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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Photo attached: (from L to R): Myesha Coleman and Ashley Rollins. Photograph by JCPenney Portrait Studio, Cat Whigham.**

**TWO NATIONAL WINNERS SELECTED FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE GULF COAST**

***East Biloxi Unit home of two National ImageMakers Photography Competition Winners***

**Gulfport, MS** – Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast is proud to announce that two of its Club members were selected to be a part of BGCA's 2011 National Photography Exhibit. Ashley Rollins' alternative process photo "The 'A' Factor" and Myesha Coleman's photo essay "Mirror Mirror." Both young ladies are Club members at the East Biloxi Unit.

The photos were selected from among thousands submitted by aspiring young photographers from Boys & Girls Clubs and Youth Centers across the nation and overseas military installations. The competition is part of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's (BGCA) ImageMakers National Photography program. BGCA's ImageMakers National Photography program is a comprehensive initiative promoting young people's creativity and encouraging artistic skills and cultural enrichment. Twenty national winners were selected from thousands of entries and their images will be displayed at BGCA conferences throughout the year and featured on a virtual art gallery at <http://www.imagemakersbgca.org> later this year. Winning artists will also receive an engraved plaque and letter of congratulations from BGCA President Roxanne Spillett.

Myesha Coleman, age 16, was very happy that her picture was selected. "I am thankful to my Club staff for all the assistance, help, and encouragement to take part in the photography contest," Coleman commented. "I look forward to taking more pictures at the Club and developing them in our own dark room at the East Biloxi Unit." Ashley Rollins, age 14, has always had a passion for taking pictures. "Winning at the national level has encouraged me to keep living my dream to become a photographer," Rollins explained, "I had so much fun participating in the contest. I am happy I won but the most important thing is that other people will see my creative work." Both young ladies were treated to a complementary photo shoot and photography lesson from Cat Whigham, Studio Manager at JCPenney Portrait Studio Edgewater Mall last week as part of the Pennies from Heaven promotion and partnership.

With 5 Clubs in Harrison and Hancock Counties, Boys & Girls Club of the Gulf Coast has served the youth of the MS Gulf Coast since 1966. The Club provides programs for more than 2800 boys and girls in the areas of character and leadership development, educational enhancement, career preparation, health and life skills, the arts and sports, fitness and recreation.

**About Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast**

In 2010, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast had approximately 2800 registered members and served 1500 youth through 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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