

WFWP and UPF Parents of the Year Awards Banquet in Washington, DC

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Alisa and Dan Ellis (on the right) with former Congressman Doolittle and his wife

"What it's like to be a parent: It's one of the hardest things you'll ever do but in exchange it teaches you the meaning of unconditional love."
-- Nicholas Sparks

Being a parent is a lifetime commitment and a fulltime job, although it is not always recognized as such, making the celebration of National Parents' Day all the more significant. Since Congress unanimously passed "The Parents' Day Resolution" in 1994, Americans have recognized outstanding parents on the fourth Sunday of July each year. Parents' Day events are hosted on the local level throughout the nation, culminating in a Parents of the Year Banquet in Washington, D.C. sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation, a partner organization of WFWP.

Members of Congress and other dignitaries attend the annual award ceremony, which

honors parents that "exemplify parental love, service, and dedication to their family and to the broader family of their local community" (quoted from parentsday.com). Local Parents' Day selection committees in each state collect nominations and this year I had the pleasure of nominating one extraordinary couple, Alisa and Daniel Ellis.

I first met Alisa in October 2015, when I attended the ninth World Congress of Families as a representative of WFWP in Salt Lake City along with about 3,000 other people. One of the scheduled activities was attending a rehearsal of the world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir. While waiting with the crowd for a bus to go to the location, I happened to get into a conversation with three other women. One of them was Alisa Ellis, who took me under her wing, so to speak. She lived near Salt Lake City and was very familiar with the area, since she was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We all sat together for the beautiful choir music, then went for dinner at the hotel afterwards. I learned that she and her husband had seven children, and she had become active in public education issues in Utah.

We parted but kept in touch over the past four years via Facebook. In 2016, Alisa ran for and won a seat on the 15-member Utah State Board of Education.

At the beginning of this year (2019), while discussing possible speakers for the southwest launch of Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN) in Las Vegas, I thought of Alisa Ellis. Fortunately for WFWP, she was available to speak on June 22nd. She gave a presentation on the central importance of women and the family as the primary place where children are educated. As reported in a previous newsletter issue (see [report](#)), the GWPN was a great success and other WFWP members were able to meet Alisa and hear her inspiring message.

A couple of weeks later, when the call came to submit nominations on behalf of WFWP for National Parents of the Year, I felt that Alisa and her husband Dan would make excellent candidates and did not hesitate to submit an application for them.

Alisa and Dan are an inspiration to their many friends and family members because over the years they have exemplified a life of putting God first and serving others. Dan is a community leader for youth, and Alisa is an outspoken advocate for parents as the ultimate authority for children in public schools.



Alisa Ellis with Laura Hornbeck

Through conversations with Alisa, I was impressed to learn that all their children have done service projects, including the youngest son, who is nine years old, and their 12- and 14-year-old daughters. Their eldest uses her artistic skills to create inspirational art. Two sons have done overseas mission trips for their church.

One week after submitting the nomination, I received the exciting news that they were the winners of the award! They were able to shuffle their hectic schedules and carve out the time to travel to the DC area for the July 24th program and dinner at the Washington Times Arbor Room.

Several dignitaries spoke at the event, including the co-chairs of this year's national selection committee, former Indiana Congressman Dan Burton and WFWP USA President Angelika

Selle (read her speech [here](#)). Congressman Burton spoke about his own upbringing and wanted everyone to remember those children who have a difficult past: "If there is trouble at home between the father and mother, or if the father is not treating the mother or children right, it can create a great deal of pain and unhappiness. And that problem spills out into the community and it erupts in many of the problems we see today in violence and family breakdown. The Parents' Day effort seeks to strengthen and honor the role of good parents and families."

A total of eight couples were honored for parental leadership in various categories -- faith communities, outstanding personal sacrifice and civic leadership. Five of the couples were from the DC area and three, including the Ellises, were from other parts of the country. One couple, Representative Bob and Mrs. Utu McDermott, flew all the way from Hawaii, and another couple came from South Carolina. All of the honorees were distinguished by their dedication to service in the community, as well as teaching their own and others' children the value of hard work and sacrifice.

I was in the presence of greatness, and it gave me great hope for the future. Honoring exemplary parents each year through National Parents' Day is a much-needed acknowledgement of the most important people on earth: our parents.