



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Pam Scott
Spokane Regional Convention & Visitor Bureau
509.742.9373 direct / 509.993.9824 cell
pscott@VisitSpokane.com
www.VisitSpokane.com

Father's Day Turns 100 Years Old

(Spokane, WA, January 27, 2010) Father's Day will be 100 years old on June 20, 2010, and a Spokane, Washington, woman is credited with being the founder of the annual celebration. Sonora Smart Dodd, often referred to as the "Mother of Father's Day," was 16 years old when her mother died in 1898, leaving her father William Jackson Smart to raise Sonora and her five younger brothers on a remote farm in Eastern Washington.

In 1909 when Sonora heard a Mother's Day sermon at Central United Methodist Church in Spokane, she was inspired to propose that Father's receive equal recognition.

The following year with the assistance of Reverend Dr. Conrad Bluhm, her pastor at Old Centenary Presbyterian Church (now Knox Presbyterian Church), Sonora took the idea to the Spokane YMCA. The Spokane YMCA, along with the Ministerial Alliance, endorsed Dodd's idea and helped it spread by celebrating the first Father's Day in 1910. Sonora suggested her father's birthday, June 5th, be established as the day to honor all Father's. However, the pastors wanted more time to prepare, so June 19, 1910 was designated as the first Father's Day and sermons honoring Father's were presented throughout the city.

It was years, however, before Father's Day gained national prominence. In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge recognized Father's Day and urged the states to do likewise. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a proclamation calling for the third Sunday in June to be recognized as Father's Day and requested that flags to be flown that day on all government buildings. President Richard M. Nixon signed a proclamation in 1972, permanently observing Father's Day on the third Sunday in June.

Sonora's pivotal role in the creation of a national Father's Day celebration was recognized in 1943 at a luncheon in her honor in New York City at the Billion Dollar Bond Drive, at a celebration by the National Council for the Promotion of Father's Day at the 1940 New York World's Fair and at the 1974 World's Fair Expo in Spokane. A plaque dedicated in 1948 honoring Sonora Dodd's efforts rests on a granite boulder outside the Central Spokane YMCA commemorating the YMCA's role in the first celebration of Father's Day.

Today Father's Day is celebrated from Antigua to Zimbabwe in over 50 countries around the world. Commemorative activities in the Spokane region are currently being scheduled. Go to www.VisitSpokane.com for more information.

About the Spokane Regional CVB

The Spokane Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau generates economic growth for Spokane County by successfully marketing the Spokane Region as the destination for conventions and leisure travelers from around the world. The proof is in: Visitors to Spokane County spent an estimated \$832.5 million in 2008, providing jobs for nearly 10,110 residents and generating \$61.9 million in non-resident tax dollars collected in Spokane County.

SPOKANE. NEAR NATURE. NEAR PERFECT.

801 West Riverside, Suite 301, Spokane WA 99201
www.VisitSpokane.com | 509.742.9373