

## Far Rockaway Final Project

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This past November, I went on a service trip to Far Rockaway in order to learn about victims of Hurricane Sandy and see what ways I could help. Not only did I receive different perspectives of the hurricane from many different people but I bonded with all of my peers. I enjoyed every minute I was there. This was my second service trip ever and both were focused on hurricane victims. After seeing the effect that Hurricane Katrina had on New Orleans and Biloxi, it was nice to get a different perspective with a more local event.

In just the short period of time we spent in Brooklyn, we were able to improve the lives of tons of people. First, we helped to recover three homes with Friends of Far Rockaway, an organization that helps to rebuild homes that were destroyed in the hurricane. We also visited a food pantry where we learned about the personal experience of one worker there and saw what part they played in helping to rebuild. Every person that came on this trip put so much hard work and dedication into what they were doing.

The most interesting place we visited for me was the West End Temple. Personally, my synagogue plays a huge role in my life. I go there very frequently for services and other events. I felt sympathy for those could not pray when hope was one of the only ways to survive. I know that if I was involved in a disaster as horrible as this, praying would help me get through the hardships. It felt really good to know that the supplies and money we donated would be going somewhere that connected to me.

Most importantly, the stories I heard on the trip made me step into the shoes of other people and realize how lucky I was. I heard the story of one woman, who had lived in

her house all her life only to have her basement destroyed during the storm. She had some serious problems with her insurance, therefore making it harder to get help in her house. Although she went through an extremely difficult time, she was so grateful to see so many different teenagers working to help fix her basement. Each story I heard left a greater impact on me. Not only did we see how certain organizations helped the people of the community, but also we saw how the community worked together to help each other. Again, I truly learned how lucky I was to have everything I do have.

Overall, this trip was an amazing experience for me. I really enjoyed hearing the different perspectives of victims of the hurricane as well as helping to repair their homes. I had an incredible weekend and hope to go on more service trips just like it soon!