

Parents' Day Committees Honor Outstanding Parents Nationwide

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From L to R: Sammie Tollette, Sanford Tollette (son), Sanford Tollette. Mr. and Mrs. Tollette are the recipients of the 2011 Arkansas State Parents of the Year Award.

This Saturday, hundreds of people around the country will gather to celebrate couples who have exemplified extraordinary commitment in fulfilling their roles as parents on the 17th annual Parents' Day. Communities from every corner of the nation will be taking this opportunity to show their gratitude towards parents who go above-and-beyond the call of duty.

Parents' Day is a national holiday established with the goal of "recognizing, uplifting, and supporting the role of parents in the rearing of their children," according to the unanimous resolution passed by the House and Senate and signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1994. Although relatively new in our nation compared to the traditional Father's and Mother's Days, Parents' Day is growing quickly, evident by the numerous events being held in its honor.

Community members in Northern Las Vegas will be celebrating exemplary parents with a Parents' Day celebration and breakfast buffet at a local chapel, and a speech given by Mari Parlade, Judge Pro Tem of Family Courts. Judge Parlade welcomes this Parents' Day Celebration as an opportunity to stress the importance of family and hopes to bring the court system, churches, and the community together to address and solve issues within families.

Another event is taking place in the Rotunda of the State Capitol, in Little Rock, AR, where five remarkable couples will be honored. James Leon Holmes, a United States Federal Judge, will give the keynote address and Jerry Wilkins, mayor of Booneville, Dilbert Baker, the State Senator of Conway, AR, and the assistant to the Mayor of the City of Cabot are expected to attend and support the three couples they nominated to be honored. Around one hundred members of the community will also come to support these couples. In addition, there will be an award ceremony for a student essay contest on topics stressing the importance of families.



President Bill Clinton meets with Parent of the Year Honorees in 1995.

The Arkansas State Parents of the Year are Sanford and Sammie Tollette, Little Rock natives who have been married for 60 years. These parents are Ambassadors for Peace and have participated in the Holy Blessing given by Rev. and Mrs. Moon. Both have worked extensively for the benefit of their communities. Sammie was the first African-American President of the Classroom Teachers Association in Little Rock and still serves as a volunteer in a local library. Sanford, a World War II veteran, worked as a pastor and continues to volunteer as a drug and alcohol counselor at the Hoover United Methodist Church. Their sons, Sanford and Frederick, are also involved in the community, as the director of the Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp and the founder of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, respectively.

The Windermere Mansion in Seattle, WA, will be the site of the local Parents' Day event, in which twelve couples will be honored. About one hundred people are expected to attend the event and barbecue dinner at this magnificent mansion, which was built in 1907 by Rolland Denny, the youngest member of the first settlers in the Puget Sound. The mansion is the last standing home of any member of this settling party.

The 2009 winners of the Pennsylvania Parents of the Year Awards Gordon and Dawn Douglas of Glen Mills, PA, are coming back this year as the spokespersons for the event in Hershey, PA. Gordon is a professional comedian and often gets stories for his acts from real situations at home – a home of 19 children. The commitment of the Douglases to raising 14 foster children along with their 5 biological ones, won them the Award.

In Manassas, VA, a celebration will be held at a community library to honor Mr. Robert E. Griesemer, Jr. and Lynn M. Griesemer of Fairfax City as the Northern Virginia Parents of the Year. This couple is well-known in the home-schooling community for their dedication to raising their six children, whose ages range from 23 to 9 years of age. Robert, 52, is a software engineer for Northrup-Grumman who spends as much time as possible with his children, giving each child personal attention in the form of individual outings. Lynn, 48, has just “retired” from her sixteen years of homeschooling her children and authoring several books on homebirth, marriage, and public speaking. She continues in her passion as a marriage coach to this day. Robert and Lynn are devout Catholics and stress the importance of strong virtues to their children and all young people, hoping to raise the next generation to be stronger than the current one.



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Many more celebrations will be held around the country, including an event in Durham, North Carolina where more than sixty people will gather to honor their Parents of the Year as well as God, the parent of mankind, according to Sharon Pace, a Universal Peace Federation (UPF) representative in Durham. Festivities will include live music, an open mic, multicultural dance performances, games, and a barbecue dinner.

Although only a small city, Wheatland, CA has celebrated National Parents' Day for the past 5 years, honoring local individuals and couples who have demonstrated excellence in the parenting of children and in service to their community. This year, the Wheatland Parents' Day Committee will be honoring four model couples during the event. Two guest speakers, Yuba County Health Officer Dr. Joseph Cassady and Bill Jens of the Yuba-Sutter Healthy Marriage Coalition, will congratulate the parents. There will also be live musical entertainment and some refreshments.

Parents are vital in order to raise healthy children and this Parents' Day, citizens around the country will show their gratitude by honoring the ones who were always there for them.

To learn more about Parents' Day, visit: <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/parents-day> For the UPF Parents' Day Website, visit: <http://www.parentsday.com/>