



School officials break ground at Our Lady of Lourdes School



Dozens of miniature red, green, purple and blue shovels dug into the damp ground off Westchester Boulevard on Thursday to kick off the construction of the new Our Lady of Lourdes School in Slidell.

The approximately \$9 million school will replace the old elementary building, which was ruined by Hurricane Katrina over three years ago. The school's students have been attending school in portable buildings on the soccer field, assistant principal Stephen Nichols said.

"Now as part of the rebuild we've been able to tear down the old and literally and figuratively build up the new," he said.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is covering the costs of the 32,000 square-foot building, which will include 24 classrooms in two raised wings and a connector bridge, with a separate playground area for prekindergarten and kindergarten students.

While working on the new school, Metairie construction firm Citadel Builders, LLC will simultaneously rebuild the adjacent Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, which also suffered total devastation from the hurricane.

That approximately \$8 million project is being funded entirely by the church parishioners, officials said. School officials hope the school and the church will both be completed by Christmas 2009.