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ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION AWARDS \$6.6M IN WORKFORCE TRAINING GRANTS

HAVERHILL - Director of Workforce Development Jane C. Edmonds today announced \$6.6 million in new state Workforce Training Fund (WTF) grants to help train 8,250 employees at 93 businesses across the Commonwealth.

Edmonds announced the funds at the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce Small Business Awards breakfast where she underscored the importance of the Workforce Training Fund in helping businesses to build and sustain a competitive advantage.

“To date, workforce training grants totaling more than \$120 million have helped to train more than 172,000 employees across the Commonwealth,” said Edmonds. “This fund enables companies to improve their business operations and in turn, helps fuel economic growth in Massachusetts.”

Administered by the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, the Workforce Training Fund provides businesses with matching grants to provide job related training to incumbent employees.

“Hundreds of companies in the Merrimack Valley region have used the Workforce Training Fund program to upgrade their employees’ skills,” said Joseph Bevilacqua, President of the 1,000-plus member Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce. “Our members tell me repeatedly that if it weren’t for the WTF, their business would not be as competitive or successful.”

“As a local company that is planning a major expansion in Massachusetts during the next five years, this Workforce Training Fund grant will help us get to the next level,” said Susan Leger-Ferraro, Founder and CEO of Little Sprouts Child Enrichments Centers, Inc. in Lawrence, one of the 93 grant recipients. “I believe it represents the tipping point in our strategy by enabling us to bring together our efforts in marketing, literacy and IT.”

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Little Sprouts Child Enrichments Centers, Inc. was awarded a grant worth \$211,000 to train 153 employees in skills necessary for the early education industry, including business management training, customer service and child care software training.

For the 2007 fiscal year, Governor Romney has again proposed full funding of \$21 million for the Workforce Training Fund. Employers can now access online applications and take advantage of a rolling review to more swiftly process grant requests of up to \$50,000. Employers using the online application can receive decisions on their grant application within 45 days.

The following grants were awarded in this latest round.

- 8 grants in Western Massachusetts totaling \$419,967 to train 440 employees;
- 9 grants in Central Massachusetts totaling \$386,587 to train 479 employees;
- 14 grants in Northeastern Massachusetts totaling \$1.8 million to train 1503 employees;
- 30 grants in the Boston area totaling \$2.2 million to train 2,455 employees; and
- 32 grants in Southeast Massachusetts totaling \$1.7 million to train 3,373 employees.

For more information on the Workforce Training Fund and a complete listing of grant recipients, please visit www.mass.gov/wtf.

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