Englewood Back to School Parade: CANCELLED!

Onlookers await the passing of the Parade at the 63rd/Halsted Shopping Center (circa 1974).

For the full-length story and photo essay, visit RAGEnglewood.org.

Every summer, just as the season comes to a close and children are returning to classrooms, residents align the streets of Halsted and Racine, anxiously awaiting the start of the Englewood Back-to-School Parade.

The festivities include performances by drum and bugle corps, dancers, tumblers, music, and colorful floats. The B2S Parade is a treasured tradition of the Englewood Back-to-School Parade. Despite donations and out-of-pocket contributions from the Committee's members, "That's how it's always been," says Mrs. Stephens, "people supported the Parade. They believed in it, so they donated, they contributed in some way." In its heyday, the Parade was considered the second largest African-American parade in Chicago, second to the Bud Billiken parade.

One of the most anticipated activities of the parade is the handing out of free school supplies: books, papers, crayons, backpacks, and sometimes, school uniforms.

"Our goal isn’t to make money or sell things. The purpose of the parade is to serve the community. It’s a day of caring and showing love," says Stephens.

The start of a new school year is exciting, it can also be chaotic if schedules are not set. In preparing for the school day, use the night before to get organized as possible: complete all homework in advance; make certain backpacks are filled with the necessary items and stored neatly; clothes and accessories should be prepared and ironed beforehand. Nothing throws your day off more than having to spend the morning looking for a matching sock!

The more organized the routine, the more peace in your mornings. Remember to set and follow the schedule. Get organized!

What’s next for Stagg Elementary?

Asiala Butler

In February 2012, the Chicago Board of Education approved all school actions proposed by Chicago Public Schools. Two of the schools in Englewood impacted by this decision were Guggenheim Elementary which will be closing in the fall and the second was Stagg elementary school located at 74th & Morgan. It was decided that Stagg will undergo the turnaround process and be managed by the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL).

The turnaround model is designed to transform the lowest performing CPS schools by completely overhauling them without moving students to other schools," District 299 Blog. Stagg is a unique case because it was one of the only schools in the Englewood neighborhood that housed a Montessori program. Because of this, many of Stagg’s parents organized to assure the program remained intact. Stagg parents articulated their demands to the Board and developed a strong bond through the process.

The Board initially stated that although the school would be managed by AUSL under the turnaround model, the Montessori program will continue as-is. Unfortunately, AUSL had other plans and decided later that funding was not available to sustain this unique learning experience for the students.

Students in this program will now have to enroll in the Montessori School of Englewood, set to open this fall. Another interesting fact about the turnaround model pertains to the staff and administration, whereas these individuals are laid off and asked to reapply for their positions.

The Power of Organization

Cherice Price

The way your day starts is generally how your day will flow. For some, being organized is easy. For others, however, it requires more deliberate and habitual actions.

An organized life is one created through structure and habit. As a single mother, I rarely have time to waste. This is especially true on school mornings when I’m trying to get myself and the kids out the door, to school and work on time.

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A PUBLICATION BY THE RESIDENT ASSOCIATION OF GREATER ENGLEWOOD
Parade Cancelled after 52 years

In the early 1960s, Englewood was a community divided by rival gangs, but that didn’t keep residents like Willie Pittman from seeing opportunity.

Mr. Pittman gathered gang youth and other neighborhood children and started a drum and bugle corps. They would practice after school, marching up and down the streets of Peoria and Morgan - hotspots for gang activity. To the community’s surprise, violence declined in the area; Pittman’s only requirement for being a part of the corps was ‘no fighting.’

“We always ended in Ogden Park,” recalls Stephens, “then Mr. Pittman would barbecue us some hotdogs, we’d drink kool-aid, and all our families would be there. It was like a family day picnic because by then we were all family.”

Thus, the Englewood Back-to-School Parade was born. In 1993, the Pittman family entrusted the Parade to Stephens, one of Mr. Pittman’s first pupils: “I was in the gangs, but I got out because of Mr. Pittman. I wanted to be in the corps so I had to quit fighting. I had to leave the gangs alone.”

That was then. Today, the Back-to-School Parade has an uncertain future. The Parade’s Committee announced in March that it came to the difficult decision of canceling the parade this year in hopes of getting back on track financially and resuming the parade in 2013.

Upon the announcement, Stephens and the Committee asked for more support and involvement from residents, youth, and community leaders. Donating schools supplies, volunteering, and even serving on the planning committee are just a few ways to help.

For more information and to learn how you can help support the parade, please call 866.845.1032.

Stagg Elementary positions. Regrettably, according to one of the staff members at AUSL, only eleven individuals reapplied and none of them were able to secure a position at the school.

Although Stagg was targeted for the turnaround strategy, many of these parents feel that the entire Chicago Public School system should also be overhauled. Parents do recognize that Stagg has been categorized as a low performing school like many of the schools in Englewood. But it is more than just test scores. At Stagg there was a culture that was rich in history, various learning experiences, and generational connections to the teachers.

It is refreshing to see that even with this decision, the momentum of the parents of Stagg is still steadfast, strong and should be viewed as a model for other parents in Englewood. If there was a lesson to be learned it is for parents to advocate for their children before actions like these are put on the table.

It is inevitable that CPS will continue to close and turnaround schools especially in Englewood, however, if more parents take an active role like the parents of Stagg, perhaps their voices will be heard and small victories will soon follow.

The Englewood Call commends the efforts of the Stagg parents and will continue to follow this story as well as other education related stories happening in the neighborhood….so stay tuned!