



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES VITAL GRANT TO STRENGTHEN TECHNOLOGY LITERACY IN NORTH CENTRAL ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced a **\$50,000** *Opportunity Returns* grant to the Tri-County Urban League in Peoria to increase access to technology for low-income residents. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program awards funding to local community technology centers (CTCs) to provide technology training and access to computers and the Internet in low-income communities. More so than ever before, technology literacy is a necessity to competing for and succeeding in nearly all jobs in the 21st century marketplace. By empowering these residents with these crucial skills, the program offers a bridge to higher education and better paying jobs.

“Any discussion of creating better opportunities in disadvantaged communities must include improving access to advanced education and better jobs. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program provides a critical building block toward accomplishing these objectives. Moreover, the Tri-County Urban League is an ideal recipient and provider for this training because it will help give them the capacity to do what they already do best: work at providing better opportunities for people looking to better themselves,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The Tri-County Urban League will use the funding to provide computer literacy activities to an estimated **500** individuals. Serving over 5000 clients annually in Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford counties, the Tri-County Urban League’s mission is to improve the educational, economic, and social well being of disadvantaged local residents. The CTC is strategically located in the neighborhood where Peoria’s Title I schools have the highest concentrations of low-income families qualifying for free or reduced cost lunches.

In addition to providing basic skills training needed to access and utilize computers and the Internet, a variety of technology access activities can be provided by the grant recipient including:

Vocational skills training related to information technology occupations;

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;

(more)

Computer based before and after school programs for academic enrichment and reinforcement;

And promotion of home access to computers.

“The Governor is committed to positioning our workforce to excel in the 21st century economy, and this grant program is really a key element to realizing that objective. It helps ensure that we are not leaving those from low-income communities behind in our efforts to build a more highly educated, skilled, and competitive workforce. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program has realized a great deal of success already, and we look for that success only to continue through the strong partnerships with groups like the Tri-County Urban League,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

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 North Central region is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 40 specific projects that the Governor announced in December for the North Central 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.

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