

The 2011 NYC DADS Matter Awards



On Thursday, June 16th, Mayor Bloomberg invited city dads and their families to Gracie Mansion in honor of Father's Day, and to celebrate the first ever NYC DADS Matter Awards. The evening barbeque was a celebration of ten special dads who were nominated by friends, City agencies, family members and leaders from their communities, as men who've overcome great obstacles to be consistently involved in the lives of their children. But it was really an event to honor all dads throughout the City who make a daily difference in the lives of their children.

When the families arrived, they were treated to lemonade, hot dogs, burgers and other tasty treats. It was a time to kick back, as the kids were entertained by balloon animals and face painting clowns. There was also plenty of anticipation in the air for a special guest: Knicks star Carmello Anthony.

Mayor Bloomberg kicked off the ceremony by joking that he and Anthony had exchanged Father's Day gifts: Anthony would deliver an 82 and 0 record for the Knicks next year, and the mayor promised he'd give the team a parade in return. But Anthony is more than just a star athlete; his foundation serves fathers, plus he's a dad himself. "Being an NBA player is tough," Anthony said. "But nothing is more challenging and rewarding than being a dad."

The occasion marked one year since the launch of NYC Dads- The Mayor's Fatherhood Initiative, and Fatherhood Services Coordinator Alan S. Farrell recounted just a few recent achievements, including the Housing Authority's opening of community centers to provide fatherhood workshops, as well as the Department of Corrections' Daddy and Me reading program that helps incarcerated fathers connect with their children.

The goal of the Fatherhood Initiative is to make the city more father-friendly, so that dads have increasing access to the resources that help them to be there for their children. Of course, it's up to the

men themselves to want to be there, and there was no difficulty in finding such dads in the crowd. Take Darrell Williams, a Yankee-cap clad father of four from the Bronx. Although he acknowledged that the hardest part of being a dad is taking care of the babies—“being there, 24-7, and then having to go to work,” as he put it—he said he relished his role. For Williams, the best thing about being a dad is “the responsibility,” he said. “To be responsible for someone is what makes me happy.”

A few feet from Williams was Jose Munoz, also hailing from the Bronx, who brought his youngest daughter, Samantha, to the event. “I wouldn’t miss this for the world,” says Munoz, who added that he loves “spending time with my little ones.” Upon hearing her father, Samantha’s face lit up with a smile that matched his own.

The NYC DADS Matter Awards is just one way to champion the fact that dads matter and to send a message that says that The Mayor and the City continue to believe that fathers want to be involved in the lives of their children.