

September/October 2014

Message from the Director

This fall, Illinois and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) have great news to share with you.

Governor Pat Quinn announced Illinois' unemployment rate dropped from 9.2 to 6.7 percent - the fastest decline in the entire country in the last 12 months.



We are excited to announce corporate relocations and expansions downstate and in the Chicago suburbs, and ridesharing giant, Uber, is expanding its Chicago regional headquarters, creating 420 new jobs.

On the technology front, incubator hub 1871, ranked as one of the best business incubators in the world, and Chicago was named the number two city for fast-growing small businesses. And Park Forest Maker Space was one of 50 winners in a first ever nationwide Growth Accelerator Fund competition.

Finally, our disabilityworks program received a \$2.5 million award from the U.S. Department of Labor to improve employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities.

Through these efforts and many more, DCEO continues to work hard to create jobs and improve economic growth throughout the state.

This month's highlights include:



In September, **Governor Quinn visited Hydro, Inc. in Chicago to discuss the state's ongoing economic recovery.** Illinois'

In this Issue

Governor Quinn Visits Hydro as Illinois' Unemployment Rate Continues to Drop

Uber Announces Major Chicago Headquarters Expansion and 420 New Hires

AFCO Industries to Open Mfg Facility in Southern Illinois

1871 Ranks 9th in World in Survey of Business Incubators

Diesel-Maker Weichai to Expand in Rolling Meadows

Chicago - National Leader in Fastest Growing Businesses

Park Forest Wins National Growth Accelerator Fund Competition

DCEO Awarded \$2.5 Million Federal Grant to Expand Disabilityworks Program

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unemployment rate dropped to 6.7 percent in August, its lowest level since August 2008. Click [here](#) for the press release.

"Hardworking women and men across our state are back on the job and these numbers are proof that Illinois' comeback continues," Governor Quinn said. "More people are working today than at any time in the past six years and that is thanks in part to companies like Hydro who are staking their future right here in the Land of Lincoln."

Illinois' unemployment rate fell in August for the sixth consecutive month to 6.7 percent while employers created 13,800 jobs, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Illinois Department of Employment Security. The number of people employed in Illinois remains above six million, continuing a 2014 trend that has seen more people working in this state than at any time since early 2009.

Formed in 1969 in Chicago, Hydro, Inc. is a global company and the largest independent pump rebuilder in the world. The company employs more than 170 people in Illinois and more than 430 worldwide. Hydro recently purchased a third storage facility on Chicago's south side and is among the many Illinois-based manufacturing companies that are taking advantage of the state's central location, skilled workforce and strong business climate to expand their operations and create jobs.



A Thorough Inspection is the Foundation of a Quality Repair



Courtesy of Hydro, Inc.



Courtesy of Uber Technologies, Inc.

Governor Quinn and Uber executives announced the ridesharing giant is moving forward to create 420 new jobs by the end of 2016 in a major expansion of its Chicago regional headquarters. Click [here](#) for the press release.

"Through innovation and job creation, Uber is helping drive Illinois' economy forward," Governor Quinn said. "Uber's new expanded headquarters will allow the company to continue its rapid growth and serve its riders and drivers throughout Illinois. While we have more work to do, Illinois is making a comeback and cutting-edge companies like Uber are a key part of it."

Uber's Chicago office serves as the headquarters for the company's



Courtesy of Uber

Central Region that encompasses the Midwest, Texas and Canada. The more than 80 full-time employees based in Chicago include marketing managers, driver and rider support teams and operations experts who service more than 40 Uber cities across 16 states and provinces, including 11 in Illinois. Drivers who use the Uber platform are independent contractors.

Having outgrown its current office in just three months, the regional headquarters will move to a 56,000 square foot space at 111 N. Canal, currently being remodeled for Uber and other tenants including Twitter and Gogo Wireless.



Courtesy AFCO Industries, Inc.

Louisiana-based AFCO Industries Inc. is opening a \$1.9 million aluminum manufacturing facility in Olmsted that will create 19 full-time jobs. Click [here](#) for the press release.

"We are grateful for AFCO's commitment to southern Illinois," Governor Quinn said. "Manufacturers like AFCO are major contributors to Illinois' economy and support our local communities. I welcome AFCO to Illinois, where our hardworking men and women are second to none."

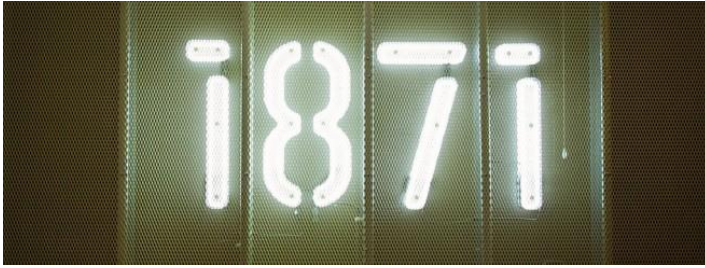
AFCO chose Olmsted, in Pulaski County, for customer access, cost effectiveness and a quality workforce. Its building products are featured in some of the nation's largest dealers, distributors and home centers. Their aluminum components are used by some of the best-known manufacturers in the United States.



Courtesy of AFCO

The new facility along State Highway 37 will perform aluminum extruding and painting operations, doubling its aluminum production capabilities. The plant will have 19 full-time employees, with a goal of adding a second and third shift.

AFCO was founded in 1946 and is one of the nation's leading building products manufacturers. With plants in Alexandria, La.; Olive Branch, Miss.; and Pell City, Ala., AFCO employs approximately 400 people.



Courtesy of 1871

1871 was recently named one of the global top ten business incubators following a survey of over 800 incubators across 60 countries. **1871 ranked 9th in the UBI Index list of Top Ten University-Associated Business Incubators.** The UBI Index analyzes business incubators based on a wide range of factors, including their value to members and overall economic impact. Click [here](#) for the press release.

"Incubators like 1871 are helping to keep Illinois at the forefront of innovation," Governor Quinn said. "This ranking shows how investing in the entrepreneurial community can pay dividends to our economy, creating new businesses and jobs for years to come."

As a university-associated incubator, 1871 maintains close partnerships with top universities in Chicago and around the world. Northwestern University, University of Chicago, University of Illinois, Illinois Institute of Technology and DeVry Education Group all have dedicated spaces at 1871 where students and faculty come to work on their businesses and immerse themselves in Chicago's entrepreneurial community.

1871 is an entrepreneurial hub for digital startups. Located in The Merchandise Mart, the 75,000-square-foot facility provides Chicago startups with programming, access to mentors, educational resources, potential investors and a community of like-minded entrepreneurs that help them on their path to building successful businesses.



Courtesy of 1871



Courtesy of Weichai Group

Weichai America Corp, a Chinese manufacturer of diesel engines, is expanding their Rolling Meadows facility and adding 32 full-time jobs. Weichai (WEE'-chye) America will invest \$8 million on facility improvements and equipment purchases at its Golf Road location, as well as hire 32 new employees within two years and retaining 21 jobs. Click [here](#) for the article.

Weichai America considered moving their operations to Canada, but



factors such as Illinois' central location and highly-skilled workforce swayed company officials to expand here.

Courtesy of Weichai Group

Weichai America is part of Weichai Group, a manufacturer of engines and other parts for cars, trucks and yachts.



Courtesy of World Business Chicago

World Business Chicago noted that Chicago ranks second in the nation for the number of fast-growing small businesses, according to the recently released Inc. 5000 list. Click [here](#) for the article.

Chicago is home to 95 companies on the list, outnumbering Atlanta, Austin, San Diego, Houston, San Francisco, Dallas and Denver. And five Chicago businesses are among the top 500 fastest growing in the nation. Only New York City has more businesses on the list.

The Inc. 5000 represents a comprehensive look at one of the most important segments of the economy - America's independent entrepreneurs. Companies named to the 2014 Inc. 500 were selected from a group considered to be the most competitive in the list's history. To make the cut, companies had to have achieved a minimum of 918.59% in sales growth over the previous three-year period.

Chicago-based Max Digital was the highest ranked of the Chicago businesses at #51 on the list with three-year growth of 5,483.1% and 2013 revenue of \$6.6 million. Click [here](#) for their Inc. 500 profile. Five other Chicago businesses ranked in the top 500 were: Insureon (#107), Paramount Lodging Advisors (#188), Protein Bar (#200), Restaurantwave (#366) and AKTA (#414).



Courtesy of WBC



Courtesy of Inc.



Courtesy of Village of Park Foresst

In September, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) selected Park Forest Maker Space as one of 50 winners in the first ever nation-wide Growth Accelerator Fund competition. Earlier in May, the SBA had launched the \$2.5 million competition for accelerators and other entrepreneurial ecosystem models to compete for cash prizes of \$50,000 each. Click [here](#) for the press release.

The Growth Accelerator Fund competition attracted 800 applications from across the country, and finalists were reviewed by a panel of experts in entrepreneurship, investing and business plans from both within the government and the private sector. Besides Park Forest, The Good Food Business Accelerator in Oak Park was the only other winner in Illinois.

The Park Forest Maker Space incubator is a resource for local inventors, tinkerers, artisans, and students to learn about new ways of making things, and to realize their dreams of starting a business or qualifying for a good paying job at an existing manufacturer; and it is a catalyst for a regional collaboration intended to strengthen and expand the Chicago Southland's manufacturing base, train a skilled workforce, and create opportunities for innovations in the making of things.



In September, the **U.S. Department of Labor announced \$14.8 million in grants to six states, including \$2.5 million to Illinois, to improve employment opportunities for adults and youth with disabilities.** Click [here](#) for the press release.

Grants are being awarded as part of the [Disability Employment Initiative](#) (DEI), funded by the Department of Labor's [Employment and Training Administration](#) and [Office of Disability Employment Policy](#). This is the fifth round of funding through the Disability Employment Initiative, which now supports 37 projects in 26 states.

The awards will help expand the capacity of local [American Job Centers](#) to improve employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities by increasing their participation in existing [career pathway systems](#) and programs that build on partnerships among local educational institutions, businesses and disability advocates.

Illinois' disabilityworks program provides resources and tools for individuals with disabilities, as well as employers, to achieve training and employment goals. Click [here](#) for more information on our program.

Please pass this newsletter along, and be sure to connect with us on social media for up-to-the-minute announcements on programs, events and items of interest for businesses and job seekers across the state.

We know that Illinois is a great place to live and work, which is why millions of people call it home. With your help, we will make it even better.

Sincerely,

Adam Pollet, DCEO Director



 State of Illinois
Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity



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