



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 27, 2004

CONTACTS:

Cheryle Jackson	312/814.3158 (office)
Angelynne Amores	312/636.6148 (cell)
Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/814.7168 (Opp. Returns)

IMPORTANT METROPOLIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FACILITY MOVES CLOSER TO COMPLETION

Shawnee Community College Educational Center Will Train Both Students and Workers

SPRINGFIELD - A major initiative of Governor Rod Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* program to help business and industry leaders address the ongoing loss of jobs in their own backyard begins today as Shawnee Community College officials broke ground on the Metropolis Regional Education and Training Center. The versatile new job training and economic development facility will hold more than 10,000 square feet of classroom and lab space ready to serve a diverse population of students and area workers in need of upgrading their skills to meet the demands of a high-tech work environment. The facility will open in October of this year and should train between 1500 and 2000 people each year in about 100 courses. Governor Blagojevich first announced **\$2.2 million** in funding for the educational center when he visited Carbondale in November to unveil *Opportunity Returns*, his comprehensive, economic development plan designed to spur economic growth and create new jobs in the state's Southern region.

"As the economic base of the Southern region becomes more advanced, its educational resources must become more customized and sophisticated as well. The Metropolis Regional Education and Training Center will act as a vital resource for achieving our goal of building a more dynamic workforce capable of thriving in the 21st century economy. Shawnee Community College is a perfect partner for ensuring that this region's workforce is prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow and help Southern Illinois reach its vast economic potential," Governor Blagojevich said.

The 10,600 square foot facility is ideally located on a 10-acre site in the Metropolis Industrial Park near Interstate 24, where a host of businesses will be stationed. The center will offer on-site training facilities to local business and industry, strengthening worker skills and promoting job stability in an area hit hard by the closing of a nuclear power plant and the subsequent loss of 2,000 area jobs. The City of Metropolis has donated the site and a portion of the funds required to construct the facility.

"Shawnee Community College is proud to be a part of this strong partnership between the city of Metropolis and the State of Illinois, which has led to the creation of this education and training center. The center will provide training programs and classes in critically needed areas to the community and the region. One of our slogans here is, 'start reaching for our dreams.' This really represents a dream come true for this region," said Shawnee Community College President Terry Ludwig.

(more)

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. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business. 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.

#####