

## Yankees' Sabathia in New York state of mind

By DAN TOMASINO

CC Sabathia signed with the Yankees before the 2009 season amid much speculation he was unsure he would enjoy life in New York.

Two-and-a-half years later, not only has the pitcher excelled on the field, he has totally embraced the New York experience off it, from attending NBA games to hosting fundraising events for local charities, such as last night's reception to benefit the JCC Therapeutic Nursery.

"It's been way better than I expected being part of this community," Sabathia said after posing for pictures with teammates. "Coming here, I moved my whole family here, planned on being part of the community, and it's been better than expected. Everybody welcomed us with open arms. We have a lot of friends in the community with kids and stuff, so it's been a great experience. I wouldn't change anything."

Sabathia has an opt-out clause in his contract when this season ends, but for those trying to read the tea leaves, it seems he and his family are content here and are likely to stay for the long haul.

Sabathia, his wife, Amber, and their friend Kelly Spitzley hosted last night's reception, called Pitch In For Kids, at The Stone Mansion in Alpine, N.J., just eight miles from the George Washington Bridge. Amber said she hoped to raise \$500,000 for the JCC Therapeutic Nursery, a program for bright children who face developmental challenges, including autism spectrum disorders.

The reason for their commitment to the JCC is one of many reasons to believe Sabathia will remain a Yankee beyond this season.

The Sabathias' daughter, Jaden, was diagnosed with expressive/receptive language delay and spent a year in the JCC program. The program worked wonders, and she is ready to join a mainstream school in the fall for first grade.

"She changed so much that year she went to the JCC," Sabathia said. "It really changed our lives, her life, and really set her on the right track to have a successful life."

Asked what life would have been like for Jaden without the JCC, Sabathia said, "It would have been so tough. I really can't describe what it would be like."

If you feel the same away about the Yankees without Sabathia, rest easy. The Sabathias are officially New Yorkers.