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My Experience with J-Teen

In mid-November, I attended the far rockaway Sandy Relief trip. Before going into the trip, I expected to leave with an experience, but the impact the trip had on me was much greater. As soon as I walked off the bus, and witnessed external damages on the houses of the Rockaways, I felt a connection. It wasn't just that they needed help but that many of these houses already have done so many repairs, but there was still so much to do. Also, it was not only the houses that were damaged, it was a person, a family, and an entire community. One huge storm destroyed such innocent people.

Seeing the damage from afar was one thing, but actually stepping into the basement and houses of these people was completely mind blowing. The work we did on one house was painting the walls and sanding the ceiling. These were steps before actually priming the walls and ceiling. A year after, the place was still a mess. As a visitor to the Rockaways and a volunteer it was extremely hard to think about and to look at. It wasn't just the damage that was done but the lives that were put to a halt because of such a horrendous event.

Another thing that I encountered when I volunteered in the Far Rockaways that it wasn't only the physical buildings of the houses that were ruined but it was also the emotions of the people. They were just living their lives, dealing with daily ups and downs and suddenly they had to stop everything to figure out where they will sleep or how they will get clothing. When you have to stop going to work to

repair your house or to deal with insurance companies or things like those it is extremely difficult from what I have gathered. Families were completely torn by such a painful occurrence.

The house that I worked in, the family had lost everything that belonged to the woman's husband who had passed away just months before. It was tragic to hear the stories of these people but also made me grateful for everything I have in life and made me want to help them as much as I could. Whenever I complain or get upset because I don't have the newest trend of clothing or technology, I just remind myself of the things that people lost in the storm. I remind myself that people lost family members, family heirlooms, objects that remind them of special times, and so much more. This trip touched me in such an incredible way. I was taught to be grateful and when a tragic event happens, people really know how to help and how to come together as a community to support each other.