



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod Blagojevich – Governor

news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 17, 2004

CONTACTS:

Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355 (office)
Gerardo Cardenas	312/814.3158 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/814.8193 (Opp. Returns)
Matt Tiefenbrun	773/399.8873 (U.S. Cellular)

GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES U.S. CELLULAR'S PLANS TO OPEN NEW CALL CENTER IN BOLINGBROOK

Governor's Opportunity Returns Regional Economic Development Program Provides Approximately \$4 Million in Incentives Creating 450 New Jobs

CHICAGO – Governor Rod Blagojevich and U.S. Cellular, motivated by its success growing its business nationwide and in its home market of Chicago, today announced plans to open a new customer call center in southwest suburban Bolingbrook. As a part of his historic, regional plan to spur economic growth and create jobs throughout Northeast Illinois, Governor Blagojevich announced that U.S. Cellular will receive approximately \$4 million in *Opportunity Returns* grants and tax credits to help open the new center. The facility, which will open in the middle of next year, will employ as many as 450 people within its first two years of operation.

“This is a great victory for the regional economy,” Governor Blagojevich said. “We’ll never stop making investments in companies such as U.S. Cellular that have the desire, the dedication, and the wherewithal to act as an economic engine of growth and that continue to move this economy forward full speed ahead. By continuing to invest here, U.S. Cellular has shown a real belief in all Illinois has to offer, and we’re happy to reciprocate that belief in them with this support.”

“Our company has experienced a tremendous increase in customers over the last two years. We view customer service as one of our principal strengths. At a time when our competitors are closing facilities and internationally out-sourcing customer service jobs, we are proud to open another major U.S. call center to serve our customers in the nation’s heartland,” said U.S. Cellular President and CEO John E. Rooney. “Our obsession with total customer satisfaction – and it is an obsession – has been rewarded with a huge amount of new business. The investment we’re making and the new jobs we’re creating here are clear symptoms of our success.”

U.S. Cellular will renovate a 100,000-square foot facility to open the call center, which initially will handle calls primarily from customers in Greater Chicago and Northern Indiana. The building will house call center operations and training and conference facilities. The company will begin hiring staff for positions, including customer service, customer relations, help desk, and tech support functions, shortly after the first of the year.

(more)

U.S. Cellular currently operates five call centers, located in Medford, Ore., Tulsa, Okla., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Waukesha, Wis., and Knoxville, Tenn.

“We looked at a lot of different locations in the area, but Bolingbrook simply had the best combination of facilities, location and economics. This facility lies in the center of one of the deepest and most talented labor pools in the country,” Rooney said.

“The seeds of economic growth are planted with a commitment to improving the skills of our workforce, reducing the cost of doing business, and making available the resources business needs to compete and thrive in today’s ultra-competitive global economy. Governor Blagojevich has invested heavily in building up these assets, and what we’re seeing now with the attraction of successful companies like U.S. Cellular is really the fruits of that labor,” State Senator Larry Walsh (D-Joliet) said.

“Under Governor Blagojevich’s leadership, a number of highly successful companies have announced their decision to locate or expand their operations in the Northeast region in just the last few weeks. Not only does that mean a wealth of new jobs for this economy, but an accelerated rate of economic growth and more widespread economic opportunity,” State Rep. Brent Hassert (R-Romeoville) said.

“Governor Blagojevich understands that as the demands of businesses continue to change and evolve, we need to continue being pro-active to ensure that they have all the tools needed to increase efficiency, productivity and competitiveness. The decision of U.S. Cellular to open this new call center in Bolingbrook is another indication that we’re getting the job done,” Bolingbrook Mayor Roger Claar said.

Chicago-based U.S. Cellular Corporation (AMEX: USM) is a super-regional wireless company, serving more than 4.8 million customers in 150 markets in 26 states. With 2003 sales of \$2.42 billion, U.S. Cellular maintains one of the industry’s highest levels of customer satisfaction by emphasizing customer support, quality network coverage and a comprehensive range of wireless products and services. The company is an active corporate citizen through charitable contributions, award-winning community relations programs and associate volunteer activities. For more information, visit www.uscellular.com

The support for U.S. Cellular’s new call center will be provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). DCEO will make available Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) tax credits based on job creation over a ten-year period, a Large Business Development Program (LBDP) grant, and funding through its Employer Training Investment Fund to help train U.S. Cellular’s workforce.

“From his first days in office, Governor Blagojevich acted with a great sense of urgency to create a support system that would not only help retain businesses throughout the state, but provide the targeted resources and hands on assistance that will help businesses expand and launch new ventures here. U.S. Cellular’s decision to locate its new call center in Illinois will help a prosperous local economy thrive,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

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 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.

#####