

TEXAS HELP

Falcons worked with Pirates to take others under their wing

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Blair Oaks and Boonville teamed up Monday to collect supplies for Texas schools during their volleyball game.

Falcons are taking the lead with Pirates to help their namesake kin.

The Blair Oaks Lady Falcons and Boonville Lady Pirates faced off on the volleyball court Monday night, but the two school communities came together as part of the former's efforts to help two other school communities in Texas after Hurricane Harvey.

Even after Harvey struck in late August, two more powerful hurricanes and two major earthquakes followed within weeks.

"There's always going to be a cause at some point or another," Blair Oaks Middle School Principal Don Jeffries said Wednesday. "We're just one school trying to do a little bit on our end."

Blair Oaks Middle School partnered with Rockport-Fulton Middle School in Rockport and Fort Settlement Middle School in Sugar Land, both in Texas.

Blair Oaks' elementary and high schools have partnered with James C. Mitchell Elementary in Houston.

Jeffries said the Blair Oaks community would like to believe other schools would come to their aid if a tornado or some other disaster hit here. In the immediate aftermath of Harvey, he said, communications arts teacher Leigh Thrasher emailed him and asked what they could do to help.

Jeffries' wife also shared a Facebook post from relatives in Texas about a supply drive there.

That prompted him to do two things. One was to search for middle schools in the Houston area with the same Falcons mascot as Blair Oaks; he also found a fellow Pirates mascot school to boot.

The second action was to ask his staff: "What would you need as a teacher to get started (over again) if we had a disaster occur?"

Those needs are the ones Rockport-Fulton has specifically asked for, he said — things that might be easy to miss when thinking about school supplies from students' point of view: staplers, staples, tape dispensers, binders, folders and dry-erase markers.

At Monday's home volleyball game against Boonville, fans were invited to donate three new school supplies in lieu of the usual \$2 entrance fee.

The effort resulted in the collection of three "strong" boxes of school supplies, he said, adding people are welcome to keep bringing donations to the school.

He said there's no deadline for collecting items yet, but hopes to send some supplies to Fort Settlement next week. Rockport-Fulton asked them to hold off until around mid-October, given the extent of damage there.

Harvey's eye made landfall directly over Rockport and Fulton, northeast of Corpus Christi. The towns are on a vulnerable peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides and separated from the main body of the Gulf of Mexico by only a narrow barrier island.

Photographs from the area show cars piled on top of each other amid rubble, wrecked apartment buildings and airplane hangars, and a laundromat with still-standing rows of washers and dryers without walls or a roof around them.

An update Monday from the Aransas County Independent School District's Superintendent Joseph Patek said the Rockport-Fulton Middle School and High School will need at least six months to be restored. Portable classroom campuses are being prepared at a nearby soccer practice field to serve students for the majority of the remaining school year, and it's anticipated the portable facilities won't be ready until Oct. 9.

Students will be allowed to attend other districts in the meantime, while still competing as their home Pirates.

Jeffries said supplies Blair Oaks sends will be evenly divvied between Rockport-Fulton and Fort Settlement, and whatever the latter doesn't use can be sent to other schools in the Fort Bend district.

"This one was brought to the table, it was a good idea, and it fit really well with the volleyball opener," he said of the planning for Harvey relief.

He added, though, he's open to other relief ideas for other disasters if teachers or students bring ideas to him.

"No idea is a bad idea," he said.