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Tech group works to draw Kansans back

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LSI Corp.'s Ann Martin welcomes a new effort to lure former Kansans who are working in the biosciences and information technology back home.

Computer storage software and hardware maker LSI Corp. could benefit from the Come Home to Kansas initiative, which was recently launched by the Kansas Technology Enterprise Corp.

"We want to widen the net of people who we can recruit to come work here," said Martin, director of firmware development for LSI, which employs 720 in Wichita.

The initiative initially involves bringing those former residents to a Web site, www.comehometokansas.com.

The site is equipped with software that is designed to match them to a job opening in the bioscience or information technology fields in Kansas, said KTEC chief executive Tracy Taylor.

"That's probably the neat technology part of this," he said.

The service is free to bioscience and IT professionals and the companies that post jobs there, Taylor said.

KTEC is dedicating a staff person to the initiative, operating the Web site and coordinating advertising of the initiative and the Web site, he said. Initial advertising for the Web site and initiative will appear in Kansas newspapers, he said.

Taylor hopes the ads will prompt parents, grandparents and siblings in Kansas to tell their family members living out of state -- and who work in those industries -- about the Web site.

Taylor said the advertising initiative will likely branch out to include alumni magazines of some state universities, especially those that offer degrees related to biosciences and IT.

The entire initiative will cost about \$200,000, Taylor said.

KTEC's partners in the initiative include the Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Bioscience Authority and Kansas Bioscience Organization.

He said the initiative was spurred by those groups as well as bioscience and IT companies.

Dave Cunningham, LSI's Wichita site manager, said his company always needs IT professionals, including electrical and computer engineers.

Because of attrition or increases in staffing, "it seems like we're always looking" for those workers, Cunningham said. "We need like a come home to Wichita site."

Sedgwick County Commissioner Dave Unruh's son is the type of person the initiative is aimed at.

Greg Unruh moved back to Kansas from Iowa to take a job as vice president and general manager of Ventria Bioscience's new plant in Junction City.

Greg Unruh also is one of the faces that will promote the initiative, on the Web site and in advertisements.

"In my particular position I'm very sensitive to the fact that we need to recruit and retain young people back to Kansas, back to our area," Dave Unruh said.

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