



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF THE GULF COAST

PRESS RELEASE

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Open House Festivity for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast

*Community celebrates the opening of the
Hancock County Unit at the newly renovated Valena C. Jones Center*

Gulfport, MS – The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast will host a Grand Opening Celebration from 5pm-7pm on Wednesday, September 15. This is an opportunity for the community to tour the newly renovated Valena C. Jones Center at 310 Old Spanish Trail, Bay St. Louis. The renovation was made possible due to funds from the MS Development Authority and CDBG allocated to the City of Bay St. Louis. In the grant application the city proposed to lease the building to the BGC GC Hancock County Unit in order to provide quality afterschool and summer care for the youth of Hancock County.

“This is a great moment for our youth,” stated Greg Gipson, Director of Operations for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast, “Since the storm our Hancock County Unit has been moved to over 5 different temporary locations. We are thankful to the city and community leaders for providing this building, it is a great place to cultivate their talents and interest, the bottom line is to enable all youth, especially those who need us most to reach their full potential as productive, caring responsible citizens.”

“This building is one of the few surviving examples of a pre-desegregation school in the gulf coast area, and represents a history that has value to many residents and visitors,” cited Mike Cuevas, Director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Bay St. Louis, “Originally, this school served the primarily African-American neighborhood.” Mayor Les Fillingame noted that the building has architectural significance but that wasn’t the main reason for the restoration. “The building itself was somewhat significant, but the priority was to restore it due to its historical value to the city. The fact it was an old school building made it a perfect fit for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast, we are very proud to offer the facility to the Hancock County Unit.”

Other funders for the project include the Leo Seal Jr. family, which furnished the facility, a grant from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation that provided the kitchen equipment and a grant requested from the Bay St. Louis Rotary from Rotary International that furnished the computer lab and provided some other essential equipment. The community is invited to attend the grand opening where tours of the new renovated facility will be provided.

For additional information about the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast please contact Michelle Wilson at 228-896-3770 or visit our website at www.bgcgulfcoast.org.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast

In 2009, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast had approximately 2500 registered members and served 1400 youth through the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast New Hope Program, which is a school based therapeutic behavioral facilitation program. Our mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

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