

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact:** Mary Fergus

September 18, 2018

Phone: 847-888-5000, ext.4160

Ronald D. O'Neal Elementary Students to Host Community Walking Tour

*District U-46 students will cast spotlight
on Elgin's first African-American residents*

ELGIN -- Fourth through sixth graders at Ronald D. O'Neal Elementary School will host a community walking tour this month that will cast attention on the cultural and historical significance of their school's Elgin neighborhood.

The Project 2-3-1 Community Walking Tour will take place from 9 a.m. to noon on Friday, Sept. 28. It is inspired by the acclaimed documentary film of the same name that tells the story of the Civil War "contrabands," captured southern slaves who became the first African-American residents of Elgin.

The O'Neal students have been researching the people and historic homes in the east side neighborhood of Hill, Gifford, Fremont and Hickory Streets, where those first residents settled. The students will be sharing their research during a walking tour of the neighborhood, which is known as the settlement.

Residents can join the tour anytime during the three hours. Tour maps will be available outside the front entrance of the school at 510 Franklin Blvd.

"The students and staff at Ronald O'Neal Elementary School are excited to share what they've learned, and we think attendees will come away with a renewed sense of pride in this beautiful neighborhood," Principal Marcie Marzullo said.



Tony Sanders, Chief Executive Officer

School District U-46
Educational Services Center
355 E. Chicago Street, Elgin, IL 60120-6543
Tel: 847.888.5000 x5007
Fax: 847.608.4173

U-46.org

At the tour's conclusion at noon, community members and attendees are invited to meet at Clara Howard Park on Fremont Street between Hill and Gifford to share stories and reconnect with old friends.

At 1 p.m. everyone is invited to return to O'Neal Elementary for light refreshments and to see the Project 2-3-1 documentary, which will be shown in the school gym. There is also a traveling exhibit associated with the documentary that will be on display at the school.

"Project 2-3-1: Two Boxcars, Three Blocks, One City -- A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage" is an award-winning, 75-minute documentary. It traces the history of the slaves who arrived in Elgin in 1862 in two boxcars, settled in three blocks on the city's east side, and how they and their descendants grew to become part of one unified city.

Ernie Broadnax, an Elgin community leader and lifelong resident of the settlement neighborhood, was the driving force behind the creation of the Project 2-3-1 documentary.

"I am pleased that the school, its principal and assistant principal, and its teachers are motivating their students to learn the importance of the social history of the settlement area," Broadnax said. "It's history that needs to be shared, and this is a great way to do it."

Note: *Members of the Media: Please RSVP to Mary Fergus at MaryFergus@u-46.org if you are planning to attend any of the above events.*