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Usually when I get an email for a community service opportunity I will take a quick look and that would be it. When I saw this J-Teen opportunity it was different. Hurricane Sandy happened on my birthday a couple years back. I remember when my Dad told me to look at the news and I saw on the t.v. a house floating in water. It's crazy because in Rockland we just didn't have power for a week but in other places in New York homes were demolished. Not knowing communities were still struggling I really wanted to do what I could to help.

Ben Walker called me on the phone and basically said that this J-Teen opportunity will be a great way to help out places that are still struggling from Sandy and a way for Ben, Rafi Lieberman, and I to hang out of school after we do the work. Ben went last year and told me that there was a shul that wasn't in great condition that I actually got to see. At first I really didn't know what to expect. Once we started working I couldn't believe that people still needed help for their places that were destroyed.

My group and I worked at this lady's basement. Before Sandy it was a salon but she now wants it to be a space where her children could hang out. When my group and I walked into the basement it was heart breaking because this was someone's business but now it was a white big room with sanding marks. While I was sanding and molding I really wanted to give up because dust was getting into my mouth and eyes. But I knew in the long run it would be helping out people that deserve a second chance.

A couple of takeaways were that helping people with no expectation in return feels so good. The gift of giving is a great thing to do but also a mature thing to do. Some people expect something in return but I personally knew their smiles on the people's faces are worth it to me. Working with my friends Ben and Rafi was also a new experience for me. Usually in class my peers and I will work together to get an assignment right, but this was much different. There was no right and wrong. We had a responsibility to help out people that were in need without questioning.

Overall this trip was great. Instead of doing homework on a day where I didn't have school I put my daily routine on a hold to help people. I expected to help but I took away so much more. When you want to give up you fight through whatever you're doing. If you're not trying you're not fighting. Once you realize that, you will achieve things you didn't know you were capable of only if you put action to it. Lastly, spreading the word about things is very important. If Ben didn't tell me about this community opportunity then I wouldn't of known anything about it. The most important part is now spreading the word after this trip. At my Friday night dinner I told my Mom and sisters all about the trip and they were very surprised that people we're still struggling after Sandy. Hopefully people will get back on their feet as fast as possible.