



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

### CONTACTS:

Cheryle Jackson	312/814.3158 (office)
Angelynne Amores	312/636.6148 (cell)
Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/814.7168 (Opp. Returns)

## GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES CRITICAL JOB TRAINING GRANTS FOR THE ROCK RIVER VALLEY REGION

*Improving the skills of more than 530 local employees in Northern Stateline region*

ROCKFORD – Gov. Rod Blagojevich today announced two new workforce-training grants in the Northern Stateline region as a part of his historic regional economic development plan, *Opportunity Returns*. Good Will Abilities Center, a non-profit, community based organization in Rockford, will receive almost **\$60,000** to provide skills enhancement services to workers at local companies. The center offers a wide range of training services, including vocational assessment, counseling, and job-seeking services. Good Will Abilities Center also subcontracts for area businesses in the manufacturing sector in areas such as assembly, packaging, and quality inspection. An estimated six companies and 320 employees will participate in the training projects.

Rock Valley College in Rockford will receive almost **\$48,000** to provide professional development and skills training courses to an estimated 90 area workers at four companies – Ecolabs, Kennametal Inc., Owens Corning and Pierce Biotechnology. The grants are being awarded through the Employer Training Investment Program's (ETIP) Small/Mid-sized Company component and will be used to upgrade the skills of approximately 410 employees in total. ETIP is a new generation of employer-focused, customized training 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% of the costs of training their employees.

“The fundamental focus of *Opportunity Returns* in the Northern Stateline region is to promote the region’s competitive advantages. These grants are an important illustration of this strategy in action. Manufacturing is still the backbone of this region’s economy, and one of its greatest strengths; yet it has the potential to be a more dynamic force of growth in the local economy. These grants will improve the skills of hundreds of workers, strengthening the caliber of these companies and ultimately making the area more economically competitive,” Governor Blagojevich 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

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business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. These economic initiatives 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.

“The Governor is ensuring that our workforce is ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond,” said DCEO Director Jack Lavin. “This initiative will offer assistance to address the training needs necessary for local companies to retain and expand manufacturing operations in the Northern Stateline region, especially those businesses that act as suppliers to larger companies.”

Two other Rockford businesses were recent recipients of ETIP grants. Roper Whitney, Inc. is receiving almost **\$49,000** to help train all 97 of its employees; and Rockford Ball Screw Co. is being awarded nearly **\$23,000** to help upgrade 25 employees. The Governor has announced a total of nearly **\$180,000** in *Opportunity Returns* ETIP grants for the Northern Stateline region.

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