



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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FIRST LADY PATTI BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES STATE PARTNERSHIP WITH THREE SPRINGFIELD GROUPS AIMED AT IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

Boys & Girls Club of Springfield, Springfield Urban League and Lincoln Land Community College receive 'Eliminate the Digital Divide' Grants to Prepare People of All Ages for a Better Future

SPRINGFIELD – During an appearance at the Boys & Girls Club of Springfield, Illinois First Lady Patti Blagojevich announced that three Springfield community organizations are receiving technology grants totaling nearly **\$136,000** as part of Governor Rod Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* plan for spurring the economy and creating jobs throughout the Central region. These *Eliminate the Digital Divide* grants, administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), 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 people of all ages need to succeed in today's high-tech world.

"In today's society, the Internet permeates all aspects of our life - from school, to banking, to reading the newspaper, to searching for a job. Expanding access to the Internet goes hand in hand with improving education and opportunity for children and families throughout Illinois. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program is making tremendous progress in this effort, and these grants will greatly strengthen the ability of three dedicated local organizations to give people in Springfield the tools they need to succeed in school or on the job," First Lady Blagojevich said.

The Boys & Girls Club of Springfield will receive nearly **\$42,000** to provide technology-based learning programs at its two facilities. The target population is 100 youth aged 6 to 18 and 20 adults living in disadvantaged circumstances or high-poverty neighborhoods in Springfield. They will receive training in basic computer skills/Internet use, technology-based academic enhancement programs focused on reading and math skills, vocational programs, including graphics and web design, and GED courses.

The Springfield Urban League (SUL), a not-for-profit organization that assists African-Americans, other minorities and underprivileged individuals in their pursuit of becoming more self-sufficient, will receive a grant for nearly **\$44,000**. SUL's community technology center will provide 480 participants with access to technology equipment and training enabling them to better compete in today's job market.

Lincoln Land Community College will receive **\$50,000** to provide technology training and services to 850

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youth, adults and senior citizens at its two Springfield community technology centers. Short-term computer training, certificate programs through online training, after-school and summer youth programs, and open access labs are some of the services and training provided in these state-of-the art computer labs.

“The *Eliminate Digital the Divide* program is a critical tool in ensuring that Springfield residents of all ages have the necessary skills to compete in our increasingly high tech society,” State Senator Larry Bomke (R-Springfield) said.

“Governor Blagojevich and I realize that we are making a profound difference in the lives of people in Springfield, Chicago and across Illinois through this vital program. I have been a passionate supporter of the *Eliminate the Digital Divide* initiative because we must equip all of our residents, from students to adults, with the skills that many of us take for granted,” State Rep. Constance Howard (D-Chicago) said.

“These three fine Springfield organizations are dedicated to improving the lives of so many people. These *Eliminate the Digital Divide* grants will help them make the Internet and other basic computer skills more accessible to continue bridging our technology gap,” State Rep. Raymond Poe (R-Springfield) said.

“To meet the demands of today’s world, students and adults need to be proficient in Internet use and basic computer skills. In many economic environments, the resources that are needed to teach these skills simply aren’t available. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program is bringing these resources into the heart of the communities that need them most - helping to cast a wider net of real economic opportunity throughout our state and creating a brighter future for all of Illinois,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

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

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. Developed largely from the input of local business, labor and public sector leaders, *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible, specific actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to businesses. While the Central region’s plan is yet to be announced, the Governor’s office and DCEO is currently working closely with regional leaders to identify top local needs and priorities.

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