



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES TECHNOLOGY GRANTS TO CAIRO AND VIENNA FOR ELIMINATING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that Cairo and Vienna 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.

"The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program plays an important role in our *Opportunity Returns* plan because it provides a critical building block toward accomplishing our objective: creating better opportunities for the people of the region to earn a decent living. The program teaches essential skills in computers and technology literacy. Gaining these skills will increase opportunities to pursuing quality education and well-paying jobs; producing long-term gains that will benefit the individuals, as well as the regional workforce," Governor Blagojevich said.

Shawnee Community College will receive a **\$44,000** grant to provide computer access and training to 350 low-income, rural residents in Alexander, Pulaski and Union counties. Shawnee Community College will expand its community technology center into the communities of Cairo, Olive Branch, Mounds, Olmstead and Dongola by permanently placing 25 accessible computers in public libraries and Illinois Department of Human Services offices.

Vienna High School will receive the other grant, for **\$42,000**, in order to provide technology skills training, computer equipment and software for students and the community. This technology center will offer learning opportunities that build upon the literacy, technology and job skills of students and adults in Johnson County.

"The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program is really a response to the demands of today's marketplace. By targeting resources, critical skills are taught that provide a foundation for future achievement. The grant program has realized a great deal of success already, and we look for that success only to continue through the strong partnerships we are able to build with community technology centers like Shawnee Community College and Vienna High School," Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity 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. The more than 40 specific projects that the Governor announced in November for the Southern 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.

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