

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Dutch Foundation Invests in the Mississippi Delta; Program to Help Disadvantaged Children

**The Mississippi Delta (May 2, 2006)** -- The Bernard van Leer Foundation announces the establishment of the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership (MDCP), a coalition of community-based organizations with a shared vision to create nurturing family and community environments that support the early growth and development of children. The MDCP initiative represents an investment of \$800,000 in children who live in some of the poorest areas in the United States.

According to Dr. Bettye Ward Fletcher, founder and chief consultant with Professional Associates, Inc. (PAI), the organization responsible for the initiative design, "The child is at the center of this program which is truly comprehensive in nature and focuses on the academic, social, and cognitive development of children -- while recognizing the importance of their family, their community and their cultural heritage."

Bernad van Leer Foundation President Peter Laugharn and Trustee Peter Bell, are touring Anguilla, Cary, Mayersville/Glen Allen, Marks, and Webb, Mississippi -- the five communities where the MDCP operates Children's Villages that provide after school and summer enrichment programs.

"The targeted communities have demonstrated a significant commitment to this Partnership in the form of matching human and in-kind support totaling \$1.4 million. It is envisioned that this Partnership will enable other communities to join this initiative and thus extend the Foundation's scope of work further into the region," Laugharn said.

A large part of this matching support is the donation of a former plantation home which now serves as the site of the Anguilla Children's Village.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is a private trust established in 1949 and based in the Netherlands. Their mandate is to improve opportunities for children between the ages of 0 and 8 who live in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage.

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