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My J-teen Experience: Far Rockaway

My J-teen experience is always the culmination of my long-weekends because of the multifaceted purposes it serves to me. While last year on Martin Luther King Day weekend I was able to participate in the Sandy relief efforts, this year was especially meaningful because I was returning to a similar neighborhood in need. J-teen is the perfect community service experience for a teenager because of the friendships that are made on it as well as the altruism that is involved in every trip.

This most important aspect in a J-teen trip is to help those who are in need. My favorite part of the trip this year was that I was assigned to a house to help refurbish the basement. Contrary to last year when I was a member of the demolition team, this year I was refurbishing. I worked all weekend on ensuring that the lady living in this house would be able to use her basement after I left.

However, a J-teen trip is not complete without mentioning the perennial friendships and relationships that are experienced when doing this community service work. I got to know countless members of the trip on a personal level from my area who I would not have had the opportunity to interact with had I not come on this trip. More importantly though, I developed a relationship with the lady of the house I was working at. She told me her story of how her house was ruined by Sandy weeks after the death of her husband. The trauma she must have been going through must have been unbearable, which further motivated me to help rebuild her basement. It all started with me coming upstairs to ask for the bathroom, but quickly turned into a serious conversation and a fun time playing with her two dogs.

I will never forget the pain she must have been going through because it is a constant reminder of how lucky I am to have all of the necessities and relationships that I have.

Without J-teen I would not have had the opportunity to have a hands-on experience of what it means to be a community. A community is a group of people who care about each other. It does not matter what their race, religion, or location is on a J-teen trip because we are always willing to help.