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Scores of volunteers turn out to ready Rose City Park Elementary for Marysville classes

By John Foyston, The Oregonian

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Andrew Steiner (left), a volunteer with Hands On Greater Portland, and Mark Anderson help paint Rose City Park Elementary School in preparation for students displaced from Marysville K-8 School, which was destroyed by fire last week. Anderson has three grandchildren who are Marysville students.

Rose City Park Elementary School woke from a couple of years' slumber Saturday to the ministrations of more than 200 volunteers, community members, contractors and staffers readying the building for Monday morning's diaspora of **Marysville K-8 School** students and teachers.

Nearly 500 students and teachers safely evacuated Marysville school in Southeast Portland as fire swept the building Tuesday morning. Portland Fire & Rescue investigators released preliminary estimates Saturday that set the toll at \$4.25 million: \$2.75 million damage to the building and \$1.5 million damage to contents.

The displaced students and teachers will stay at Rose City Park, about five miles from Marysville, for the rest of the school year, said **Portland Public Schools** Superintendent Carole Smith. "We want them to settle in here," she said. "This is their new home."

On Saturday, people were making that home a cheery one. Volunteers filled the cafeteria, signing up to paint classrooms and doors, spread barkdust, assemble furniture and put away supplies, and make colorful signs welcoming kids and teachers to their new classrooms.

They snacked from long tables piled with donated rolls, pastries, juice, bottled water and home-baked cookies and muffins.

Portland Public Schools custodians, staff, contractors and movers navigated hallways full of janitorial supplies, floor polishers, buckets, ladders, desks,



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Sadiann Bailey, 9, (right), a third-grade student from Marysville K-8 School, and cousin Haylee Clark, 6, help Sadiann's teacher Danielle Turley prepare her new classroom Saturday at Rose City Park Elementary School in Northeast Portland. A devastating fire burned through Marysville school last week.

file cabinets, chairs and classroom books and material -- the tons of stuff needed to transform a vacant building back into a bright, bustling elementary school.

The district closed **Rose City Park, 2334 N.E. 57th Ave.**, in June of 2007 because of declining enrollment and has used the 1912 brick building occasionally since, Smith said, for training, examinations and meetings.

"The response of the community has been the most amazing thing," school board member David Wynde said Saturday, as an electrician ran conduit overhead to a new smoke detector. "What started as a huge tragedy on Tuesday has become a massive affirmation of community support for kids and schools."

"This is like an old-fashioned barn-raising," said Andy Nelson, director of **Hands On Greater Portland**, the volunteer-coordinating group that signed up more than 130 people for a morning of scraping, painting, cleaning and yardwork.

"We filled all the volunteer slots in two hours, faster than any other project we've ever organized, and I have no doubt that we could have recruited 100 more people in another two hours if we'd needed to."

Superintendent Smith said that response in general has been nearly overwhelming, from the landscape contractors who showed up to start tidying the grounds, to **Schoolhouse Supplies**, which opened its doors to Marysville teachers who lost all their supplies.

Powell's donated books to the school library and **Nike** is supplying gym equipment, backpacks and jackets to every student, totes to all the teachers and "back your block" community involvement T-shirts and wristbands for Saturday's volunteers.

Clayton Smiley and his wife, Holly, came from Northwest Portland with the whole family: Sage, 13, Anna, 11, Dana, 8, and Owen, 5 1/2. "We just want to try and help out," Smiley said. "Our kids have great schools in Northwest, and we want to help the Marysville students have a nice school to come to on Monday morning."

Portlanders Mark and Donnie Anderson have three grandkids who attended Marysville. When the kids come through Rose City's Tuscan red front doors on Monday, the fresh paint will be courtesy of granddad and Portland Public Schools' paint foreman, Charlie Slaughter.

"I'm kind of getting back to my roots here," said Mark Anderson, who repairs electric scooters and mobility carts and also adjusts the compasses of big ships. "I paid for part of my college in Salem by painting for a contractor."

In Becky McAlister's first-grade classroom, she was feeling more at home thanks to the pale yellow and blue paint job that her husband, Terry, had finished the night before.

"It's just like the classroom I had," she said. "My family has painted every one of my classrooms, because I always like to have the least institutional room -- I had a couch and lamps and silk plants, and I will again. I even went out and found the same flannel-with-stars material I had for curtains and I was going to sew them, but some volunteer already did that for me."

McAlister said the ceiling caved in on her Marysville classroom. She lost 15 years accumulation of teaching materials, and her purse in the bargain. "It's been a crazy week," she said. "The bad stuff is obvious, but it's been crazy in good ways, too."

"The generosity of the community has absolutely floored us -- we knew we live in a great city, but this week has proved it in so many ways. Nike even made us T-shirts that say, 'Marysville: We will rise again.'"

Judging by the stacks of books and boxes of schools supplies, there looked to be no shortage of things still to be done. "Oh, we'll be ready Monday morning," McAlister said. "it won't be perfect, but we'll be ready."

"Besides, these are the most important things," she said holding her arms wide. "Because Monday morning I'm going

Past coverage

To read earlier stories about the Marysville Elementary fire, go [here](#)

How to help

The Oregon PTA and Portland Council PTA are putting out a call for donations for the following in new or like new condition:

- Coats
- Jackets
- Sweaters
- Backpacks
- Lunch Bags/Boxes
- Art Supplies (paints, markers, paper etc)
- Books for the library
- Boxes of tissues
- Construction Paper
- Photocopy Paper

Please drop off items between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at Marshall High School, **3905 SE 91st Ave.**, Portland.

Checks for financial donations to cover additional needs can be made to Portland Council PTA with "Marysville Donation" in the memo and mailed to:

Portland Council PTA
2246 SE 90th Ave.
Portland, OR 97216

to hug every kid and welcome them to our new home."

-- **John Foyston**

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