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Bridging the Digital Divide in South Florida

(Miami-Dade County, Florida) – South Florida Workforce Investment Board (SFWIB), the workforce development agency for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, has partnered with PerScholas, Inc. (PerScholas), a non-profit social venture dedicated to providing access to technology to low-income communities, in an effort to bridge the widening gap between the technologically-rich and technologically-poor. According to a U.S. Department of Education report, 37 percent of families with incomes below \$20,000 use computers at home, compared to 88 percent of families with annual incomes over \$75,000.

This partnership is representative of SFWIB's strategic plan, namely to improve the economic development of South Florida via a digitally literate workforce. The Digital Divide Project provides 405 low-income families with a refurbished computer, technology training and internet access for one year. The families will be selected from work ready TANF participants throughout SFWIB region. The SFWIB will invest \$85,213 dollars to implement the project.

SFWIB's role in the partnership is to supply 405 old computers from its Career Centers, identify 405 eligible low-income families who have at least one household member between the ages of 14 and 21 and pay for AT&T internet access. While PerScholas promises to refurbish the computers, provide OS and Office 2003 software, three hours of basic technology training to identified families and a full year of technology support.

SFWIB is keenly aware of the impact of digital literacy in finding meaningful long-term employment in today's marketplace. Thus, the success of the Project will ultimately contribute to leveling the playing field between South Florida's advantaged and disadvantaged populations.

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