



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 4, 2004

news

### CONTACTS:

Cheryle Jackson	312/814.3158 (office)
Angelynne Amores	312/636.6148 (cell)
Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/814.7168 (Opp. Returns)

## GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES CREATIVE GRANT TO STRENGTHEN TECHNOLOGY LITERACY IN CARBONDALE

*‘Eliminate the Digital Divide’ Program Will Prepare Workers for Better Jobs*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that Carbondale will receive a technology grant 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.

“Building proficiency in computer use and aptitude on the Internet is really about giving people the tools they need to compete in the digital economy. As the Southern region’s economic base becomes more advanced, so must its workforce. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program is more relevant now than ever before because it builds the foundation for a more technologically skilled workforce, one whose marketability to businesses will help strengthen the local economy,” Governor Blagojevich said.

For 33 years, Attucks Community Services (ACS) has offered education and social service programs to low-income residents and minority students. ACS receives a **\$30,000** grant to provide computer skills training and individual assistance to **150** minority youths and adults. The goal is for participants to become more competitive in employment markets.

“Though we have made some inroads at addressing the digital divide in the last ten years, a significant portion of the population remains isolated from technology and its economic benefits,” Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Director Jack Lavin said. “The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program provides access to technology, and the technology related skills demanded by today’s employers. The by-products of these resources will be greater access to a quality education and better paying jobs, meaning long-term gains for the individual participants, as well as the entire regional workforce.”

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

(more)

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 was the product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 40 projects that the Governor has announced 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.

#####