

Friends of Rockaway's Service Trip

The J-Teen service trip was a great way to connect with those who were significantly affected by super-storm Sandy. I had never heard first hand stories from people who had lived in places which were devastated by Sandy, and that made the trip even more meaningful than I thought it would be. To then visit those places which were once nice neighborhoods that became destroyed remains was very impactful. It made me feel even more motivated to do the best I can to help rebuild these families' homes. Many of us hear about the tragedies that occurred during the storm and the damage that was done, but very few people get the opportunity to see the effects of the storm and to help out during the reconstruction. After three full years families have continued to live without lighting, running water, heat, and many other things that are essential to our lives today. I feel that it is my job to make the difference and help them get back to their old way of living.

When we arrived for dinner at a local Rockaway synagogue, we heard many depressing stories from kids our age and younger about their experiences during the storm. Then, during the meal, we ate with volunteers from Friends of Rockaway whom have been volunteering to help restore all of the houses on the Rockaway's that were damaged. It was a very nice meal and we were able to meet some of the people that we would work with the following day. The next morning we all met together and were given house assignments, and were sent to our selected houses to start building. One of the Friends of Rockaway volunteers who I had met at dinner the previous day gave me rather simple instruction about what to do: sanding, mudding and painting. We all grabbed our tools and got to work! I climbed up a ladder and began to sand the ceiling until it was smooth. After, I began to mud the walls that needed maintenance. Finally, I began to paint; my favorite part. While using the technique I was taught by one of the volunteers, I started painting the wall top to bottom, and by almost an hour, I was finished. I took a step back and stared at the wall with satisfaction that I had just gotten a family one step closer to moving back into their house. It made me feel really good, and I was glad I went on this service trip. I recommend it to all because it was a very fun way to express our sympathy for the families affected by the storm.