



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 IMPORTANT GRANT TO HELP ELIMINATE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN ALTON

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that Alton will each receive a technology grant as part of his *Opportunity Returns* plan for job creation in Southwestern Illinois. These grants, known as the *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program, 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 employees will need to succeed in today's high-tech workplace.

"Investing in education is a vital part of any successful economic development plan," Governor Blagojevich said. "The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* program is an investment in the fundamental education of computer and technology literacy. Possessing these skills is critical to effectively competing for well-paying jobs in the digital economy. We are steadily eliminating the pockets of the population who have not developed these skills due to lack of access; and, in turn, improving the overall caliber of the region's workforce."

Lewis and Clark Community College will receive a **\$48,000** grant. The school's Division of Adult Education, in collaboration with several community organizations, will use the funds to increase the effectiveness of four existing community technology centers in the greater Alton area. The program provides training activities utilizing an innovative, project-based approach, designed to enhance basic computer skills, work skills and academic skills through real-life work experiences. The *Eliminate the Digital Divide* grant will provide resources to train approximately **500** additional residents.

"A significant portion of the population remains isolated from technology and its economic benefits," Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said. "Through this *Opportunity Returns* grant, we are ensuring that a larger number of people in the Southwest region will gain these needed technology skills. By doing so, they will greatly enhance their ability to pursue higher levels of education and compete for better-paying jobs," Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity 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

(more)

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

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.

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

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