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For Immediate Release

### **Delta Bridge Project Announces \$240,000 in Grant Funding for Boys & Girls Club of Phillips County**

HELENA-WEST HELENA, AR (October 19, 2006) Dr. Steven Murray, Chairman of the Delta Bridge Project Steering Committee, today announced that the Boys & Girls Club of Phillips County will receive up to \$240,000 in grant funds over the next three years. The funding will be used to bring a nationally proven model for youth development to Phillips County.

Open since June of this year, the Boys & Girls Club of Phillips County (BGCPC) will use the funding first to expand the Boys & Girls Club in Helena-West Helena. By the third year, BGCPC plans to expand the program to Marvell, with additional plans for expansion to Elaine and Barton-Lexa in future years.

The Boys & Girls Club program has earned national and international recognition as a model program for meeting the enrichment needs of young people. Among other honors, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* has rated Boys & Girls Clubs of America as the number one youth organization for 11 consecutive years in its yearly study of the 400 top nonprofits in the country.

The Boys & Girls Club of Phillips County currently serves more than 200 members out of its temporary facility and has plans to serve over 1,000 Phillips County youth in the first three years of operation. BGCPC will begin by focusing on character and educational programs; sports, fitness, and recreation; and the development of its long-term facility in Helena-West Helena.

“For over 25 years I've heard people in Phillips County talk about the need to provide more recreational opportunities for kids and the need to provide our children with a safe place to learn and have fun,” Murray said in the announcement. “Now, with the inception of the Boys & Girls Club of Phillips County, we're not just talking about it. We're doing it. Because of this project, many of our children will be provided with the resources and relationships necessary to move out of poverty. The Delta Bridge Project is making a difference in the Delta.”

The Delta Bridge Project is a comprehensive community development initiative in Phillips County. The goals of the Delta Bridge Project are outlined in the Phillips County Strategic Community Plan, which was developed by more than 300 Phillips County residents during an 18-month strategic planning process. The Boys & Girls Club project directly addresses a strategic development goal identified by the community in this document.

“This tremendous gift from the Delta Bridge Project and the Walton Foundation could not have come at a better time. After a successful summer program, we’re now getting into the full swing of our school-year programming including our extremely popular ‘Power Hour’ after-school homework help and tutoring program,” explained BGPCPC Executive Director Jason Rolett. “The Delta Bridge Project’s support will give us the resources we need to move forward with our leadership and community service programs as well as our highly-successful prevention programs.”

“As a teacher, I’ve heard my students say again and again how there’s ‘nothing to do in Helena-West Helena.’ That’s changing, and so are the kids,” said BGPCPC Board Member Doug Friedlander. “Thanks to the Delta Bridge Project, this is a very exciting time to be a citizen of Phillips County.”

The Delta Bridge Project is spearheaded by Southern Financial Partners, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit lender and community development organization founded in 1986. Ben Steinberg, President of Southern Financial Partners, joined those praising the project.

“The Boys & Girls Club is a marvelous example of what happens when residents from all across Phillips County work together for a better community,” Steinberg said. “I hope that others will follow the example of the Boys & Girls Club. The message is simple: Work together and take the initiative!”

*Southern Good Faith Fund, Southern Financial Partners, and Southern Property Corporation are affiliates of Southern Bancorp, a \$500 million rural development bank holding company working to transform rural economies by stimulating investments in people, jobs, businesses, and property with banking operations in Arkansas and Mississippi.*