



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

April 18, 2006

**CONTACTS:**

Cheryle Jackson	312/814.3158 (office)
Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355 (office)
Gerardo Cardenas	312/814.3158 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/814.8193 (DCEO)
Eric Matanyi	708/534.4044 (Governors State)

**GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES \$200,000 FOR NEW ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER TO HELP HIGH-GROWTH COMPANIES AND CREATE MORE JOBS ACROSS CHICAGO'S SOUTH SUBURBS**

*DCEO Director Jack Lavin Highlights Work of the CenterPoint Entrepreneurship Center at Governors State University*

UNIVERSITY PARK - Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich's top economic development official visited the CenterPoint Entrepreneurship Center at Governors State University today to announce \$200,000 in funding for the new center, which will help local entrepreneurs and small business owners and their promising ventures develop into successes in the marketplace.

"Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the cornerstone of the Illinois economy and critical to creating more good jobs, so it's essential that we provide high-growth entrepreneurs with the resources they need to grow and flourish. Working with Governors State University allows us to cultivate a stronger entrepreneurial atmosphere throughout the south suburbs. By investing in promising firms with great potential and giving them the resources they need to take their ventures to the next level, we're not only fostering their individual success, but fueling more vigorous economic growth," Gov. Blagojevich said.

The CenterPoint Entrepreneurship Center (CPEC), which opened in December 2005, acts as a regional hub that coordinates all small business development, entrepreneurship and technology training activity across the south suburbs, and provides entrepreneurs with the tools they need to make their ventures successful. CPEC is one of 17 entrepreneurship centers Gov. Blagojevich has opened over the past three years. The entrepreneurship centers make up one vital component of the **Illinois Entrepreneurship Network (IEN)**, a comprehensive network of resources designed to strengthen the state's capacity to develop small businesses into market successes and help entrepreneurship act as a more dynamic engine of growth. Gov. Blagojevich launched the IEN Web site, [www.ienconnect.com](http://www.ienconnect.com), which features a free business needs assessment and a referral within 24 hours for personalized, face-to-face assistance. Entrepreneurs can also call toll-free **1-800-252-2923**.

"Gov. Blagojevich and I strongly believe that in order to grow jobs we must provide our young firms with the resources they need to develop into economically viable and sustainable companies that create jobs in the community. This entrepreneurship center allows us to give a greater level of support to local small businesses and entrepreneurs, which are the source of innovative ideas and showcase the great things that the south suburbs have to offer," said State Senator Debbie Halvorson (D-Chicago Heights).

(more)

“The work of the CenterPoint e-center at Governors State University will help to engage entrepreneurs and innovators in the community to meet their untapped potential, and I look forward to working together with Gov. Blagojevich to continue making investments that will result in more jobs for this region of the state,” State Representative Lisa Dugan (D-Kankakee) said.

“The addition of an Entrepreneurship Center at Governors State University will reinforce the services we already have in place and allow us to make an even greater impact on the region’s businesses, communities, and lives of its residents. The choice to allow us to host one of only 17 such centers in Illinois is not a point to be taken lightly,” said Dr. Stuart Fagan, President of Governors State University. “I thank Gov. Blagojevich and Director Lavin for recognizing our past successes and putting faith in us to assist businesses on an even greater scale.”

The CenterPoint e-center provides a number of specialized resources for its clients, including \$5,000 challenge grants awards to assist entrepreneurs or small businesses with obtaining professional services for comprehensive business plan assistance, evaluation of a proposed start-up or expansion or other accelerated support purposes. Over the past five months, CPEC has already awarded **\$25,000** in challenge grants, and more than half of which went to women and minority-owned businesses, with several more pending approval. Additionally, the e-center has worked with 25 clients and helped secure more than \$2.75 million in debt and equity financing in its brief existence. The CenterPoint e-center works in collaboration with the CenterPoint Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which over the last 5 years has served more than 2,700 clients, and the Global Trade Center. For more information visit [www.centerpointgsu.com](http://www.centerpointgsu.com).

Director Lavin highlighted some of the successes of the CPEC to date, who spoke at the e-center announcement:

**Advanced Information Resources (AIR)** is a two-year old IT based consulting services company specializing in small to mid-size businesses in the south suburban Chicago region. AIR, which is based in Homewood, came to CPEC for assistance in expanding its business by focusing on the high growth medical services sector. The e-center awarded AIR a \$5,000 matching Challenge Grant to tackle this milestone. The grant will be used for hiring an outside marketing and sales service provider that will assist AIR in the selection, targeting and marketing/sales of the healthcare industry, which will allow AIR to ramp up from two to seven full time employees and to grow revenues 60 percent this year.

**LoadSys Consulting, Inc.**, based in Tinley Park, provides web applications and solutions, programming, web marketing, graphics, flash and application development along with database development. CPEC is currently working with LoadSys to help them develop a take out/delivery web based module exclusively for independent restaurants. The e-center is assisting with LoadSys in meeting this business milestone. Revenues are expected to increase more than 100 percent with three new jobs added this year.

**Kathryn E. Humecki & Associates, Ltd**, based in Olympia Fields, is one of the fastest growing independent CPA firms in the south suburbs, experienced in all matters of accounting and taxation, IRS problem resolution, estates and trusts, business formation, financial planning and investment, real estate and business sales. KHA approached CPEC for ideas to reach its own internal goal of taking its staff from a size of two to twenty over the next three years. CPEC is working with KMA to assist in sales and marketing and to use a Challenge Grant to assist KMA in working with an outside service provider for branding and marketing of the KMA name.

“Gov. Blagojevich and I understand that small businesses and local entrepreneurs need critical access to capital, markets, networks, technology and other professional resources for success in today’s competitive business environment. The CenterPoint e-center is working on a number of levels to stimulate growth in the south

(more)

suburbs, providing increased opportunities for businesses to grow and create jobs in the community and foster entrepreneurship and innovation,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Gov. Blagojevich’s *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development strategy 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 – each with a regional team that is empowered and expected to rapidly respond to opportunities and challenges. *Opportunity Returns* is about tangible, specific actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to businesses. It is about upgrading the skills of the local workforce, increasing the access to capital, opening new markets, improving infrastructure, and creating and retaining jobs. *Opportunity Returns* is about successfully partnering with companies and communities, both large and small, to help all of Illinois reach its economic potential.

#####