

National Parents Day Celebrated at the Washington Times in Washington, DC

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Washington, DC, United States -- The Arbor Ballroom at the Washington Times was filled with well-wishers and awardees from as far away as Hawaii and Arizona to celebrate National Parents Day, recognizing parents who go above and beyond expectations to care for the children of the nation.

A delicious dinner was served for all. Ahna Stewart, recent grad from Maryland, led the group in the National Anthem. She then sang "Amazing Grace" and "You Raised Me Up."

Led by MC Larry Moffitt, executive vice president of Washington Times Holdings, the evening began with an invocation offered by Dr. Luonne Rouse, national cochair of the American Clergy Leadership Conference; followed by welcoming remarks by Rev. Demian Dunkley, president of the Family Federation for a Heavenly USA, honoring all parents who are willing to give their lives for their children. Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, Jr., director of the US chapter of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), stated that good parents are co-creators with God: "You, husbands and wives, are the best example of God."



An overview of the creation of National Parents Day was given by Dr. Michael Jenkins, president of UPF-USA. He began with the historic speech by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, founder of the Universal Peace Federation, at the US Capitol on July 28, 1993. She was introduced by Sen. Orrin Hatch and Sen. Trent Lott, who proclaimed "True Parents Day," and urged his colleagues in the U.S. Senate and all citizens of our nation "to recognize and support True Parents Day and the restoration of God-centered families in our society."

A resolution establishing Parents' Day was enacted with bipartisan leadership and strong support in

Congress, notably by former Rep. Dan Burton (IN R), Rep. Floyd Flake (NY D) and former DC Delegate Walter Fauntroy. In 1994 President Bill Clinton, signed a bill establishing the fourth Sunday of July as Parents Day, a recurring and perennial day of commemoration. He said, "Parents play a crucial role in shaping our lives and the life of our nation...we owe our parents—whether biological or adoptive, stepparents or foster parents—a profound debt of gratitude for their sacrificial efforts, unconditional love and constant devotion."



President George W. Bush continued the White House support for this important day by saying, "Being a parent is the most important job in the world. As we hold a newborn in our arms or embrace an older adopted child, the promise we make in our hearts to love, protect and nurture our children stays with us and them forever. We are eternally linked to the children whom we are blessed to parent and to the generations before us who helped shape our lives."

Congratulatory remarks were offered by Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, chairman of the Family Federation for a Heavenly USA, who highlighted the spirit of Parents' Day as living for the sake of others. He continued by saying that God created men and women and blessed them with children, creating the family. "In each family there are four kinds of love: conjugal, parental, children's and siblings' love. Each is necessary as a foundation of the realization of the Kingdom of God," he concluded.

Hon. Todd Tiahrt (Member of Congress, 1995–2011) gave the father's point of view. He thanked the founder of this day, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, and talked of the birth of his first child, Jessica. He said that fathers need much patience. "In today's culture, dads just need to show up...so many never do. Dads need to live with their families and grow together with them," he said. "What shall we tell our boys?" He asked. "It is a DECISION to love and keep our families together, no matter what." We must create a God-centered safe place, making stronger families, he concluded.

A mother's point of view was given by Mrs. Aisha Kahn, member of the Democratic Party State Central Committee of Maryland and the owner of several day-care centers. She congratulated all the parents attending this event. She said, "Before you try to change something in a child, first look inside yourself and see if there is something you must change." She reflected that when she went to Korea and met Dr. Moon, she was so moved by her work to bring all people together beyond faith, race and nationality. She concluded by saying all children should thank their parents for all they do, as parents are the most precious gift of God to children.

Remarks were also offered by Hon. John Doolittle (Member of Congress, 1991–2009) and Mrs. Julie Doolittle. "Children are entitled to be raised by parents who are faithful to each other and to their family," Mrs. Doolittle said. Her husband echoed her comments and congratulated all the parents chosen this year.

Comments were offered by the Hon. Dan Burton (Member of Congress, 1983–2013) and his wife, Dr. Samia Burton, who is assistant clinical professor of medicine at George Washington University. He mentioned that his wife's 99-year-old father prays every day. He stated that no one is more dedicated to bring peace in the world than Dr. Moon.

Five supporting organizations contributed to the recommendation and selection of the Parents of the Year Awards commemorating National Parents Day. They included the Universal Peace Federation, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, the American Clergy Leadership Foundation, the Women's Federation for World Peace, and the Washington Times Foundation. There are four award categories: National Parents of the Year, Faith Community Parents of the Year, Parents of the Year for Outstanding Sacrifice, and Civic Leadership Parents of the Year.

The Parents of the Year 2019 announcement was made by Angelika Selle, president of the Women's Federation for World Peace and cochair of the National Selection Committee. She explained that the main criteria for choice was living for the sake of others. "This lifestyle goes beyond the family," she said. "Parental love is the only love that can fill the hearts of people who are longing, and who need to be healed."



2019 National Parents of the Year are Mr. Daniel and Mrs. Alisa Ellis. Married for 24 years, they have led their seven children by example. The Ellis family, living in Arizona, is heavily involved in volunteer efforts, including being founding members of "Gathering Families," an online community offering families a place to meet together to discuss ways of sustaining family as the pillar of society. All the Ellis children, including 9-year-old Caleb, have participated in service projects since childhood.

Faith Community Parents of the Year are Bishop Carleton Enoch and Dr. Barbara Rainey from Maryland. They are exemplary parents for three generations. They have four natural children, two adoptive children, 18 grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. Also honored were Mr. Rizwan Jaka, chairman of the ADAMS Center (All Dulles Area Muslim Society, VA) and Mrs. Priscilla Martinez (Jaka). They have six children and exemplify harmony and cooperation among the world's faiths. Involved in interfaith dialogue and bridge-building, they are leaders of 3,000 youth, including 400 Boy and Girl Scouts.

Parents of the Year for Outstanding Sacrifice are Elder Adrian and Mrs. Alice Barnes, with nine children. As elders at Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic in West Baltimore, they have taken care of the youths of the church and neighborhood. Also recognized were Dr. David and Diana Salik, originally from Pakistan. They fled their home country due to the severe persecution of Christians in Pakistan. They weathered the struggles of having a disabled child who needed 24-hour care and finally succumbed at age two. They established a flourishing business allowing them to send \$4,000 per month to Pakistan to help families pay for school tuition. When they lost their major client, they resorted to Uber driving and rebuilt their business, still sending \$200 a month to help Christian families in their homeland.

The final award of Civic Leadership Parents of the Year was given to three couples. Dr. Saleem and Dr. Ivy Hylton, parents of three and grandparents of five, have devoted their lives to interfaith work. They established Youth and Families in Crisis, providing training and professional development in restorative justice practices in schools, re-entry programs for youths coming out of jail, and strategies for lessening domestic violence. Also awarded were the Hon. Bob and Mrs. Utufa'asili (Utu) McDermott. He is serving his seventh term in the Hawaii State Legislature. They rescued five children from abusive and drug-abuse situations, creating a family of eight children. "Our children are all bi-racial, as are my wife and I, so they fit in." he said.

The third awardees were Gen. Tom and Mrs. Virginia Mullikin, of South Carolina. A powerful force for unity among the races in an area of historical difficulty, they mentor young boys and girls of diverse cultures and ethnicities to reach their highest levels of success. Through coaching they help gifted African American boys to go on to universities. A white couple, they were introduced by their dear friend, Hon. Terry Alexander, Member of the House of Representatives of South Carolina, who is African American.

A blessing toast for parents, marriage and families was led by Rev. Ernest and Keiko Patton of the Family Federation for a Heavenly USA. All sang Let There Be Peace on Earth followed by a moving closing prayer by Bishop Keith Allen, Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic in Baltimore, Maryland.