

Press Release



Rebuilding Communities

For Immediate Release – April 28, 2009

Construction crews temporarily stopped their work on the Port Sulphur Community Center as representatives from non-profits and private businesses joined state and local leaders for the ceremonial ground breaking. The event drew top figures from the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and the state's FEMA office.

The Port Sulphur site is one of four community centers under construction in Plaquemines Parish. The centers will provide essential community services that are currently limited, and will assist families with the rebuilding process.

"This is a great day for the rebuilding and recovery efforts in Plaquemines Parish. This site is special to me; the Port Sulphur Community Center is located in my district. And I personally contributed 25,000 dollars to ensure the project moved forward," said Parish President Billy Nungesser. "I'd like to thank the council members for coming together and agreeing on four sites that would best serve all of Plaquemines Parish."

The Plaquemines Legacy Campaign is a combined effort involving the Plaquemines Parish Government, Plaquemines Parish School Board, the United Way, the business community, the YMCA, and FEMA.

"We have a great partnership with President Nungesser," said Bill Vogel, Acting Deputy Director for FEMA's Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office. "And in working with parish officials, we were able to come up with some innovative, new ideas for the recovery here."

FEMA has provided \$16 million for the Legacy Campaign Community Centers, with more than \$3 million going to the Port Sulphur site. The Port Sulphur Community Center will be 17,000 square feet. It will include a fitness center, a civic auditorium, a conference room, offices, and a swimming pool.

A few years back, the United Way came up with the concept of the Legacy Campaign to help unite communities that were torn apart by Hurricane Katrina. St. Bernard Parish was originally targeted as the location of the project. But after requests from Billy Nungesser, who sits on the board of the United Way, and his personal commitment to help raise the funds to make the community centers first-class facilities, United Way moved the project to Plaquemines Parish.

After more than a year of fund raising efforts, Gary Ostroske, Buzz Elliot, and Nungesser proudly said they've pooled together \$2 million. Those funds will cover the extra amenities for the community centers that FEMA would not pay for. All the enhancements are made possible thanks to companies based in Plaquemines Parish. Some of the money raised will also be used to support the operating staff.

"These are multi-purpose facilities," said Bill Vogel. "The top notch infrastructure helps make them safer, stronger, and better than before."

"And in the event of tornado activity, they can also serve as a temporary shelter," added Nungesser.

"Billy Nungesser and I have been involved in several projects and it's been a real pleasure working with him, he's a hands-on type of guy," said Colonel Thomas Kirkpatrick, the State Coordinating Officer for the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

(GOHSEP). “Plaquemines Parish and Cameron Parish have a different attitude than most others. Those two parishes have the attitude: we’re going to get this done, with or without your help.”

The Port Sulphur Community Center, located at the end of Civic Drive, is expected to be completed in early 2010.



PHOTO (Above): Jim Hufft: FEMA, Bill Vogel: FEMA, Billy Nungesser: Plaquemines Parish President, and Colonel Thomas Kirkpatrick: GOHSEP.

PHOTO (Below): Dr. Eldridge Burns: FEMA, Ames Yeates: Yeates & Yeates Architects, Bill Serpass: PPG, Buzz Elliot: United Way, Burghardt Turner: Parish Council Member, Colonel Thomas Kirkpatrick: GOHSEP, Annette Cockrell: GOHSEP, Billy Nungesser: Plaquemines Parish President, Lynda Banta: Parish Council Chair, Betsy Brien: ConocoPhillips, Bill Vogel: FEMA, and Jim Hufft: FEMA.

