

FEMA Helps Fund Sacred Hearts Temporary School

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LAHAINA, Maui – Sacred Hearts School has stood as a cornerstone of Lahaina since its' establishment in 1863. On Aug. 8, 2023, the K-12 school was destroyed in the Maui wildfires, while the Catholic church on site miraculously emerged unscathed.

With community support, the school reopened at an emergency site just three weeks after the disaster, making it the first Lahaina school to resume in-person learning. The initial site at Sacred Hearts Mission Church in nearby Kapalua, West Maui was made up of tents and makeshift classrooms set up in the yard without air conditioning or electricity.

As recovery efforts continued, Sacred Hearts sought a safer, more appropriate temporary home for their 200 students until a permanent site can be rebuilt in Lahaina.

Thanks to a collaborative effort involving FEMA, school officials, and generous community members, a new temporary home was found, and a lease was signed for a property in K??anapali, West Maui. Once a permanent site is rebuilt and students resume session in Lahaina, the leased property will be restored to its original condition, including returning the grass and landscaping that were removed during the school's construction.

The new temporary site was selected by the school and validated by FEMA as the most cost-effective and practical option to continue providing education to the students. However, the site also required some modifications and updates to meet code standard requirements and to be suitable for educational use. To address these needs, design work began in Nov. 2023, and construction commenced in Feb. 2024. The renovations were completed in June 2024 and the site opened ahead of the first day of school on Aug. 2, 2024, following a blessing ceremony.



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The initial costs for the school rental, construction modifications and architectural design fees total approximately \$2 million, much of which will be eligible for reimbursement through FEMA's Public Assistance Grant Program.

Sacred Hearts temporary school now consists of thirteen air-conditioned classrooms housed within existing buildings on the leased property, two portable enrichment classrooms, a school office, mental health counseling rooms and maintenance areas. Students are also able to enjoy a playground and multipurpose court for basketball, volleyball, and pickleball along with an outdoor seating area for lunch.

Additionally, the school expanded to bring back their Early Learning Center for Pre-K students (ages 3 to 5), which they did not have space for at the Kapalua location. Three Early Learning Center classrooms were constructed, and engaging wall art is displayed to support student development and create a nurturing environment.

Sacred Hearts demonstrates the community's perseverance and commitment to continue investing in West Maui's youth throughout the recovery process. Tonata Lolesio, principal of Sacred Hearts School, said, the temporary school "underscores our unwavering commitment to nurturing our students and supporting the broader Lahaina community as it continues to recover from the impact of the wildfire, offering a beacon of hope in these challenging times."

FEMA is proud to support Sacred Hearts as they gather community support and work to foster resilience among the next generation.

For the latest information on the Maui wildfire recovery efforts, visit mauicounty.gov, mauirecovers.org, fema.gov/disaster/4724 and [Hawaii Wildfires - YouTube](#). Follow FEMA on social media: [@FEMARegion9](#) and facebook.com/fema. You may also get disaster assistance information and download applications at sba.gov/hawaii-wildfires.

