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### **Lawrence Tech gets Skillman grant to promote Detroit microenterprises**

*Southfield, Mich.* – The Center for Nonprofit Management at Lawrence Technological University has been awarded a two-year, \$257,000 grant through the Good Neighborhoods Initiative of the Skillman Foundation to support entrepreneurs and facilitate microenterprise development in the Osborn neighborhood of northeast Detroit.

Microenterprise is a proven business strategy for providing supplemental income for households that already have a wage earner. Examples of successful microenterprises include daycare services, transportation and messenger services, and basement fish farms that have generated up to \$30,000 a year in supplemental revenue.

The project will employ proven techniques of entrepreneurship and microenterprise successfully used to produce grassroots economic growth internationally and more recently in the United States.

One study has estimated the United States has the potential for 10 million microentrepreneurs – individuals seeking to start businesses with existing skills to supplement their income. Microenterprises have fewer than five employees, and in most cases the owner is the sole operator and worker. They are frequently launched with the help of small loans of \$5,000 or less.

The Skillman Foundation of Detroit launched its Good Neighborhoods Initiative in 2005 “to transform Detroit’s neighborhoods into healthy, safe and supportive environments for children, youth and their families by working directly with concerned citizens and organizations in specific neighborhoods.”

The Skillman Foundation is targeting six neighborhoods where 30 percent of Detroit’s children live. The Osborn neighborhood is bounded by Eight Mile, Gratiot, McNichols and Connor roads on Detroit’s east side.

“We’re enthusiastic about Lawrence Tech’s program, which we believe will help families in the Osborn neighborhood better prepare their children for successful lives,” said Tonya Allen, the Skillman Foundation’s vice president for program.

Leadership and staffing of the Osborn Entrepreneur and Microenterprise Project will consist of key faculty and students from Lawrence Tech, volunteers and community leaders from Osborn and the residents themselves.

Robert Inskeep of the College of Management and the Center for Nonprofit Management at Lawrence Tech will be program liaison, and Ken Gadd, an adjunct professor in the College of Management, will be program manager. Several other faculty and students will support the project.

“This grant represents a unique partnership between the Detroit residents of Osborn, Lawrence Tech’s Center for Nonprofit Management and the Skillman Foundation’s Good Neighborhoods Initiative. It allows us to focus our mission of innovative and practical education to support Osborn families in their work to make their children’s lives successful,” said Jerry Lindman, director of the Center for Nonprofit Management.

After putting the project team in place and setting up the office this fall, organizers hope to launch the new program in January 2008. Osborn residents will participate in basic entrepreneurial training, advanced business workshops, or alternative career placement activities. In addition to business mentoring support and referral for business start-up loans, personal support services will also be available to ensure participant success.

“We will utilize neighborhood resources as much as possible,” Lindman said. “The goal is the development of a sustainable community network that will provide ongoing support for entrepreneurs and microenterprises.”

Lawrence Tech’s Center for Nonprofit Management has been involved in Osborn for the past two years through planning, supporting neighborhood task forces, and conducting a survey of Osborn residents.

“Not only did youth and adults indicate a high degree of interest in learning how to start small businesses, but a number of business owners, school officials and other community leaders indicated a willingness to help, mentor and support future entrepreneurs,” Inskeep said of the survey results.

According to Inskeep, the Skillman Foundation grant will improve neighborhood conditions by providing Osborn residents with training and support needed to launch new business and expand existing ones. “It’s partnerships like these that will help make sure that Osborn families will have all the resources and support they need to make their children successful in life,” he said.

Jack Litzenberg, senior program officer at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, a nationally recognized expert on microenterprise development, has provided guidance to Lawrence Tech in developing the Osborn Entrepreneur and Microenterprise Project. “In summoning people to match their talent and labor with small amounts of credit, microenterprise development meets low-income communities where they are, introducing new opportunities to create work, income and assets, and thereby affirming human worth and dignity,” Litzenberg said.

Lawrence Technological University, [www.ltu.edu](http://www.ltu.edu), offers more than 60 undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degree programs in Colleges of Architecture and Design, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Management. Founded in 1932, the 5,000-student, private university pioneered evening classes 75 years ago, and today has a growing number of weekend and online programs. Lawrence Tech’s 102-acre campus is in Southfield, with education centers in Livonia, Clinton Township, Traverse City, and Petoskey. Lawrence Tech also offers programs with partner universities in Canada, Mexico, Europe and Asia.

Created in 1960, The Skillman Foundation is a private philanthropy committed to helping children in metropolitan Detroit by improving their homes, schools and neighborhoods. Skillman grantmaking supports nonprofit organizations, schools and agencies in Wayne, Macomb and Oakland counties, with a special emphasis on organizations working in the city of Detroit.