



Business Roundtable™

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative Completes Over 7,500 Trainings**

*Business Roundtable Effort to Retrain, Rebuild, Renew Ahead of Schedule*

**Washington, D.C.** – Business Roundtable’s Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative (GCWDI) today announced that it is ahead of schedule in its effort to recruit and train up to 20,000 new construction workers in the Gulf Coast region by the end of 2009. The program provides critically needed new construction workers in the Gulf Coast and empowers the region’s workforce with new educational opportunities and career paths.

“Just over a year into our ambitious program, we already have over 7,500 training completions, with another 2,000 students enrolled in classes,” said Charles O. Holliday, Jr., chairman and CEO of DuPont, and co-chairman of the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative. “Residents of Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas have embraced our free classes, demonstrating the vitality of the region and the residents’ fierce desire to rebuild. We’re so encouraged by the success thus far that we hope to step up recruiting efforts and expand into Alabama as well.”

The GCWDI was conceived and developed by Business Roundtable in response to the devastating storms that ravaged the Gulf Coast of the United States in late 2005. Members of Business Roundtable, 160 CEOs of the nation’s leading companies, have spearheaded this public-private partnership by committing up to \$5 million in funding to coordinate the training and assist in recruiting participants.

"This unique initiative is bringing together numerous government agencies, community and trade organizations, academic institutions and the business community to give up to 20,000 people the skills needed for rewarding, long-term careers in construction," said Riley Bechtel, chairman and CEO of the Bechtel Group, Inc. and co-chairman of the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative. "The graduates are already becoming strong contributors to the Gulf Coast's rebuilding efforts and infrastructure development projects."

Participants enroll in free training that provides them with the necessary skills for entry-level jobs in the construction industry. Training is provided through partnerships with local community and technical colleges and with critical funding on both the federal and state levels. Upon completion of the coursework, graduates have the opportunity to participate in job fairs hosted at their training center. These job fairs provide trainees with an opportunity to be introduced to local contractors who are looking to hire additional construction workers.

The GCWDI recruits students through the “I’m GREAT” campaign. “GREAT,” which stands for “Get Rewarded for Education and Advancement Training,” has helped bolster residents’ sense of self-worth through participation in the construction industry, drawing widespread praise from political leaders in the region.

Representative Charlie Melancon (D-LA), a strong supporter of the program, plans to visit the Louisiana Community and Technical College System’s Lafourche campus on August 28<sup>th</sup> to meet with and congratulate program graduates. He noted, “Even before the hurricanes, we were in dire need of construction labor, not just in the Gulf region, but across the country. This program brilliantly matches committed, hard-working residents with the training they need to revitalize our home. We are just beginning to understand the full physical and psychological impacts of these events; ‘I’m GREAT’ addresses both of these critical aspects of rebuilding.”

Contributors to the Initiative are: A.O. Smith Corporation; Abbott Laboratories; Accenture; Air Products and Chemicals, Inc.; American Electric Power; American Express Company; American International Group, Inc.; BE&K, Inc.; Bechtel Group, Inc.; Bosch Tool Corporation; Business Roundtable; Chevron Corporation; The Dow Chemical Company; Duke Energy Corporation; DuPont; Exxon Mobil Corporation; International Paper; Fannie Mae; FedEx Corporation; Fisher Scientific International Inc.; General Electric Company; The McGraw-Hill Companies; McKesson Corporation; National Center for Construction Education and Research; National Gypsum Company; National Roofing Contractors Association; PB Foundation; Pearson Educational; Pfizer Inc.; Rohm and Haas Company; The Shaw Group Inc.; The Sprint Foundation; St. Paul Travelers Companies, Inc.; Washington Group International, Inc.; and Xerox Corporation.

Additionally, the GCWDI has many partner organizations, including the American Association of Community Colleges; American Subcontractors Association; Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc.; Associated General Contractors; Baton Rouge Area Chamber; Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO; Construction and Maintenance Education Foundation; Construction Industry Round Table; Construction Users Roundtable; Golden Triangle Business Roundtable; Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance; Greater New Orleans Business Roundtable; Greater New Orleans, Inc.; Gulf Coast Business Council; Gulf Coast Development Program; Home Builders Institute; Houston Area Safety Council; Houston Business Roundtable; Houston Community College System; Lake Area Industry Alliance; Louisiana Chemical Association; Louisiana Community and Technical College System; Louisiana Department of Labor; Louisiana Recovery Authority; Louisiana Workforce Commission; Minority Business Roundtable; Mississippi Board for Community and Junior Colleges; Mississippi Construction Education Foundation; Mississippi Department of Employment Security; Mississippi Economic Council; Mississippi Governor’s Office; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Association of Minority Contractors; National Black Chamber of Commerce; National Petrochemical and Refiners Association; Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding; Roofing Industry Alliance for Progress; Safety Council of the Louisiana Capital Area; Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board; Texas Workforce Commission; and U.S. Department of Labor.

In addition to the GCWDI, Business Roundtable supported the region following Hurricane Katrina through the Partnership for Disaster Response, which brings together the resources and capabilities of the private sector to enhance and accelerate on-the-ground relief and recovery

following major natural disasters. As soon as Katrina struck, the Partnership facilitated communications about critical on-the-ground needs and collected member contributions of more than \$360 million in cash and in-kind donations of supplies, equipment and services.

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*The Get Rewarded for Education and Advancement Training, or GREAT campaign, is sponsored by the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative, a partnership of federal, state and local government agencies, businesses, community organizations and construction trade groups and associations, working together to recruit and train up to 20,000 skilled construction craft workers for the Gulf Coast region by the end of 2009. The GREAT campaign is primarily funded by members of Business Roundtable, an association of 160 CEOs of leading U.S. companies. For more information please visit our website, [www.imgreat.org](http://www.imgreat.org).*

*The Partnership for Disaster Response works to enhance the efficiency of the private sector's disaster response; to foster public-private collaborations; to prepare for the health, social and economic burdens that disasters can create; and to ensure that the business community's response efforts address the most critical needs and mobilize the unique technologies and resources of member companies. For more information, please visit [www.respondtodisaster.com](http://www.respondtodisaster.com).*