

For Immediate Release October 12, 2007

What: County Board Chairman Scott Christiansen Visits Abilities Center's TECHWORKS to Announce Support for a Fast-Track Machining Training Program

When: Wednesday, October 17th, 9:00 a.m.

Where: TECHWORKS – 185 15th Avenue, Rockford, Illinois

Contact: TECHWORKS Program and Facility Manager, Ed Van Vleet at 815-967-7571.

Winnebago County Board Chairman Scott Chistiansen will announce a new program to meet immediate manufacturing employment needs in Winnebago County.

Winnebago County has elected to create a \$25,000 revolving loan fund for qualified county residents to enroll in a Fast-Track Machining Training Program at TECHWORKS. Qualified applicants may apply for a student loan for up to 80% of the program tuition. The self-replenishing loan fund will help to underwrite a sustainable workforce development pipeline for local manufacturers.

TECHWORKS will use its community outreach network to locate candidates who can quickly transition into available resources for manufacturing. Interested applicants will be evaluated for participation in the program based upon physical capability, math and reading skills, mechanical aptitude, and employment history. They will pass a pre-enrollment drug screen and a background check.

The Fast-Track program will prepare employees to embark on a career in CNC machining. The 72-hour, 6-week program is designed to introduce students to the manufacturing workplace and basic concepts in CNC machining. They graduate from the program having demonstrated their commitment to on-time attendance and shop floor safety. They are 'employment ready' and primed for immediate productivity.

The program will actively seek employer involvement. Employers will be encouraged to 'pull' graduates into the workforce. They will be invited to engage with students during the program as guest speakers and by providing job shadowing opportunities. If they hire graduates, they will be encouraged to work out a loan repayment program with the employee as a recruitment and retention incentive.