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PRESS RELEASE

Investing in Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs: Herrin Contributes to Williamson Co. CEO Program

Herrin, IL — Herrin Community Unit School District #4 (CUSD #4) announced today that it has committed a $3,000 impact investment to support the establishment of the Williamson County Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (CEO) program. Financed through the district's federal Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Grant, the funding underscores the district's dedication to expanding experiential learning and localized career pathways for high school students.

The CEO program operates as a comprehensive, year-long course that moves students beyond traditional classroom settings and introduces them directly to the regional business ecosystem. Throughout the academic year, participating students will visit regional companies, engage with local mentors, and gain firsthand insight into corporate operations. Under the guidance of area business leaders, students will ultimately design, launch, and manage their own fully functional business ventures.



"A primary objective of our FSCS grant is to build sustainable career pathways that equip our students with real-world capabilities," said Herrin CUSD #4 Director of Development Valerie Clodi. "Allocating these federal resources toward the Williamson County CEO initiative allows us to strengthen the connection between public education and local economic development. This partnership offers our youth the mentorship and practical experience required to cultivate successful careers right here in Southern Illinois."

The regional chapter is currently being established by a steering committee composed of area educators, advocates, and business professionals. To officially launch the initiative, the committee set a fundraising goal of $35,000. Herrin CUSD #4's $3,000 contribution provides critical early momentum toward that target, helping ensure local students can soon access the entrepreneurial curriculum.

The upcoming Williamson County chapter aims to replicate the proven success of established CEO programs in neighboring Johnston, Union, and Jackson counties, which have garnered praise for fostering innovative student projects and strong community partnerships.

In a recent public statement regarding the chapter's development, steering committee organizer Zeppelyn Brewer emphasized the impact of the initiative: “This program provides students with direct access to entrepreneurial opportunities within our community. Our goal is to give young people the tools, mentorship and confidence to start businesses and create opportunities right here in Williamson County.”

All program contributions are being securely managed through the Southern Illinois Community Foundation. Herrin CUSD #4 hopes its foundational investment encourages additional businesses, civic organizations, and regional stakeholders to get involved. Area leaders interested in becoming program investors, guest speakers, or student mentors are encouraged to contact the Southern Illinois Community Foundation or reach out to the Williamson County CEO steering committee.

ABOUT HERRIN CUSD #4

Herrin Community Unit School District No. 4 serves approximately 2,300 students across five educational facilities, ranging from PreK through grade 12: Herrin PreK Center, North Side Primary Center, Herrin Elementary School, Herrin Junior High School, and Herrin High School. The district is committed to providing a high-quality education by prioritizing strong connections among families, staff, and students. Herrin CUSD #4 fosters a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers students to achieve academic excellence and personal growth.