PowerUp! Riverbend is poised to offer free public access to the Internet; free public computer literacy classes; career counseling; life coaches to help a person set and achieve self-improvement goals; tutoring; area-wide access to lectures and demonstrations through webinars; and health screening that is tied to personal improvement plans that will be monitored for progress and assistance given with entry into academic programs in allied health, such as nursing or occupational therapy assistants; and in programs leading to other high-growth occupations, such as green jobs. Public computer centers will be established throughout Alton, Godfrey, and Jerseyville, Illinois, through a partnership with eight different entities, resulting in eleven different community sites. With unemployment and access to affordable health care being two major issues facing the economically disadvantaged region served by HPLD, PowerUp! Riverbend will provide broadband access to an area that reflects significant numbers of people who are unemployed, living in poverty, earning a per capita income notably lower than the national rate, have less than a high school education, and are medically underserved with no access to affordable health care. Many of these people live in rural areas with no access to broadband technology. Those who do live in areas where Internet providers claim to provide access cannot afford the service. Both major Internet providers in this area, AT&T and Charter, have installed a limited number of cables or DSL lines, and, once they are claimed, no more service lines are available, even if the resident can afford it. The area is characterized by significant losses of heavy manufacturing industries, high unemployment, and low socioeconomic status. The computer centers will be located in eleven places: a center that advocates for the disabled (IMPACT), a senior services agency (SSP); a community learning center in a weed and seed neighborhood (CLC/L&C); a middle school building in the center of Alton (Alton CUSD #11); a hospital (St. Anthony's Health Center - SAHC); a large community college in Godfrey (L&C); a shopping mall (Hayner Public Library - HPLD); a library in downtown Alton (HPLD); the Madison County Employment and Training Center (MCET); and a predominantly rural library in Jerseyville, Illinois (Jerseyville Public Library). The programs offered at any one center, if offered in a lecture format, will be accessible, through a webinar simulcast, to all centers by using interactive software and an Internet portal that will be password-protected. Although each center will offer its programs at times that are conducive to its own scheduling, all centers will be open to the public and all centers will address the four points of job training/re-training, computer literacy, continuing education, and personal health care education. All centers except one will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Monday through Friday. Six of the centers will be open from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on those days. On Saturdays, five of the centers will have operating hours between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., and, on Sundays, four of the centers will be available. PowerUp! Riverbend will serve an area that includes
Jerseyville, Illinois, in the north, and Alton, Godfrey, and Fosterburg, located approximately twenty miles south of Jerseyville. The City of Alton, IL, which is part of the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area, lies along the riverbanks of the Mississippi River, approximately 30 miles north of St. Louis, Missouri.

Information gleaned from electronic sources such as www.census.gov, www.city-data.com, and www.factfinder.census.gov, (according to 2008 data), reveals that the national per capita income is $36,714; however, Alton, the home site of the project, has a per capita income of $20,959, which is only 57% of the national average. Godfrey, which would house the Lewis & Clark Community College (L&C) center, and is adjacent on the north of Alton, has a per capita income of $31,521. The per capita income in Fosterburg is $25,891, and Jerseyville's is $25,098. The average per capita income of this area is $25,867.25, which is 70% of the national per capita. Although Godfrey and Jerseyville's statistics are in line with the national average for unemployment, both Alton and Fosterburg reflect numbers that put them a full two percentage points above the national average. When you take in account the numbers of people who have been unemployed for longer than six months, the marginally attached workers, the discouraged workers unemployed for more than a year, and the under-employed (those working full time, but who cannot find a steady job), the number jumps closer to 20% in this area. According to some statistics, the unemployment rate for African Americans is at 27%. The number of people lacking at least a high school education ranges from 9' 23% of the population, which means that, of the 6,864 people living in these cities, towns, and villages, anywhere from 6,197 to 15,838 of them didn't matriculate from high school. Although the number of people throughout the area who are living at or below the poverty level is 8.8%, in Alton that number stands at a full 18.6%. The non-white population overall is around 9.57%, but the non-white population in Alton is 27.7%. (The Illinois non-white population is 26%). With an average of 500 users per computer center, PowerUp! Riverbend reasonably projects that approximately 5,000 people could be served each year with our programs. Based on historical attendance at certain centers (those at Lewis & Clark Community College and at Hayner Public Library), that number could be even larger. The Hayner Public Library District has been offering public computer literacy classes for the past three years with an instructor who has more than fifteen years of experience in teaching computer literacy. Lewis & Clark Community College (L&C) opened its doors in 1970, and today serves approximately 8,000 students per semester. L&C has a well established Adult Education Program that serves approximately 1,200 students. The College has successfully conducted state and federally supported projects, such as bridging the digital divide, which has offered programs and courses on digital technology to economically disadvantaged populations in its district. The Alton Community Unit School District #11 has a staff who represent an average of 11.8 years of experience. 60% of the teachers have a bachelor's degree, and 40% have a master's. The district has been offering classes in computer technology for over thirty years. Senior Services Plus uses staff employed by Lewis & Clark Community College for its public computer classes. The center is staffed by professionals in the social services field who have extensive experience in working with diverse populations. IMPACT employs professionals who have degrees and backgrounds in education, social services, and experience in working with the disabled. St. Anthony's Health Center (SAHC) offers public health education seminars on a regular basis, using its health professionals to deliver quality programs on various topics like diabetes, heart health, and aging, among others. Jerseyville Public Library has staff that has both the background and experience to provide quality computer programming in a public computer center. The Madison County Employment and Training Center has been working to help those who are unemployed...
be able to find new work for 39 years. It is estimated that 150 jobs will be saved or created from this project's start-up. The overall cost of the proposed project is 4.4 million dollars.