

10 Ways to be a Great Dad Spotlight



Michael Mitchell is the dad to a 10-year-old girl and a 6-year-old boy, but he is a father figure to many more, as a teacher at August Martin High School in Queens. Mitchell knows the ground on which he walks: he grew up in Queens, he attended August Martin as a student, and he went to Queens College. Mitchell, who has been married for 14 years, had the slogan “Talk it Out,” on his photo ad, because “I want my daughter to be able to tell me whatever is on her mind,” he says.

How have people responded to your being an NYC DAD?

A lot of people talk with me about it. They appreciate it.

What have been some of your fathering highs since that photo of you was taken?



Doing homework and going to PTA meetings. I love it. It’s in my nature to help kids. And both my kids made the honor roll. My son was named the student of the month. We recently went to Playland in Rye. Wow, we had a great time.

Have there been lows?

We’ve had challenges. My mother had heart surgery and she had to come in to live with us. The space was limited, but she needed the care. It was almost like having another child. I was spreading myself thin. Now, my mother is back in her apartment.

How did your students respond to your being a part of NYC DADS?

They loved it. They went online to check it out. They feel like my children. A lot of them were raised in single parent homes. And some of them have told me, “You’re like a father to me.” And that keeps me teaching.

What’s the school environment like these days?

I think that things are getting better. But parents or guardians have to be more involved. Mentors have to be assigned to the students throughout the high schools. Unfortunately, a lot of parents don’t have time for their children. But if it’s not in their heart to do it, then they are not going to do it. You can’t convince someone.



How has daddyhood been going?

I love being with my kids. It doesn’t seem like work. But for some parents, it is work. And that’s terrible. Something happened between the 70s and now. It makes me want to better myself. I just can’t stop. I want to give the kids more. I want them to be able to go to the college of their choice. Just to be able to get there, that’s my goal.