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Q&A with David Stoecklin

**Executive Director,
Madison County Employment &
Training**

IBJ: What's Southwestern Illinois Worknet?

Stoecklin: Southwestern Illinois Worknet is a Web site portal that provides services both to businesses and to job seekers.

With it, we are banding together to put one face on the employment and training services that are offered in this area. As an example, job seekers will be able to get information on job transitioning to a new job or new career. There will be workshops to teach resume writing that will be available and broadcast there. There will be tips on interviewing techniques. There will be information about careers and salary information, as well as all kinds of information about the kind of training that might be available to someone who needs new skills to compete in the market. The idea is: There are no wrong doors.

IBJ: When did this Web site become operational?

Stoecklin: We've got almost all of the bugs out of it and we're going through the promotion of it right now. It's gone statewide within the past 90 days.

IBJ: Could a job seeker log onto this Web site and find all kinds of information that would be helpful?

Stoecklin: Absolutely. When job seekers access the home page, there will be a section about finding a job. They can do everything from registering with Illinois Skills Match, which is the state's electronic job exchange, to researching issues like how to prepare for a job, how to find a job and how to put together a resume. It will also give them information on the closest centers where they can go for services as well.

IBJ: And then from the employer side?

Stoecklin: Recruitment, employee training, business planning, things of that nature. The business planning service is an exciting part of

this. It's actually assistance with developing business plans as well as advice on starting your own business. It can give you information on how to recruit, about our income and worker training programs, on tax credits that are available, on the job training and on all kinds of services for businesses.

IBJ: Are these services available to any size business?

Stoecklin: Yes. We work with both very large businesses and small businesses to assist them in the training of their existing workforce. We partner with them. For example, we're working with an auto body shop right now that needs to get some new skills to a couple of its folks, and we're going to be able to help them do that by matching dollar for dollar with them for the cost of the training. That's a small shop where there are two or three people affected. At the same time, we're working with U.S. Steel, trying to help the company with its learner programs. Whether it's a big business or a little business, there's a lot of assistance that we can provide.

IBJ: So the employer can find out what's available and then find out who to contact to really start working on accessing different types of services?

Stoecklin: I think this is a very good first step on the part of the government to try to consolidate and provide all of this information in one place. Quite frankly, before this you would get a little bit here, a little bit there, but there was not one place where you could access all of the employers' services and job services as well.

IBJ: What does it cost?

Stoecklin: The big thing with us is that this thing is free. It gives folks someplace that they can go in and find this information free of charge. The other thing is that we're building partnerships every day – community colleges, the United Way, the NAACP, the Regional Superintendent of Schools Office. We've bringing in more and more partners who then provide more and more information.

IBJ: Can an employer go in looking to see what it can find out about training some of its employees, find that Southwestern Illinois College offers those services and then link to that?

Stoecklin: Exactly. We have a hiring event going on right now. There's a medical

company in Alton that's accepting resumes for authorization specialists. We list what that employer is looking for. There's a Sherwin-Williams store in Alton that's looking for folks. We put that kind of stuff on there, too. Any employer can use it. If employers see this thing and see that it's a recruitment tool, then they can go ahead and contact us so we can put listings on there for the employer as well.

IBJ: It seems you've got a fantastic tool here, but you've got to be able to drive people to it. What's your plan?

Stoecklin: We're just beginning to put the word out there and we're going to try to do a promotional campaign. We'll do some launch events where we're looking for any kind of venue at which we can get the word out. We're constantly scouring for events, and we would welcome anyone who is having an event to contact us and let us know about it so we can promote this tool.