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Press Release

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LR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD RECEIVES GRANT TO HELP FORMER SOUTHWEST AIRLINES WORKERS

The Workforce Investment Board (WIB) recently received a \$1.6 million grant from the US Department of Labor to offer dislocated worker services to 400 former Southwest Airlines (SWA) employees, who lost their jobs when the reservation center closed recently. Eighty percent of that money will go to efforts in Little Rock; the remaining twenty percent will go to efforts in outlying areas of Pulaski County, and Faulkner, Lonoke, and Saline Counties.

The WIB works with twenty-five (25) partner agencies to offer training to the dislocated workers. This grant will allow the former SWA employees to meet with a counselor at a workforce center through June 2006. With the counselor, they will draft an individual employment plan, which outlines what it takes to get a job as good or better as the SWA job. If training or certification is needed for these new jobs, the steps to obtain those will be identified.

Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey, the CEO of the Little Rock Workforce Investment Board, was very pleased by the news of the grant. "When Southwest Airlines closed the reservation center, it concerned me not only because they were a great corporate partner, but also because it meant that many hard-working citizens would be out of a job. With this grant from the Labor Department, those former Southwest employees now have the tools to be competitive in the job market."

The Little Rock Workforce Investment Board (LRWIB), a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, was established to coordinate and improve employment, training and education systems within Little Rock under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. It is committed to building a comprehensive regional workforce development system that is extremely positive and responsive to the needs of customers, job seekers, employers and incumbent workers and is highly accessible, sensitive, flexible and accountable.