



PARKS AND RECREATION

PRESS RELEASE

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Cook School Historical Marker Dedication Ceremony Scheduled

ATHENS, TENNESSEE – August 25, 2021 – History comes to life as the new historical marker representing J. L. Cook School is scheduled to be unveiled on Thursday, September 2 at 5:30 p.m. at J.L. Cook Memorial Park, 414 Cook Drive, Athens, Tennessee. Handicap parking will be available in the main lot, with general parking in the adjacent overflow grass parking area.

The J.L. Cook Heritage Foundation, a group founded to preserve the history and heritage of the J.L. Cook School, has been working for years to install a tribute that tells the story of the African American school that once stood on the grounds of J.L. Cook Memorial Park. In the 1950's – 60's, Cook School, as it was known by many, had a reputation throughout the state and the south as being one of the premier black schools in the region. The school remained open through the desegregation movement in the 1960's and closed in 1966.

The 5-foot-tall by 9-foot-wide historical marker, that will be unveiled on September 2, features a news article by former principle and noted educator, Professor W.E. Nash and highlights images of the school, its students and epic events that took place at the school.

“We are excited to join together, and watch history come alive!” said Ann Boyd, a representative of the J.L. Cook Heritage Foundation.

The completion and installation of this project is a collaboration between Main Street Athens, Athens Area Council for the Arts, J.L. Cook Heritage Foundation, and the City of Athens Parks & Recreation Department. Funding for the design, production, and installation of the sign comes from the Tennessee Placemaking Partnership, a program created to foster projects that infuse arts and heritage into community planning. This program is a partnership between Lyndhurst Foundation, Southeast Tennessee Development District, Tennessee Arts Commission, and Thrive Regional Partnership.

This outdoor event is open to the public. More information about J.L. Cook Heritage Foundation is available on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ilcookschool>. Questions about the unveiling on Thursday, September 2 or J.L. Cook Memorial Park may be directed to City of Athens Parks & Recreation Department at 423-744- 2700 OPT 3.

The City of Athens is a full-service municipality nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains and has garnered a reputation as the “Friendly City.”