



# Fontana Unified School District

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Fontana Unified Middle School Student Honored by Assemblymember Reyes for Dedication to Justice, Equity

**FONTANA, CA** – Southridge Tech Middle School seventh-grader Cyrus Moss has been honored as a 2024 “30 Under 30” recipient by 50th Congressional District Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes in recognition of his leadership in the successful effort to rename Fontana Unified’s Randall Pepper Elementary School to O’Day Short Elementary, commemorating the family who broke Fontana’s color barrier in 1945.

Moss’ courage and dedication to justice were celebrated during Reyes’ annual “30 Under 30” celebration on Oct. 30. The recognition honors 30 residents under the age of 30 from California’s 50th District, which includes Fontana, for their dedication, innovation, and service.

“I feel good about being recognized by Assemblywoman Reyes, and also a little nervous,” Moss said before the event. “I’d like to thank everyone who helped me to honor the O’Day Short family legacy, including my teachers, the Fontana Unified Board of Education, everyone who signed my petition – especially my mom and younger brother, who supported and assisted me so I could achieve my dream.”

As a Dolores Huerta International Academy (DHIA) fifth-grader, Moss first heard the tragic story of the O’Day Short family during a Black History Month presentation. All four members of the African-American family: father O’Day, wife Helen, and children Carol Ann and Barry Short died after their house burst into flames on Dec. 16, 1945. Randall Pepper Elementary was then built on the same site in 1950.

The story profoundly affected Moss and he began to research the Short Family deeper as part of his DHIA International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme exhibition project in sixth grade. He began a petition drive to rename Randall Pepper Elementary to O’Day Short Elementary and first presented it with 132 community signatures to the Fontana Unified School District Board of Education in March.

Unable to immediately act on the matter, FUSD’s Board voted unanimously to rename the school O’Day Short Elementary at its Sept. 4 meeting. The change will officially take effect for the 2025-26 school year.

After the vote, an emotional release was felt throughout the room, with audience members giving a standing ovation and Moss shedding tears alongside his family in the front row.

“Cyrus’ compassion, leadership, and drive to foster equity and inclusion make him an inspiration to his peers and the broader community,” said Taneka Moss, Cyrus’ mother. “His courage is a testament to the profound change one person can create.”

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In his first year as a middle schooler, Moss is developing into a campus leader and was recently named to the Southridge Tech Honor Roll. An aspiring actor, Moss looks forward to joining Southridge Tech's drama department after appearing as Jiminy Cricket in a DHIA production of "Pinocchio" and Anansi in "Anansi's Carnival Adventure."

"Cyrus Moss exemplifies the compassion, leadership, and commitment to justice we strive to cultivate in all our students," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "He has been an inspiration for all of us, and there is no one more deserving of this recognition."

**PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**FUSD\_MOSS1:** Southridge Tech Middle School seventh-grader Cyrus Moss, right, celebrates being named one a "30 Under 30" recipient in the 50th Congressional District by Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes, center. Moss was recognized for spearheading the movement to rename Fontana Unified's Randall Pepper Elementary School to O'Day Short Elementary.

**FUSD\_MOSS2:** Fontana Unified Superintendent Miki R. Inbody, left, and Board of Education President Marcelino "Mars" Serna, right, celebrate Southridge Tech Middle School seventh-grader Cyrus Moss, center, at the 50th Congressional District "30 Under 30" ceremony on Oct. 30. Moss was named a "30 Under 30" recipient by Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes after he led a petition drive to rename Randall Pepper Elementary School to O'Day Short Elementary to honor the family remembered for breaking Fontana's color barrier in 1945.

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