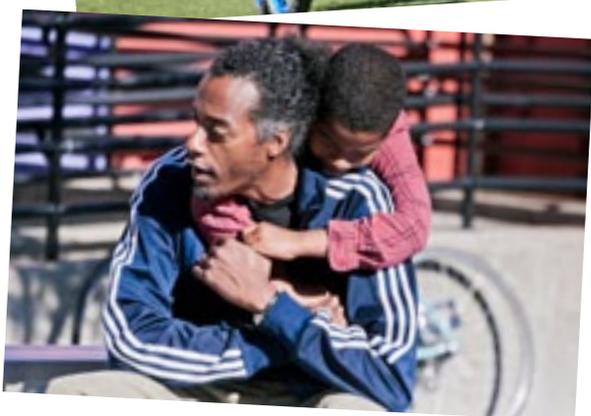


Dads and their kids join Chancellor Walcott, Family Engagement Director Jesse Mojica and NYC DADS for “Learn to Bike” day



There are moments in your child’s life that you just shouldn’t miss. Learning to ride a bike is one of them. It’s a huge step forward for a kid. And, hey, it can be a big leap for a dad as well. Plus, it’s a lot of fun.

Happily, there are a lot of New York City dads who recognize this, and so, on a recent beautiful Saturday morning, dozens of fathers and their kids joined NYC DADS, Bike New York, Education Chancellor Dennis Walcott, Jesse Mojica, Executive Director of their Family and Community Engagement Division along with HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and the City’s Fatherhood Coordinator Alan S. Farrell, for a “Learn to Bike” event.

Hosted at P.S./I.S. 180 in Harlem, the event was kicked off with some words from Chancellor Walcott, who is an avid bicyclist himself. “This is a pivotal moment in a child’s life, learning to ride a bike,” said Chancellor Walcott. “And to have their fathers, or the men who are important in their lives, there for it, it’s even more important.”

“As a father, I have learned to value these priceless moments with my sons” said Jesse Mojica, “A father’s consistent involvement can make all the difference in the growth and development of a child and I’m encouraged to be with the dads and father figures here today.”

Marc, a Harlem dad to two, grew up riding a bicycle, but his kids, 11-year-old Skye and 9-year-old Taj, hadn’t learned yet. “Living in the city, there are not a lot of opportunities,” Marc said. “And there isn’t much space for the bike at home.” So, Marc jumped at the chance, and his kids along with him; they fearlessly climbed on their peddle-less bikes and heeded the Bike New York teachers’ instructions.

Louis, dad of 10-year-old Louis Jr., didn’t have his own father around to teach him how to ride. “This is real nice,” he said, before chasing after his son who raced perilously around the track.

It was incredible to see so many children start the morning without peddles, unsure of even how to sit on the bike—or wear the helmet. But the kids kept at it, and the dads kept urging them on, chasing them down, and taking pictures on the run. And, yes, there were some bangs and bruises and tears, but, considering the number of rookies rolling around, those were far and few between. There were mostly smiles and determined faces.

“I remember when I got started on my banana bike,” said Geraldo, who lives down the street, and watched his two kids learn to ride. “We learned on our own. We didn’t have our dads around back then. And our moms were always working. Now, look, there’s a new movement of dads.”

Indeed, the dads stepped up this morning, and so did their kids. “This is great,” said Chancellor Walcott, who added that he’s impressed at how the Mayor’s Fatherhood Initiative, spearheaded by Alan Farrell, is providing a diverse number of ways for dads to positively engage with their children. “Learning to ride a bike with their fathers is a memory that these young boys and girls will never forget,” Farrell said. “Our hope is that today’s event sent a clear message from our Mayor and City that dads are critical in the strengthening of our families and communities.”