

BRIDGEPORT AND KINGS VALLEY STUDENTS EGGS-CITED ABOUT STEP

It's hard enough to keep pre-teens calm at 2:55 p.m. on a sunny school day, but add salmon eggs to the mix, and the challenge is ramped up to impossible.

Despite the excitement, Bridgeport School teacher Randy Fellows managed to keep his students from mobbing Jane Dalglish, biologist for the Luckiamute Watershed Council, as she delivered 150 salmon eggs to the classroom's aquarium. The students will watch as the eggs hatch into tiny spring Chinook salmon fry, which they will nurture until sometime before Christmas break. After they've learned about salmon life cycles, students at Bridgeport will release the young fish into one of the Luckiamute River's tributaries.

"You can tell the kids love this," Fellows shrugged.

Dalglish was one of 13 volunteers who helped deliver thousands of eggs to students at 58 sites in the Willamette Valley. Students at Bridgeport School and Kings Valley Charter School were among the classrooms that will rear the eggs taken from salmon at the South Santiam hatchery, according to Karen Hans, biologist for Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife's STEP. STEP stands for Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program.

"You have 350 baby salmon in your lunchbox," joked Hans, who passed the eggs from her large cooler to Dalglish's smaller one. Hans briefed the watershed biologist on the proper way to release and care for the eggs.

A half-hour later in Kings Valley, things were quieter in Diane Tatum's empty kindergarten classroom. She had spent the week shopping at Home Depot for insulated foil material to line the aquarium, and had created an elegant and practical wrap that keep the water at a at an even, cool temperature. Tatum had no doubt that her room would be filled with curious students.

"They'll all be in here, of course," she said.

For more information about STEP, visit the web page at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/STEP>.

