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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Collaboration Strengthens "Gold Collar" Job Training in Rock River Valley

In response to today's challenging economic climate, two local organizations announce a significant partnership to strengthen "Gold Collar" job training in the Rock River Valley.

Recently the boards of Rockford Area Ventures and Goodwill/Abilities Center unanimously approved an agreement to transfer the **TECHWORKS** training program to a new home at the **EIGERlab**.

For a number of years, **TECHWORKS**, a joint partnership among area manufacturers and the Goodwill/Abilities Center trained individuals in metalworking, CNC and other manufacturing skills in the buildings on 15th Avenue in Blackhawk Park previously occupied by the Army Reserve. This announcement marks a transition to Rockford Area Ventures, a consulting organization aimed at assisting new business development and furthering entrepreneurialism in the region, assuming the operations of **TECHWORKS**.

"Essentially the **TECHWORKS** curriculum and trainers will migrate to an outstanding facility at the **EIGERlab**, said Sam Schmitz, president of Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois. "This collaboration allows us to meet our mission of providing training for people in need while reducing redundancy and facility cost."

Rockford Area Ventures President Tom McDunn shared Schmitz's enthusiasm for the collaboration. "We recognize the importance of 'gold collar' skills such as advanced CAD/CAM and micromachining," said McDunn. "This partnership creates a streamlined pathway for individuals to earn these skills that are crucial for the future of manufacturing." "We are developing our Gold Collar Skill program together with Rock Valley College to provide comprehensive options for skill development for the region's residents," McDunn added.

**The TECHWORKS program will begin moving its operations to the EIGERlab.** A ribbon cutting is planned for April 30, coincident with the graduation of the first FAST-TRACK class at the **EIGERlab**. For more information on pursuing **TECHWORKS** training opportunities, please contact Laura at (815) 965-3522. For more information on this partnership, please contact Sam Schmitz at (815) 965-3795.

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