

The 2012 NYC DADS Matter Awards BBQ



Father's Day happens but once per year, but at Gracie Mansion, dads got a bonus day—the Thursday before Father's Day—to celebrate fatherhood at the NYC DADS Matter Awards barbecue. Dads from across the city, representatives from the Mayor's Fatherhood Initiative agencies, Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, Fatherhood Coordinator Alan S. Farrell and New York Ranger sensation Henrik Lundqvist were all on hand to pay tribute to responsible parenting, and, in particular, the ten dads who received the award this year.

"It's great to be honored for something that I normally do," said Christopher Astacio, one of the honorees. Farrell spoke to the gathering about the challenges that many fathers have to overcome, and Astacio is certainly one of them. A cancer survivor, Astacio has also had to deal with the difficult news that his 2-year-old daughter, Cristina, has been diagnosed with autism.

"It was surreal when it was happening," said the 33-year-old father, who also has a nine-year-old son. I was thinking, 'that's not going to happen to my daughter.'"

But Astacio is a fighter—he didn't flee. He knows that Cristina's "world is different than ours," he said. "We are going to have to go into her world."

And when Lundqvist—who will be a first-time father in little more than a month ("I'm not going to lie," he said. "I'm nervous.")—spoke of how much he appreciated how his own father would support him after a tough hockey loss, he could find no better example than with Astacio's father, who was on hand to support his son. "I am so proud of him," the senior Astacio said.

As the lemonade and ice tea flowed, and hamburgers and salads gobbled up, the depth of commitment necessary to be a good dad was palpable in the crowd. So was the pure fun of being a pop. "I told Lundqvist if he needs help, he can call me," said honoree Eric Green, who has raised seven children, mostly on his own. He spoke with a glint in his eye and a knowing laugh; being a dad is tough, and sometimes you need all the help you can get. But it's well worth it.

"It's good to see so many dads here and dad being dads, not just donors," noted Omar Lopez, a father whose three kids range from eleven-years-old to 14-months-old. Lopez, who lives in upper Manhattan, is hoping for a weekend road trip for Father's Day. "And just to take it easy," he said. "But with three kids, it's not that easy."

That's a feeling that most dads can relate to. Mike Bobbitt, the Fatherhood Initiative Director for the Department of Youth and Community Development, was himself "hoping for relative quiet," on Father's Day, when he plans to go to a park with his daughter. "My daughter wanted to go to a park," he said with a smile. "But at least I get to choose the park."

Sitting at a bench with a burger in his hand, Carl Mosley has experience sharing in the camaraderie of fatherhood. Mosley, who has four children, finds himself often giving advice to men about the benefits of being a dad. "They give you direction and they keep you on track," Mosely said. "And it's good to feel needed."

Mosely, who lives in Upper Manhattan and has a security job, often takes his children to Parks and Recreation outings, like kayaking on the Hudson. As he spoke to NYC DADS, Mosely's 3-year-old daughter took bites of his burger, even though she was holding her own.

"See, you get a lot of laughs out of them too," said Mosley, who has to work on Father's Day. "This is my Father's Day now," he said, looking down at his baby girl.

To see photos from the party, visit our Flickr page:

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