

The NYC DADS Holiday Party



“Santa!” says a little girl, about three-years-old, as she stares, bug-eyed, looking at the man in the red and white suit, sitting on a chair on the second floor of the Museum of the City of New York. She’s not my kid—my five-year-old, Natalie, has made a bee-line for the bracelet-making table, where she is attentively creating a pattern of silver saucers and red beads.

It’s the night of the NYC DADS Holiday Party, and dads and their kids and families are milling about, walking up or down a long spiraling, marble staircase that separates the face-painting and arts activities that have drawn some 300 people from all parts of the city. I wasn’t sure if I should take Natalie—when I brought her to the NYC DADS Halloween Party, she wanted to leave in less than five minutes. With kids, there’s always the unknown – you never know how your children are going to react in a given situation.

I start talking with Erik, a young father of two, who is playing with his 1-year-old Emma and 5-year-old Erik. Their family has come down from the Bronx. Erik has the same thing on his mind that’s on many of the dads’ minds here: presents. “They want a lot,” Erik says of his kids. Luckily, the younger one is still pretty young, so she’s happy with food. Lots of it, that is. Erik’s son, however, is hungry for video games, which he’ll get if he’s good. “That’s one of the things about believing in Santa Claus,” Erik says. “We tell him if he’s not good, then he won’t be getting what he wants.”

Natalie waves me over, and so I head to the arts & crafts table and see she’s done beading her bracelet. She wants me to tie the knot, so I pick it up, and the beads immediately slip off, crashing to the table. “Daddy!” Natalie says in utter disappointment. Crisis control: I make a game of it, and tell her to coach me with rapid fire instructions while I put each and every bead back on the string. She gives me orders: “Red bead! Long bead! Silver! Glass bead!” and we get it done in no time. Disaster averted.

We head downstairs where a four-piece band is rocking out with Latin-themed music, singing about rainbows while a guy in a Snow Man outfit dances with three toddlers. We sit with dozens of other families, munching on pretzels and drinking hot cocoa. There’s a warm vibe down here, with dads holding baby bottles and caring for their kids, while the lead singer of the band asks the children what their favorite colors

are. “Mine is blue,” one says. “Mine is green, because it isn’t blue,” says another, causing a ripple of laughter from the crowd.

Ramsey, a father from Queens, attends to his 2-year-old son, Ramsey IV, and his little cousin. The elder Ramsey isn’t stressing the presents, he says, because his kid is still young. Although it is true that when he mentions that he’s getting his son a Transformer, little Ramsey’s face lights up.

But there’s no time to talk—Natalie wants to move on and to make a Christmas card, so we head over to a room where kids are pasting Christmas tree, Santa and reindeer stickers on cards, while a line of people wait to get their pictures taken in a photo booth.

After Natalie’s card is finished, it’s past 7 and she’s looking pretty tired, so I decide it’s time to leave. As we are walking outside in the brisk cold on 5th Avenue, I ask her what her favorite thing was about the party. “All of it,” she says.