



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES EMPLOYER TRAINING GRANTS THAT WILL IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AT ST. CLAIR AND MADISON COUNTY COMPANIES

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced more workforce training grants for the Southwest region as a part of *Opportunity Returns*, his new regional economic development plan designed to spur economic growth and create jobs.

Gateway Food Products Co. of Dupo receives an *Opportunity Returns* grant to train employees how to use its new manufacturing software system. Gateway Food Products manufactures oils and syrups for the food industry. This **\$30,000** grant will allow the company to train three-quarters of its employees in a new software system that will increase production by 75%. This dramatic increase in production will also bring greater profitability, which could mean new jobs for the region.

Schantz and Sons, a Highland manufacturer of custom-built concession trailers and race car transporters, receives a **\$3,000** *Opportunity Returns* grant. This will provide specialized welding training for 3 employees. This grant will allow the company to increase production, reduce warranty costs, and maintain a high level of customer satisfaction, which could lead to future expansion and job creation.

“The *Opportunity Returns* plan is intended to restore economic opportunity and create new jobs by making targeted investments that will pay important dividends. By investing in employer training initiatives, like these in St. Clair and Madison Counties, we are planting seeds that will mean business expansion and job creation in the not too distant future,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The grants are 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 “21st 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.

“Economic growth begins at the local level. Small and medium sized businesses have been the life-blood of Southwestern Illinois for decades, and we are committed to supporting their success and growth. These ETIP grants will allow Schantz and Sons and Gateway Food Products to expand their production capabilities and, hopefully, put more people to work in the region,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

(more)

The Southwest region has received **\$300,000** to date in *Opportunity Returns* ETIP grants, earmarked for training of more than **1300** employees.

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 Southwestern 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 50 specific projects that the Governor announced in December for Southwestern Illinois 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.

Interviews will be available at www.state.il.us/iisradio/extras.htm

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