

GREAT program to launch free training

Centredaily.com

10/17/06

<http://www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/news/nation/15769723.htm>

Gov. Haley Barbour is launching a campaign with the goal of training 20,000 construction workers tuition-free by 2009. The official announcement will be made today at the Jefferson Davis campus of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

Barbour, Gulf Coast Community College President Willis Lott, and Gulf Coast Business Council President Brian Sanderson will be on hand for ceremonies.

Workers will receive a free four-week training course as part of the Gulf Rebuild, Education, Advancement and Training Program to prepare them for entry-level construction jobs. Organizers expect to make significant progress towards increasing the number of qualified workers.

An estimated 150,000 workers will be needed to complete the rebuilding work needed in all the states hit by the 2005 hurricanes.

Regional program manager Tim Horst said planning for the initiative began in December.

"We developed a detailed project execution plan," he said. "We are treating this like any other construction project we would take on."

GREAT is sponsored by the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative with federal state and local government agencies, businesses, community organizations and construction trade groups.

"The initiative allowed us to form new relationships between the public and private sectors," said Horst.

He said better dialogues are taking place between the Department of Labor, community colleges and labor organizations to enable them to focus on the common cause of rebuilding.

Business Roundtable, an association of 160 CEOs, has committed \$5 million to the program. Federal funds for training are also being provided through the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.