

“THE THREAD THAT MAKES US STRONGER”: DYCD CELEBRATES COMMUNITY MOMS, DADS, AND CAREGIVERS AT GRACIE MANSION

WABC-TV Eyewitness News anchor Shirleen Allicot among hundreds on hand to honor New Yorkers who encourage, teach, and inspire

NEW YORK – The NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) today hosted the inaugural Community Moms and Dads event, *The Thread that Makes Us Stronger*, celebrating parents as well as caregivers who provide inspiration and support to families and communities. Whether volunteers, mentors, teachers, community leaders, healthcare staff, essential workers, caregivers, aunts, uncles, sisters, or brothers, the 27 honorees dedicate their time and energy to the physical, social, and emotional well-being of New York City.

“The old saying remains true—it takes a village to raise a child,” said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives Ana Almanzar**. “In New York City, however, our children need a city, made up of educators, caregivers, parents, volunteers, and more, to reach their full potential. *The Thread that Makes Us Stronger* celebrates the collective effort everyday New Yorkers take to make sure our children’s future continues to shine bright. I applaud the Department of Youth and Community Development for bringing everyone together to celebrate the people who give back to our city every single day.”

“As a husband, a father of two amazing young adults, Maya and Tyler, and the proud son of a dad who served our nation and a mom who was a nurse working hard to raise seven children, I appreciate all of the many hats our honorees wear in guiding the next generation of New Yorkers,” said **DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard**. “I join Mayor Adams, Deputy Mayor Almanzar, and all our event partners and guests in congratulating the 2023 Community Moms and Dads for having such a profound impact on their families, communities, and New York City.”

“Transformative programs like DYCD’s fatherhood and motherhood initiatives play a critical role in strengthening and supporting New York City families,” said **Mayor’s Office of Equity Commissioner Sideya Sherman**. “I am thrilled to commend the dedication of community caregivers and leaders such as the Commission on Gender Equity’s Jacqueline Ebanks, among the many others who work tirelessly to make a lasting impact for children and families in our city.”

“Being a parent is unforgiven and beautiful, it’s exhausting and invigorating. The journey does not come with a manual, but the end goal is the same, we want our children to be happy and healthy,” said **NYC Young Men’s Initiative, Deputy Executive Director Nathifa Forde**. “The NYC Young Men’s Initiative is a proud and long-term supporter of building strong and recognizing active fathers in communities. We are especially excited to celebrate the moms, dads, and caregivers being honored for their notable impact and contribution to their communities. We build and sustain communities as a collective because the presence and voices of moms, dads, grandparents, aunts, and uncles help to create thriving communities.”

The Community Moms and Dads Ambassador Award was presented to Jacqueline Ebanks, the executive director of the New York City Commission on Gender Equity, for her continued support of DYCD's fatherhood and motherhood initiatives.

"Parenting and caregiving are essential aspects of life that provide families and individuals with the physical, social, and emotional support to live healthy and better lives," said **Executive Director Jacqueline M. Ebanks, Commission on Gender Equity**. "DYCD's fatherhood and motherhood initiatives have uplifted many families and stabilized communities across the city, and I applaud moms, dads, and all caregivers for their sacrifice, love, and dedication toward the well-being of others."

The gala was emceed by WABC-TV Eyewitness news anchor Shirleen Allicot, who introduced each of the honorees and shared her personal insights as a working mother of three children.

"The men and women being honored here today are true heroes," said **Shirleen Allicot**. "It is a tremendous honor for me and our whole ABC7 family be able to lift up and amplify the hard and incredibly important work that they do every day to make our community stronger."

Also presented were greetings from physician, author, and television host Dr. Ian Smith, and Christiane Pendarvis, former Co-president and Chief Merchandising and Design Officer for Rihanna's apparel line, Savage x Fenty.

"I know parenting is not easy. People call it the most important job. I don't call it a job—I call being a parent a passion," said **Dr. Ian Smith**. "There are challenges for sure. As the father of two sons who are in their teens, it is not always easy. But I try to live by the edict and motto that a little bit of a challenge can bring a whole lot of progress. And so, I work every day to become a better dad. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this celebration of parenthood and community leadership."

"As I look back on important community moms and dad in my own life, there are two pieces of advice that really come to me about the importance of those people and communities," said **Christiane Pendarvis**. "First, really be true and honest and authentic with yourself in what you what believe and stand for. Secondly, know that you can have a greater impact than your wildest dreams and what you could ever imagine. To all the honorees: continue to do the important work you are doing within your communities—and take a moment to enjoy your flowers and the recognition."

DYCD's Community Moms and Dads event was created to spotlight New Yorkers who are making a significant contribution through community involvement, volunteerism, leadership, and personal accomplishments.

Nominations were submitted by DYCD-funded programs and New Yorkers at large. Final honorees were selected based on actions that have had a lasting or meaningful impact on their community; their passion, leadership, and striving for excellence and advancement; and the extent to which their service might be considered "above and beyond."

The 2023 Community Moms and Dads honorees:

Bronx

Priscilla Alexander
Elit Calderon
Michael Hendricks, Sr
Jean Hill
Esmeralda Martes

Brooklyn

Shamina Bermudez
Cindy Francis
Michelle Gibbs
Rhonda Joseph
Wayne King
Anali Okoloji
Toni Williams
Sheldon Williams

Manhattan

Tanya Castro-Negron
Pharein Griffith
Jared Hetzel
Khadijah Jones
Mari Moss

Queens

Allenasia Adams
Pamela Anderson
Claudia Coger
Paul Mai
Jong Sook Won

Staten Island

Alycia Campbell
Tausif Latif
Linda Walters-Newton
Rashida Reid

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