



The weatherman warned of rain and the crowd huddled under the tent at Gracie Mansion as dark clouds threatened at the third annual NYC DADS Matter Awards. But the showers did not come. Instead, Mayor Bloomberg, fathers from across the city, and commissioners such as HRA's Robert Doar, DYCD's Jeanne Mullgrav, and NYPD's Ray Kelly, celebrated Father's Day with good food and encouraging words. Fatherhood Services Coordinator, Alan Farrell said it best; "There are no rain delay days for fathers."

This year's NYC DADS Matter Awards was particularly poignant, as the ten fathers being honored were an awe-inspiring group. There was Miguel Rodriguez, who has persevered after the death of his wife, to raise their three children in Queens. And Michael Whigham, who grew up in foster care, and is now a single father of two children. Michael is employed and in the process of getting his GED. Fred Surrey has two kids, both of whom suffer from a serious debilitating illness. Stephen Aponte is a single Bronx dad who has adopted five sons, and has one adult, biological son. And then there was Ernie Simpson, who has raised his son, Kadeem, who is autistic, as well as created a community fathers' group for dads with kids who have special needs.

Mayor Bloomberg told of one of his most cherished memories, when his family would wait for his father to come home, so that they could talk about their day at the dinner table. He also spoke movingly of the void left by the absence of his mother who passed away two years ago. The mayor's father died when he was much younger, so he felt his mother's absence more acutely, and he connected that to the hurt felt by many young men in the city. "The most important job is to be a good parent," he said.

William Osorio, a 26-year-old honoree who served honorably in the Marines, couldn't agree more; "It's great to be acknowledged," he said. But I have to tell you, being a father is enough of a reward."

As many smiling faces could be found on fathers' faces that night, what mattered more were the beaming faces of the children in attendance. Bronx dad Patrick knows all too well that Father's Day is really not for the dads—it's about the ones who made us into fathers. Patrick joked with his 11-year-old daughter, Lia, as she tried on a hat made of balloons. The feeling between them was relaxed, fun, loving. You could tell how close they were. "Hey, it's great to have a day when we can show more appreciation for our kids," Patrick said, with a knowing smile.