



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES IMPORTANT GRANTS TO STRENGTHEN TECHNOLOGY LITERACY IN EAST ST. LOUIS AND VENICE

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

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that East St. Louis and Venice will receive a technology grant as part of his *Opportunity Returns* plan for job creation in the Southwest 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.

"As technology has evolved and comes to play an essential role in the workplace and our daily lives, many residents of East St. Louis and the surrounding communities have been left behind," Governor Blagojevich said. "In our quest to ensure that all Southwest region residents have the ability to compete for well-paying jobs in the 21st century economy, we must provide greater access to technology and its economic benefits."

The Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation, a non-profit organization, receives a **\$37,000** grant to serve the cities of East St. Louis, Brooklyn and Washington Park. Located at the Intel Computer Clubhouse facility in the Orr-Weathers public housing complex, the project will provide computer skills training, primarily for minority residents, living below the federal poverty level.

In Venice, the not-for-profit Black Butterfly Youth Foundation is receiving a **\$34,000** grant. These funds will enhance educational opportunities for low-income residents in Madison and St. Clair Counties. Services provided include basic computer training, Internet accessibility, as well as other technology proficiency classes.

"The *Eliminate the Digital Divide Program* is providing a hands on education in technology and computer literacy. Greater access to these skills will produce greater access to well-paying jobs in our ever changing marketplace," 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

(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 Southwest region was the product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 50 specific projects that the Governor announced in December for Southwestern 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.

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