



## Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership



### ANGUILLA

Sharkey/Issaquena County  
Improvement Association  
477 Front Street  
Anguilla, MS 38721  
662.873.2832/office  
662.873.2835/fax

### CARY

Cary Christian Center  
154 Cottonwood Street  
Cary, MS 39054  
662.873.4593/office  
662.873.4112/fax

### MARKS

Quitman County  
Development Organization  
201 Humphrey Street  
Marks, MS 38646  
662.326.3022/office  
662.326.3224/fax

### MAYERSVILLE

Mayersville Youth  
Development Committee  
132 Court Street  
Mayersville, MS 39113  
662.873.0111/office  
662.873.0144/fax

### WEBB

Tallahatchie County  
Ministerial Alliance  
206 Engler Street  
Tutwiler, MS 38963  
662.345.8948/office  
662.345.6264/fax

Philanthropic Funder  
The Bernard van Leer Foundation

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# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Dutch Officials Meet With Community, Legislative Leaders; Tour Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership Sites

**The Mississippi Delta (May 16, 2006)** Additional meetings with members of the Mississippi Delta Legislative Delegation and Bernard van Leer Foundation officials are planned to continue discussions about the benefits of the van Leer Foundations' \$800,000 investment in the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership (MDCP).

Bernard van Leer Foundation Executive Director Peter Laugharn and Trustee Peter Bell, visited 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 earlier this month.

During a two day tour of the Mississippi Delta, the visitors spoke with school officials and the Partnership's staff to see first hand how they can help local children. Some participants included: Howard Sanders, conservator of the North Bolivar School District; Jo Thompson, director of the Delta Region Housing Authority; Howard Hollins, superintendent of the West Tallahatchie County School District and members of the Delta Legislative Delegation.

Laugharn and Bell officially opened the Anguilla Children's Village with a ribbon cutting ceremony and tour attended by approximately 125 persons. Fred Miller, President of the Bank of Anguilla, confirmed that the bank donated the former plantation home which now houses the MDCP Anguilla site. Led by Emma C. Harris, director of the Anguilla Children's Village, Anguilla Mayor Merlin Richardson, Second Congressional District Candidate Chuck Espy, West Tallahatchie School District Deputy Superintendent Patricia B. Ross, local law enforcement officers and parents also toured the two-story facility.

According to Mississippi State Senator Robert Jackson, chairman of the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership, "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."

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has made an initial investment of \$800,000 for the first year, and a commitment to consider similar funding for the next four years. According to the Foundation, leveraging their contributions with communities and other institutions/agencies is one of their primary objectives for the program.

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Dutch Foundation Officials Meet With Community, Legislative Leaders  
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"It is envisioned that this partnership will enable other communities to join the initiative and thus extend the Foundation's scope of work further into the region," Bernard van Leer Foundation Executive Director Peter Laugharn said.

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. 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. Entergy Mississippi has also provided additional local support for the Partnership.

Leadership for the planning and design of this initiative was provided by a local research and evaluation firm, Professional Associates, Inc. (PAI) which also serves as the Support System Contractor. Aisha Fletcher, senior program manager with PAI serves as liaison between the Foundation and grantees. She sees the involvement of parents as central to the success of this Initiative. According to Fletcher, "This initiative will raise the reading level of children in the Delta as well as increase the engagement of parents in their child's early development."

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 from birth to age 8 who live in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage.

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Bernard van Leer Foundation Trustee, Peter Bell shares a moment with a child participating in the **Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership** afterschool program in Webb, Mississippi. The program serves more than 40 children and families in Tallahatchie County.