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# Vols helping fearful Arabs



EDWINE SEYMOUR

**A HELPING HAND** NYU doctoral student Jessamine Price, 26, walks Muslim and Arab kids to school in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, yesterday, after parents said they were afraid of being harassed.

## *Young students get escorts to schools*

By PETER DeMARCO
DAILY NEWS WRITER

One by one, the children kissed their mother goodbye and barreled out the door for school.

But they did not walk alone yesterday to their red-brick schoolhouse in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

A white-skinned woman they had never met before held their hands as they skipped down the streets.

The children's Palestinian mother did not go with them because a stranger had kicked her and called her a terrorist at the laundermat on Tuesday.

After that happened, the mother thought it would be safer for her children if they walked to school with a volunteer who did not look Arabic.

"It seems like it's okay to hate an Arab now," said Emira Habiby Browne, president and founder of the Arab-American Family Support Center in Brooklyn. "It's nothing new. It happened after Oklahoma City. After TWA Flight 800."

The harassment has been so widespread since the attacks on the World Trade Center — 100 incidents reported in the city alone, according to the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund — that some Muslim women have traded their traditional head scarves for baseball caps and Arabic men have shaven their beards and mustaches.

Some Muslims and Arabs who have been verbally or physically abused refuse to leave their homes.

With so many living in fear, Habiby Browne's center began recruiting volunteers to escort scared children to school and women to the grocery store or doctor's office.

More than 100 people — including several Jewish volunteers — had signed up as of yesterday.

One volunteer is Jessamine Price, 26, a doctoral student at New York University.

At 8:15 yesterday morning, she walked five children in her Bay Ridge neighborhood from their apartment to Public School 170 on Sixth Ave.

Price asked the oldest in the group, a spunky fifth-grade girl, to lead the way to school. She held the hands of twin girls wearing matching pink plastic backpacks.

Three blocks later, the small procession reached the school, and Price waved goodbye.

"There's not much I can do in terms of rescue work," Price said. "But this is something I can do. It shouldn't be that anyone in the neighborhood should feel scared because of where they started out in the world."

# Emotional return to class for 9,000 kids

By ALISON GENDAR
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The man walked out of his young daughter's temporary school in the West Village, leaned his head against the scaffolding and wept.

It had been more than a week since the World Trade Center crumbled and his daughter, her kindergarten class and the rest of Public School 234 on Greenwich St. were sent fleeing through smoky, debris-filled streets.

"He had been with his daughter and wife since the towers fell. He didn't want to upset them, so he waited until he was alone," said Linda Stanch, a parent at PS 41 on W. 11th St., who comforted the man. "My message to him was we are all in this together."

Yesterday, nearly 9,000 students who fled schools in the shadow of the twin towers returned to class. All but one of the eight schools — Murry Bergtraum High School on Pearl St. — is closed or being used by rescue workers.

Teachers hugged kids they hadn't seen since they were separated in the confusion, with some kids escorted north on foot out of the danger zone and others put on rescue ferries.

Parents gave standing ovations to the teachers and principals they credited with getting all the children to safety.

"She's the unsinkable Molly Brown," parent Joseph Begley said of PS 234 Principal Anna Switzer as, arms outstretched, Switzer welcomed parents and kids to their temporary home at PS 41.

For juniors Becky Zeng and Stephanie Sealy at the High School of Leadership and Public Service on Trinity Place, thanks went to Margaret Espinosa and Julia Martinez, teachers aides who pushed both girls' wheelchairs through pandemonium to Battery Park.

When the wheelchairs couldn't go any farther, Espinosa and Martinez carried the teens on their backs until other rescuers offered help.

"How can you thank someone for something like that?" Sealy asked.

Surpassing expectations, attendance for the relocated students ran 70% or better. Overall attendance was 89.9% for elementary and middle schools and 76% in high schools, approaching average.

"What I take from all this is that the teachers and the children are resilient and determined to get on with education," said Schools Chancellor Harold. Levy, who met students from Intermediate School 89 in their temporary digs at IS 70 on W. 17th St.

At the host schools, libraries, hallways and art rooms were turned into classrooms. Some classes doubled up. Extra counselors were on hand to work with students haunted by seeing carnage up close.

High schools worked on split shifts. For Stuyvesant High School students, who shared quarters at Brooklyn Technical High School, classes were cut 30 minutes.

Neil Marks, a dean at the High School of Leadership and Public Service, talked his way past security checkpoints on Tuesday and, with the help of police, unbolted the school's 8-by-4-foot blue metal school banner.

Marks and Principal Ada Dolch unveiled the sign to wild applause yesterday at Fashion Industries High School on W. 24th St. The schools could be sharing space until January, though most of the evacuated schools may reopen in about a month.

"I thought the kids needed a symbol, something to show them that our school was not destroyed," Marks said. "The message is: We will go on."

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