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U.S. - China Forum, New Mississippi Welcome Signs, Unique Housing Rehabilitation Partnership, Waveland Civic Center, Free Workshop on Gulf Coast States' Economic Recovery

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U.S. - China Forum to be Held This Week; Registration Still Open

There are still a few days remaining to register for "Changzhou Meets Mississippi: Trade and Investment Opportunities Forum," an important event designed to provide Mississippi business representatives the opportunity to meet and network with executives and political leaders from Changzhou, China, and to promote understanding between the two countries. The Chinese delegation, which will consist of representatives from numerous sectors, will be visiting Mississippi to explore investment and trade opportunities. Mississippi businesses interested in trade opportunities can benefit from this event's informative sessions and networking opportunities. The forum will be held Thursday, May 21, at the Jackson Convention Complex in downtown Jackson. Registration will begin at 1:30 p.m. with opening remarks beginning at 2:00 p.m. A networking reception will be held at 3:30 p.m. following the conclusion of the forum.

In addition to Governor Haley Barbour, MDA executive director Gray Swoope and representatives from the Changzhou delegation, speakers at the event will include Mark Miller with Severstal, PSL North America representative Brian Vail and Lex Lemmers with PACCAR.

According to Swoope, the Chinese firms that will be in attendance represent billions of dollars in potential investment opportunities for Mississippi companies. Anyone interested in learning more about this exciting opportunity is encouraged to attend the event. For more information or to register, please call (601) 359-3155, or e-mail sbanyard@mississippi.org.

New Mississippi Welcome Signs Unveiled During National Travel and Tourism Week

On Tuesday, May 12, a replica of the new Mississippi welcome signs was unveiled at

the Jackson - Evers International Airport. The unveiling was just one of the activities scheduled in Mississippi during the 26th Annual National Travel and Tourism Week, which began May 11. The new signs celebrate Mississippi as the "Birthplace of America's Music," and they are designed to honor the talented musicians that have helped shape the state's rich musical heritage. The signs have been placed at the airport, the Mississippi Welcome Center in Vicksburg, on I-55 in DeSoto County, I-20 in Warren, Lauderdale and Jackson counties, I-10 in Jackson and Hancock counties, Highway 78 and Highway 61 in DeSoto County and I-55 in Pike County.



One of Mississippi's new Welcome signs greets visitors as they leave Jackson-Evers International Airport.

The Mississippi Tourism Week event, part of a larger effort led by the U.S. Travel Association, emphasized the economic benefits travel and tourism bring to local workers and communities. The travel industry in Mississippi accounts for 85,000 direct jobs, and it contributes over \$4.3 million in tourism state tax revenues. The travel and tourism industry in Mississippi is also one of the state's largest, with domestic and international travelers spending \$6 billion in the state annually.

To learn more about the tourism industry in Mississippi, please visit the MDA Tourism Division website at www.visitmississippi.org.

Governor Barbour, Gulf Coast Community Foundation Announce Unique Housing Rehabilitation Partnership

Governor Haley Barbour and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation (GCCF) have announced a low- and moderate-income housing rehabilitation partnership funded through the state's \$5.4 billion Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund. Administered by MDA, this \$15 million initiative is part of GCCF's "Coming Home Collaborative," a

program designed to empower numerous individuals to remain on the Coast and continue living in quality, single-family housing.

Gerald Blessey, Mississippi Gulf Coast Housing Coordinator, stated that Hurricane Katrina destroyed many older family homes which long ago had their mortgages paid, and following the hurricane, the families had no means of replacing or doing major repairs to the structures. This program primarily targets families in need of decent housing but unable to revitalize their properties given their limited financial resources. The funds from this program can be used for home rehabilitation or major reconstruction in the three Coastal counties.

This initiative is yet another example of how Mississippi is using its federally-appropriated Katrina recovery dollars to leverage the knowledge and resources of locally-based organizations. To learn more about Mississippi's Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund, please visit www.msdisasterrecovery.com.

Waveland Civic Center Opens in Historic Elementary School; Another Success for Mississippi Katrina Recovery

The Waveland Civic Center, located in the historic Waveland Elementary School at 335 Coleman Avenue, was recently completed. The civic center is the state's first disaster recovery project funded through Mississippi's \$235 million Community Revitalization Program to be completed. According to Governor Haley Barbour, preserving one of Waveland's few remaining links to its past, and doing so in a way that promotes the city's identity and brings its citizens closer together, makes for a great civic project. He continued, saying the project is another success story for Mississippi's Katrina recovery.

Last fall, a mere four projects in the Community Revitalization Program were under construction. In March, the governor challenged local governments that have CDBG-approved recovery projects, along with their contracted grant administrators, to begin the actual construction of their projects by September. As a result, local communities now have 28 projects under construction, 55 construction contracts issued and 79 federally-required environmental contracts cleared.

MDA's Disaster Recovery Division granted nearly \$2 million for the Waveland Civic Center project. The division oversees the \$5.4 billion the state received in CDBG Disaster Recovery funds. For more information, please visit www.msdisasterrecovery.com.

IEDC to Host Free Workshop on Gulf Coast States' Economic Recovery

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC), in partnership with MDA, the Economic Development Administration and Louisiana Economic Development, will hold a free workshop June 10th from 7:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside, Two Poydras St., in New Orleans. "Building Resilient Economies: A Free Workshop on Accessing Funding and Resources for Gulf Coast Economic Recovery" will provide communities and chambers of commerce and local economic development organizations throughout Mississippi and Louisiana with critical information on state and federal funding programs that can benefit long-term economic recovery.

The workshop is free for attendees from Mississippi and Louisiana, and it is geared

toward public- and private-sector representatives in the field of economic development. To view a full conference agenda and to register online, please click [here](#).

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