



Main Entrance

# A RED LETTER DAY

Archbishop Hannan High School Reopened | By Margie Church

What Hurricane Katrina destroyed on August 29, 2005, the McDonnell Group and Fauntleroy and Latham, Inc., restored on November 3, 2008. On that red letter day, students returned to Archbishop Hannan High School in a brand new facility. It's open doors brought back another bit of normalcy and comfort to many whose lives were uprooted by the devastating hurricane.

After Katrina, there was an urgency to rebuild the school, according to Kieran Weldon, Executive Vice President of Fauntleroy and Latham, Incorporated. The architectural firm designed the school. "I think we had an incredible team of dedicated professionals on the project. Everybody stepped up to the plate to aggressively pursue the schedule to make sure it happened as timely a manner as possible," he said.

The McDonnell Group broke ground August 23, 2007 on the new school site,

a 20-acre property on the North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Many families migrated to the North Shore after Katrina, so it made sense for the Archdiocese of New Orleans to rebuild the school there.

## A practical mix of upgrades and foresight

The school currently has five buildings: a gym, cafeteria, two-story classroom building, a two-story administrative complex, and a maintenance facility. The classroom building is designed to accommodate a two-story expansion for a school capacity of 1,000 students.

Slab on grade, structural steel, and masonry walls made the construction pretty standard and straightforward on the \$16 million-dollar project. However, it also included a practical mix of systems and design elements to modernize it and contain operating costs. A high efficiency chiller plant system provides energy savings atypical in most schools. Daylight streams into classroom windows shaded by metal

awnings and window tinting throughout the campus allows students and faculty to reap the benefits of natural lighting while keeping cool and lowering energy costs for lighting and air conditioning. High performance light fixtures fill in the gaps. Highly-reflective, white concrete keeps surrounding buildings cooler and further reduces cooling energy costs.

Students learn using ultra-modern connectivity and computers. The entire campus is wireless and each student is issued his own laptop. Hannan High School Principal John Cavell said the buildings were designed for evolving technological expansion.

Hurricane-resistant design elements include curtain wall systems, doors, and window glazing to withstand a higher wind threshold. Administrative offices and classrooms are connected by a glass-enclosed walkway on both floors. All the buildings are connected by canopies.

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Gymnasium



Laboratory

The campus features ample green space and a number of live oak trees that were carefully preserved during construction. McDonnell Group Project Superintendent Darrell Papenhausen said, “Eight or ten live oaks dot the campus. We were careful to protect their root systems and surrounding soil from any damage so they could remain part of the site’s natural beauty.”

The trees are approximately 50 feet-tall and 60 feet-wide, not uncommon for this species. Live Oak or Evergreen Oak, receives its name because it remains green and “live” throughout the winter

instead of losing its leaves and going dormant. The trees can grow centuries old. Formerly prized for lumber in shipbuilding, Live Oaks are primarily shade trees today. Live Oak canopies can grow up to 100 feet wide and are frequently covered with Spanish moss, giving them a wispy, charming appeal along streets and in parks.

### **Race to completion**

After nearly three years of holding classes in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers, students and parents were anxious to see the walls go up and the students

march into real classrooms. The McDonnell Group set up webcams to allow a bird’s eye view of the construction progress as it unfolded.

Cavell added, “As soon as a building became available, we started using it. Our athletes, for example, enjoyed playing ‘home games’ even though classes weren’t being held on campus yet.” The school’s motto, colors, mascot, and crest remain the same.

The school’s target completion date was January 2009, however with the utmost cooperation among the construction team members and suppliers, the buildings were officially handed over to school officials in mid-October and the first class day was November 3, 2008.

“The cooperation from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, its construction manager, Mike Burnett, and school Principal John Cavell, facilitated the approvals, the changes, and anything else the project required,” Papenhausen said. “Their commitment and dedication allowed us to finish the buildings in 14 months and we couldn’t have asked for a finer team. He said The McDonnell Group was very happy to see the students able to go back to school in a complete facility after three years in FEMA trailers. “It was really nice to see them hold their own home games and not have to go to somebody else’s campus.”

Cavell said approximately 40 percent of its students come from Saint Bernard Parish, where the school existed pre-Katrina. The other students are from St. Tammany Parish and attending Archbishop Hannon High School is a new education opportunity for them.

Weldon concluded, “Hannan High School is the largest Archdiocesan project we’ve ever been involved in and we hear every day how much people appreciate it. Everybody worked hard to give these kids a fine school.”