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Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH RESPONDS TO MITSUBISHI LAYOFFS WITH OPENING OF CENTER DESIGNED TO HELP WORKERS TARGET NEW OPPORTUNITIES

CHICAGO – In light of the first round of layoffs at the Mitsubishi plant in Normal, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich announced today that state is continuing its efforts to ensure that quality employment opportunities promptly return to the 1,200 men and women losing their jobs by providing comprehensive employment preparation and search services at the Career Link Transition Center located in the Bloomington at 202 North Prospect Road. The Center officially opens today. In July, Governor Blagojevich directed the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to allocate up to \$1.5 million to assist employees affected by the layoffs at Mitsubishi Motors, as well as other dislocated workers.

“While news of the layoffs came as a great disappointment to these workers who have invested so much into their jobs, they continue to demonstrate a resilient spirit and a deep determination to turn this obstacle into opportunity, and it is our job to help them do that. This region has a diversified and vibrant economy ripe with many new opportunities. The Career Link Transition Center is a tremendous resource that will help these workers seize those opportunities and transition to the next chapter in their lives. One worker at a time and one job at a time, we can reinvigorate the local economy and strengthen its foundation for future growth,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The United Workforce Development Board, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Department of Employment Security will partner together to provide a suite of services. Those laid-off workers seeking full-time employment can participate in a three-day introduction workshop where they will identify their goals and develop a plan of action to find quality employment. The services at the three-day workshop will include planning job search strategy, creating a professionally competitive resume, learning about current job search trends, and gaining effective job search skills. Referrals can also be made to community-based organizations that provide work support services, individual and family counseling, and social services.

The re-employment initiative will also compliment Governor Blagojevich’s Critical Skills Shortage Initiative (CSSI), a program designed to arm workers with new skills and prepare them to fill jobs in industries facing critical shortages in skilled labor. A group of local stakeholders, which includes the private sector-led local workforce investment boards, area employers, economic development professionals, educators and service providers, is already using a \$150,000 *Opportunity Returns* planning grant to identify industry sectors, and specific occupations within those sectors, where there are current or projected shortages of skilled workers. Once these industries and occupations have been selected, the group will work to determine the root causes of these skill shortages and then develop regional solutions to address them. DCEO is administering CSSI and will competitively award additional funds to help bridge the gap in training services available to fill these occupations.

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“The Career Link Transition Center is the most important resource we can provide right now to restore employment opportunity to the displaced workers and their families. This is why it is so important to have a grassroots approach to economic development; when faced with challenging times that threaten the economic security of our community, we can respond with a specially tailored plan designed to deliver immediately at the community level,” said State Senator Bill Brady (R-Bloomington).

“Governor Blagojevich and I want to do everything we possibly can to ensure that the hardworking men and women who are losing their jobs have the opportunity to not only find their next job but the right one. The Career Link Transition Center will be a critical tool in fulfilling that mission,” State Rep. Dan Brady (R-Bloomington) said.

“The critical partnerships Governor Blagojevich has forged is ensuring that a highly specialized collection of resources will continually be at work for the Mitsubishi workers and other dislocated workers. Right now, all our efforts are focused on helping these people move forward with their lives. This regional economy and its workforce hold a great many strengths. Our steadfast goal is to parlay those strengths into new jobs and renewed vitality for the community of Normal and the entire North Central region,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

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.

For more information about the Career Link Transition Center call Sandy Flanagan at 309-662-0358.

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