced last October for Northern Stateline region 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.

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

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