



# 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 ANNOUNCES *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* JOB TRAINING GRANT FOR BELLEVILLE COMPANY

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that he is awarding a workforce-training grant to Peerless-Premier Appliance Company in Southwest Illinois as a part of his regional economic development plan, *Opportunity Returns*.

Peerless-Premier of Belleville, a manufacturer of gas and electric ranges for cooking products, will receive a **\$45,000** grant for manufacturing software training. The company is in the process of upgrading its manufacturing system, which will include an overhaul of inventory management. Providing software training for 38 employees will improve manufacturing and sales efficiency, and could allow Peerless-Premier to grow and add jobs in the future.

“*Opportunity Returns* is meant to bring economic vitality back to the Southwest region, a part of our state where manufacturing plays a major role,” Governor Blagojevich said. “Although America’s manufacturing industry is facing formidable challenges, they are not insurmountable. Companies like Peerless-Premier are proof that by innovating and constantly improving efficiency, manufacturing companies can flourish. And if we are going to continue moving this region forward, we must commit to companies that have made a commitment to Illinois. This employer training grant will help ensure that Peerless-Premier’s future in Illinois is very bright.”

Belleville’s Peerless-Premier is a great Illinois success story. Founded in 1912 as Premier Stove Company, Peerless has grown to become a leading national manufacturer of cooking ranges. Today, Peerless-Premier is a complete manufacturer, designing and manufacturing its own parts to build modern gas and electric ranges. The entire manufacturing process takes place under one roof at a two square block facility in Belleville. Peerless-Premier, which employs more than 200 people, is one of two remaining U.S. manufacturers of gas and electric ranges.

“During these challenging economic times, many companies do not have the financial wherewithal to pour resources back into their businesses to ensure future stability and productivity. But a company’s human capital is too great a resource to overlook. This *Opportunity Returns* grant will invest in training for an important local employer, Peerless-Premier, which will both strengthen the overall caliber of the workforce in the Southwest region and also position it for future economic growth,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

(more)

According to Judith Wagner, Vice-President for Administration at Peerless-Premier, the company is committed to continuing to grow in the Southwest region: "The Belleville area has long been known for the skill and craftsmanship of its workers. We have dedicated ourselves to the tradition of providing quality and value combined with conscientious service to our customers."

The grant is being awarded through the Employer Training Investment Program's (ETIP) Small/Mid-sized Company component. ETIP is a new generation of employer-focused, customized training grants created through the "*21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs*" Training Initiative. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the ETIP grants, which reimburse companies and organizations for up to 50 percent of the costs of training their employees.

Governor Blagojevich's *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 throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The almost 60 specific projects that Governor Blagojevich outlined for the Southwest region last December are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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