



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JOBZONE PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO DISLOCATED AMERICAN AIRLINES PERSONNEL

Hampton Roads Business Community Hopes To Benefit From Call Center Closing

NORFOLK, Va. (February 11, 2003)—Beginning this week, staff from Opportunity Inc.'s JobZone training and resource centers will be conducting a series of briefings to provide assistance to the more than 500 local employees who will be affected by the closing of American Airlines reservation call center in Norfolk. The briefings are part of a rapid response procedure that provides affected personnel with pertinent information, such as how to file for unemployment insurance and what employment resources and training opportunities are available to help them re-enter the workforce.

“JobZone represents a culmination of strategic partners that have joined forces in order to provide more comprehensive service to those with employment needs,” said E. Roy Budd, President and CEO of Opportunity Inc. “Our rapid response team consists of a JobZone Career Counselor and a JobZone representative from the Virginia Employment Commission. This combined effort allows us to provide the information that is most pressing to individuals facing a layoff,” Budd said.

In addition to a wide variety of employment services available at JobZone centers, American Airlines personnel being affected by the closing may be eligible to access training money provided through a national emergency grant.

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In September of 2002, Opportunity Inc. was awarded a \$370,000 grant to provide free career counseling and training to people who have lost their jobs as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The remaining \$300,000 is part of emergency funds, which can be used to assist American Airlines employees affected by the call center closing.

“The intent is work first. However, in the event that individuals need additional skills to re-enter the workforce, we have the means to send them through training,” said Budd.

With over 500 skilled individuals in need of jobs, the Hampton Roads business community stands to benefit. “Calls from local employers interested in the potential pool of qualified workers have already started coming in,” said Joseph Hopkins, Eastern Regional Director of the Virginian Employment Commission. “We would like to take a negative situation and turn it into a win, win for both local employers and American Airlines personnel,” said Hopkins. JobZone will initiate a series of job fairs, which are scheduled to begin on February 20 and run through March 4. Employers interested in participating in a job fair can contact the regional office of the Virginia Employment Commission at 757-865-5831.

JobZone training and resource centers offer a variety of employment services for both employers and jobseekers. JobZone centers are located throughout South Hampton Roads at the following locations:

JobZone Training and Resource Center

861 Glenrock Road, Suite 223
Norfolk

Regional Workforce Development Center

Paul D. Camp Community College
100 N. College Drive
Franklin

Virginia Employment Commission

5145 E. Virginia Beach Boulevard
Norfolk

The STOP Organization

The Center for Employment Training
125 Tynes Street
Suffolk

Virginia Employment Commission

502 Viking Drive
Virginia Beach

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About Opportunity Inc.

Opportunity Inc. is a local governmental agency that serves as an umbrella organization for the Hampton Roads Workforce Development Network. Its programs are designed to strengthen relationships between employers, training providers and employees which, in turn, will raise per capita income, keep qualified workers in the region and attract new businesses to the area.