

THIS FATHER'S DAY, THINK YMCA...



When people think of Father's Day, images of a dad holding a child's hand or a family barbecue come to mind. The last thing on people's minds is the YMCA, but perhaps it should be considering the YMCA invented Father's Day.

In 1909, Sonora Louise Smart sat in a pulpit at her church in Spokane, Washington on Mother's Day and wondered why there wasn't a similar day celebrating fathers. Smart was the daughter of a Civil War veteran whose wife passed away, leaving him to raise Senora and her five siblings alone. Smart presented the idea of celebrating fathers on a specific day through special meals and small gifts to the Spokane YMCA and Spokane Ministerial Alliance, who embraced it. Smart initially wanted the day to be on her father's birthday on June 5, but ultimately it fell on the third Sunday in June as the organizers needed time to prepare sermons.

The nation's first Father's Day celebration took place on June 19, 1910 at the Spokane YMCA. As the idea of celebrating fathers gained traction, more individuals adopted the holiday. In 1972, President Richard Nixon officially signed Father's Day into law making it a national holiday.

Numerous studies have shown that children with involved fathers tend to do better in school and develop stronger social-emotional skills. According to a study from the University of Illinois, fathers who inquire about school and the day-to-day social activities of their child performed better academically than those without a father expressing that level of interest. Additionally, the Father Involvement Initiative reported that children with involved fathers tolerate stress more effectively and are better able to manage their emotions and impulses.

This Father's Day, give your dad a hug, and quietly thank Sonora Louise Smart and the YMCA for starting this wonderful holiday that celebrates everything dad. Happy Father's Day!