



## Education

**Yes,** on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

### *Pass Christian Receives State and International Support*

The City of Pass Christian, Mississippi has received generous support from across the state – and across the globe – in the development of two new public facilities. Marsha Barbour, wife of Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, has been influential in the construction of the Marsha Barbour Community Center. And, the Pass Christian Boys and Girls Club recently received a \$5 million gift from the Middle Eastern country of Qatar.

The international support helped the Boys and Girls Club open its doors this summer. Earlier this year Qatar's Ambassador to the United States H. E. Nasser Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa presented the \$5 million gift to Pass Christian to help fund the project. "I want to help these young people because within this group there are future lawyers and doctors and we need to help them with their future," Al-Khalifa said.

Club leaders and city officials expressed their deepest gratitude to the country of Qatar for their donations to help build the 28,000 square foot facility. "We are now connected to the people of Qatar with one heart beat," said Pass Christian Mayor Chipper McDermott. "We will thank you. This will go on forever." He also presented the ambassador with a key to the city.

"We hope the children of Pass Christian, Mississippi will always remember that they have a friend in Qatar," said Hamad Al-Dosari, a Qatar Diplomat.

"This project also served some of the "multiplier" goals of the Qatar Fund – the project would provide construction jobs in the community; it would serve children whose families we hoped would be encouraged to stay in the community long-term; and it was co-located with a new school so that resources could be combined and leveraged for maximum effect," Dean M. Dilley, representing the legal counsel of the Qatar Katrina Fund, stated.

The Boys and Girls Club shares a campus with Pass Christian Elementary and Middle School. The newly constructed project encompasses a K-8 school, parks, conference and meeting rooms, childhood development programs, and additional space for the club.

"This gift is truly life-altering because this new building project will serve the entire community, everyone will be able to use the property," said Sam Burke, director of club development.

The Marsha Barbour Community Center, a tribute to Mississippi's First Lady for her immediate Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in the area, is also serving the community by providing the residents with vocational training, literacy training, after school programs and a YMCA Junior Olympic size pool for swimming lessons.

The center represents the fulfillment of the vision of another strong Mississippi woman, Reverend Rosemary Williams, a retired schoolteacher and pastor of the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in DeLisle, Mississippi. Reverend Williams shared her vision with two Hurricane Katrina volunteers, celebrity syndicated talk radio host Ellen Ratner and former U-2 pilot Cholene Espinoza. Together, they have created hope and new opportunity for the community.

Other activities offered at the facility will include child development classes, childcare, life counseling, GED completion, workforce development, health assessment and wellness classes, exercise classes, sports and sport therapy, mental health counseling, music instruction, senior activities, performing arts and art therapy, after school programming and summer camps. It will also include a library and computer center/classroom.

For more information, go to [www.marshabarbourcommunitycenter.com](http://www.marshabarbourcommunitycenter.com). To learn more about the Pass Christian Boys and Girls Club, go to [www.bcgulfcoast.org/Pass\\_Christian.html](http://www.bcgulfcoast.org/Pass_Christian.html).



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