



Fontana Unified School District

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MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fontana Unified to Celebrate Renaming of O'Day Short Elementary School, Honor Family's Legacy

WHAT: Fontana Unified will host a renaming ceremony as Randall Pepper Elementary School officially transitions to O'Day Short Elementary in the 2025-26 school year, honoring the O'Day Short Family, which is remembered for breaking Fontana's color barrier 80 years ago.

District middle school student Cyrus Moss championed the renaming of O'Day Short Elementary. Moss submitted a petition with 132 signatures to rename Randall Pepper Elementary to the Fontana Unified Board of Education in March 2024. The Board unanimously voted to rename the school in September 2024 after all administrative regulations were met.

WHEN: **Tuesday, Aug. 5**
10 a.m. to noon

WHERE: O'Day Short Elementary School
16613 Randall Ave., Fontana

DETAILS: The O'Day Short family purchased and built a home on a five-acre lot at Randall and Pepper avenues in Fontana at a time when African-Americans were forbidden to live south of Baseline Avenue. The family received threats of violence before their house was set ablaze on Dec. 16, 1945. All four members of the African-American family: father O'Day, mother Helen, and children Carol Ann and Barry Short died from injuries sustained in the fire, which was later determined to be caused by arson. Randall Pepper Elementary was then built on the same site in 1950 before officially opening under its original name East Randall Elementary in 1951. The school was later renamed Randall Pepper for the street that intersected it.

Momentum began building to rename Randall Pepper Elementary in the 2023-24 school year. In December 2023, the school dedicated the O'Day Short Family Unity Garden on its campus about three months before Moss submitted his petition to the Board of Education.

Coverage and/or inclusion of this event in your calendar of events is welcome and greatly appreciated.

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