

Program rebuilds now and for the future

19 October 2006

Pascagoula Mississippi Press

The Gulf Rebuild: Education, Advancement and Training program announced this week sounds like a program that meets the immediate need for construction workers.

At the same time, GREAT offers training to thousands of people who will better their lives because of the opportunity.

Gov. Haley Barbour announced the program this week in Mississippi. GREAT is funded by private and public money and will operate from Texas to Mississippi.

According to the imgreat.org Web site, the program was started by the Business Roundtable, an association of 160 CEOs of leading U.S. companies, and involves a collaboration between businesses, construction trade groups and community organizations, as well as local, state and federal government agencies.

One estimate is a 150,000 workers are needed to complete rebuilding in the areas hit hardest by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Barbour, in an announcement Monday at Gulfport, said GREAT's goal is to train 20,000 Gulf Coast residents in basic construction over the next three years.

Community colleges will be employed as the hub for the training program.

The colleges are on the spot and the training should yield immediate jobs for the students. The classes are free, which should make this an excellent opportunity. Evidently, the program also offers a quick turnaround for students. The entry-level course is four weeks long.

It's long enough to learn the basics from construction math to safety.

Not only will be training help rebuild the Gulf Coast, it also will build the workforce.

If there are bright spots to Katrina and Rita, this is one of them.