

**South Dakota Department of Labor**  
700 Governors Drive  
Pierre, SD 57501  
(605) 773-3101  
[www.sdjobs.org](http://www.sdjobs.org)  
[www.DakotaRoots.com](http://www.DakotaRoots.com)

**Media Contact:** Dawn Dovre or Marcia Hultman, 605.773.3101  
**For Immediate Release:** October 19, 2007

## **Dakota Roots Celebrates First Year Bringing South Dakotans Home**

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota is a great place to live, grow, and build. Governor Mike Rounds' workforce development initiative, Dakota Roots, was launched one year ago to give former South Dakotans the opportunity to come home and do just that.

The joint venture launched October 20, 2006 between the Department of Labor, Department of Tourism and State Development, and the Governor's Office is proving effective.

"In 52 short weeks Dakota Roots built a prospective labor pool of almost 1,400 individuals," said Gov. Rounds. "These are people who have a real desire to locate here in South Dakota, where they can enjoy the quality of life we live every day. Just think what that means for our economic future."

A total of 241 participants from 40 states changed their lives as a result of Dakota Roots this year, finding employment in South Dakota and moving back to the state.

Justin Benson was one of those people. The Hurley native graduated from South Dakota State University with an engineering degree. After graduation he left the state because he could not find the type of job he was looking for. But that all changed when he logged on to [www.DakotaRoots.com](http://www.DakotaRoots.com) and found a job opening at MASABA Inc. in Vermillion.

"I knew I wanted to come back home, so when I heard about Dakota Roots I was excited to check it out," Benson said. "I talked to one of my former SDSU professors about it, and decided to give it a shot. I could hardly believe it when I was presented with the opportunity to not only come back to the state I love, but at a more competitive salary than I was making out of state," he said. "I hope other professionals take another look at South Dakota like I did," he concluded.

MASABA Inc. President Jerad Higman is grateful for the workforce tool that allowed his company to access a qualified workforce. "Dakota Roots gave us results. We know firsthand that South Dakotans have the work ethic and commitment we're looking for – now we have access to more of them than ever before," he concluded.

All South Dakota businesses may become partners and have the opportunity to post their job openings at no charge at [www.DakotaRoots.com](http://www.DakotaRoots.com). Department of Labor representatives will take the time to individually search for and refer candidates to openings that could be a good fit for companies. Confidentiality is guaranteed throughout the entire process.

Dakota Roots also assists businesses looking to move to the state. “Twenty-six companies have expressed interest in expanding to South Dakota as a direct result of this initiative,” said Gov. Rounds. These businesses are now working with the Governor’s Office of Economic Development.

Individuals or businesses interested in learning more about Dakota Roots can visit the website or call 1.800.592.1882.