

TRANSFORMING LIVES,

SUMMER BY SUMMER



For thousands of children from low-income communities in New York City, summer isn't just a season — it's a whole other world. That summer world is filled with bike riding, swimming, barbeques, new friends, catching fireflies in the twilight, and endless stretches of grass that are perfect for running and doing cartwheels. For 140 years, The Fresh Air Fund has been transporting children to that summer world, and in the process, empowering them to create new worlds of their own.

the *Fresh Air* fund
serving children since 1877



TOP: 13-year-old Korin, of Queens, visited the Drouins in Maine for the first time last summer and is looking forward to returning to Winthrop, Me., for another week of Fresh Air fun. *Photo: Bethany Drouin*

CENTER: Diane and Michael Ringler's family, of Loretto, Pa., has been hosting Melissa, 13, of Brooklyn, since 2009. Said Diane, "Melissa's arrival is the highlight of the summer for our family." *Photo: Diane Ringler*

ABOVE: Host siblings Madison and Sophie and their Fresh Air visitor Aisha stop during a nature walk to survey the different leaves on the ground. *Photo: Beth Fox*

LEFT: Fresh Air campers take a break from their swim lessons to pose for a picture. *Photo: Joan Barker*



A group of campers were scientists for the afternoon during their earth science lesson at Camp ABC. Photo: Joan Barker

BRINGING "S.T.E.A.M." INTO SUMMER

COME SUMMERTIME, SCHOOL IS OUT. BUT THE FRESH AIR FUND HAS FOUND INNOVATIVE METHODS OF INCORPORATING WHAT EDUCATORS CALL S.T.E.A.M. — SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS AND MATHEMATICS — INTO BOTH ITS SUMMER AND YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS IN WAYS THAT CHILDREN FIND BOTH INTERESTING AND INSPIRING. THE RESULT: CHILDREN RETURN TO SCHOOL, AND TO LIFE, WITH MORE KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND EXCITEMENT FOR THE FUTURE.

A FRESH APPROACH TO GERMS

Dressed in crisp white lab coats, six of The Fresh Air Fund's Career Awareness Program students sat riveted as microbiologist Patti Ryan explained the characteristics of bacteria and fungi, pointing out examples in her lab. The teens were not the least bit grossed out — on the contrary, her descriptions triggered an endless stream of questions: What's the place in the body where most bacteria and viruses enter? (The eyes.) Should you take your shoes off when you enter your house? (Yes. The bacteria and fungi on the bottom of your shoes — which includes those from bird and animal droppings — are plentiful and disgusting.) Is hand sanitizer better than hand washing? (No. Washing your hands vigorously with warm water is often sufficient; excessive hand sanitizer use can actually create cracks in the skin that allows in more bacteria.) Why isn't there a cure for H.I.V.? (It's an extremely complicated virus.) And on and on, until Ryan, a research associate at the Rockefeller University Lab of Bacterial Pathogenesis and Immunology and her research assistant, Atila Lima, coaxed the children onto the actual hands-on portion of the job shadowing.

This proved even more compelling. Ryan distributed masses of polyester swabs and directed the students to swab everything that might host bacteria; the children zealously swabbed their phones, watches, rings, eye glasses, door handles, toilet seat, computer keyboard, each other's mouths. Then Ryan put their cultures on agar in petri dishes, and incubated them to determine the microbial contamination or colonization of each; the results would not be available for 24 hours. She did show them an agar culture plate filled with colonies of bacteria and fungi — white splotches and worm-like lines — taken from the bottom of her own daughter's shoe. The teenagers recoiled in horror. "That is the most nauseating thing I've ever seen," said Elias, 14, who immediately tried to clean the bottom of his own shoes with hand sanitizer.

The goal of the exercise, Ryan explained, was to teach children about the many organisms that surround us. "Most bacteria we encounter every day

are harmless under normal circumstances," she said. "But I did want them to see how contaminated everything is. Maybe they'll wash their hands more often."

Ryan, who earned her Ph.D. in microbiology and molecular genetics from Rutgers University, grew up hosting Fresh Air Fund children at her home on the Jersey Shore through The Fresh Air Fund's Friendly Towns Program. She was thrilled to continue her involvement by teaching Fund children about microbiology and its many possible career paths. Indeed, the children were quite surprised at the variety of fields that demand her skillset — from fragrance companies to the food and beverage industry, including cheese making and beer brewing.

"I had no idea scientists could do such interesting jobs," said Riya, 14. "The lab was really cool," added Emily, 13. "It was amazing to meet someone who has a career that I would like to do in the future." Perhaps 14-year-old Shamar spoke for the group, commenting, "I liked to find out all about infections and bacteria. But I don't want to be covered in it. The first thing I'm doing when I get home is wash my hands and sterilize my cell phone."

NATURE: LIVE

Katie Whittaker has spent three summers teaching earth science at Camp ABC, and she never tires of watching cool city girls transform into outdoorsy environmentalists. "Many come to class rolling their eyes, complaining that they don't want to learn science," said Whittaker, a high school teacher with degrees in meteorology and earth science. "Some are really squeamish, and don't want to get near anything alive or slimy."

It doesn't take long, however, before most of the girls are swept away by the beauty and complexity of nature; many had never seen a lake, or frogs and fish in their natural habitat. During a recent class, Whittaker gave the girls a short introduction to environmental geology and hydrogeology (the study of water), and then took them to the pond for a



ABOVE: Career Awareness students get hands-on experience while visiting the Rockefeller University Lab of Bacterial Pathogenesis and Immunology during a job shadowing. Photo: Calvin Robbins

BELOW: Career Awareness Program students presented their Brace Yourself app idea to volunteers from Foursquare during a job shadowing. Photo: Kate Hess

hands-on lesson. Using test tubes and a special dye, the girls tested the water for chlorine, phosphate and pH levels; when the water changed color, they matched it to a chart, which gave them their result. "It's turning pink, look at that!" squealed Ashley. "What does that mean?" Each girl scrambled for a turn. "Look, I'm a scientist," Carla said.

Then Whittaker and the girls sat on the dock, while Whittaker explained the different characteristics of geese, ducks, toads, frogs and turtles. Whittaker instructed the girls to sit very still and look for sunfish, identifiable by the neon-green lines on their sides and the telltale dot on their gills. The campers were so excited to

catch sight of the so-called sunnies, eating and hiding in the shadows, that several of the most curious girls almost fell into the water. By the time the lesson was over, most didn't want to leave. "I'll miss dinner; I don't mind," Dalyah said. "Can we come back tomorrow?"

Said Whittaker, "As a teacher, I am so excited when I see the campers' interest in science and the natural world. The Fresh Air Fund gives them an experience they could never get in a regular classroom. It makes all the difference."



AN APP-ETITE FOR TECHNOLOGY

The vibe of technology company Foursquare's headquarters is young, hip and definitely appealing to teenagers: from the oversized beanbag chairs, cubbies filled with board games, a fridge stocked with snacks and a wood picnic table, to glass-walled offices with huge flat-screen televisions on every surface and an old-fashioned red phone booth complete with a working phone.

Touring the office as part of a job shadowing, the group of 20 Fresh Air Fund Career Awareness Program students were smitten. Gathering in a spacious room with chalkboard walls, the children received a company primer from Andrew Hogue, senior vice president of engineering. Hogue explained that the startup, launched in 2009, has two mobile apps, Foursquare and Swarm, as well as a suite of enterprise and advertising tools. He then outlined the basics of initiating and running a tech startup — from creating a business plan to raising piles of money to the long process of bringing an idea to life.

Next came the assignment: Create your own app. Led by Foursquare mentors, groups of five students began brainstorming based on specific parameters: what is it, who would use it, how will people find it and how will it make money.

The first group, which included two students with braces on their teeth, came up with Brace Yourself, an app for an at-home dental service. "There will be roaming dental trucks, and the app will tell you which is the closest and

schedule it to come to you — like Uber for dentists," explained Isabelle. There would, of course, be user ratings. Suggested Gavin, "You could have different emoji, like one smiling, and one in pain."

Another group settled on Helping Hand, an app for students and their parents to download material that aids in homework. "My mother was taught math differently than I was, so it's hard for her to help me," said Rafael. "This could be a solution."

There was a FaceTime app for kids who are home sick from school to connect with teachers; a fashion app for designing your own clothes; and a generational translator app, to help older people better understand the urban slang of their children and grandchildren. "The other day I said to my grandma, 'My room is so ratchet right now,' and she had no idea what I meant," said Nivea. (Ratchet means messy.) "With this app she could look up the words she doesn't get."

Hogue never tires of working with youngsters. "You really see the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit come to life," he said. "The kids start to realize that Facebook and Snapchat didn't just happen — people were passionate, and made them happen. These kids are the next generation of entrepreneurs."

The students walked out of Foursquare with a new understanding of technology, and what it means to create it. "I had no idea that this is how people made apps," said Edgar. "I'm into technology anyway, and this seems like a really cool career. I'd love to work here, too."

PEDAL POWER

How hard do you have to pedal a bike to turn on a light bulb? Ask the campers at Camp Mariah, who pedaled their hearts out on Con Edison's Pedal-a-Watt bicycle; within seconds, a bulb, connected to a small generator, lit up; with a little extra exertion, on went six more. "It's like a spin class," explained Ogbonna Chilaka, an operating supervisor at Con Edison. Chilaka and his Con Edison colleagues spent a summer afternoon serving as career speakers

at Camp Mariah, explaining the basics of electricity through models of electric generators and the energy-generating bike. "When the kids pedal and the light goes on," he said, "that's a great teaching moment."

The campers, a number of whom were interested in the field of engineering, were filled with questions about electricity: Does pedal-power work in a similar way to solar power? If you pedal harder would the lights get brighter? What happens from the time you flip a switch to

COUNTDOWN TO SUMMER

The moment children step onto the bus to a Fresh Air camp or a visit with a volunteer host family, their life is changed forever. It's the start of an amazing journey that opens doors for thousands of New York City children from low-income communities. The Fresh Air Fund's official "Countdown to Summer" has begun and it's the perfect time to help send children on their way to a summer full of new experiences and adventures. Thanks to many generous contributions every year, thousands of New York City children get the opportunity to explore new environments, meet new people from different cultures, and build skills that can be utilized year-round.

Visit freshair.org/cts2016 to find out how you can unlock a child's limitless potential.

the time the light goes on?

"I was very impressed," said Chilaka, who also volunteers as a tutor for The Fund's Career Awareness Program. "When I was their age, I was not into electricity."

Chilaka was an excellent ambassador for both engineering and Con Edison.

"The models helped me to understand engineering and how electricity is generated," said Laura, 13. Added Sean, 15, "My favorite part was learning about all the job opportunities that Con Edison has. I learned that energy can be made in many different ways and I loved meeting people who do that work every day."

MUSICAL MAGIC

The girls at Camp ABC were admittedly too young to appreciate the celebrity of singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant. But as the former lead singer of the alt-rock '80s band 10,000 Maniacs sat cross-legged on the floor, encouraging the young teens to join her in a capella singing, they couldn't help but be impressed and inspired. "Wow, she's cool," whispered one 14-year-old to another.

Merchant, a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (c), spent the afternoon at Camp ABC as part of The Fund's collaboration with The ASCAP Foundation, which offers free music education programs to campers. Since 1999, the foundation has donated musical instruments and arranged for composers, songwriters and musicians to visit the camps, to introduce the enriching nature of music and the arts to children who might not otherwise have this experience.

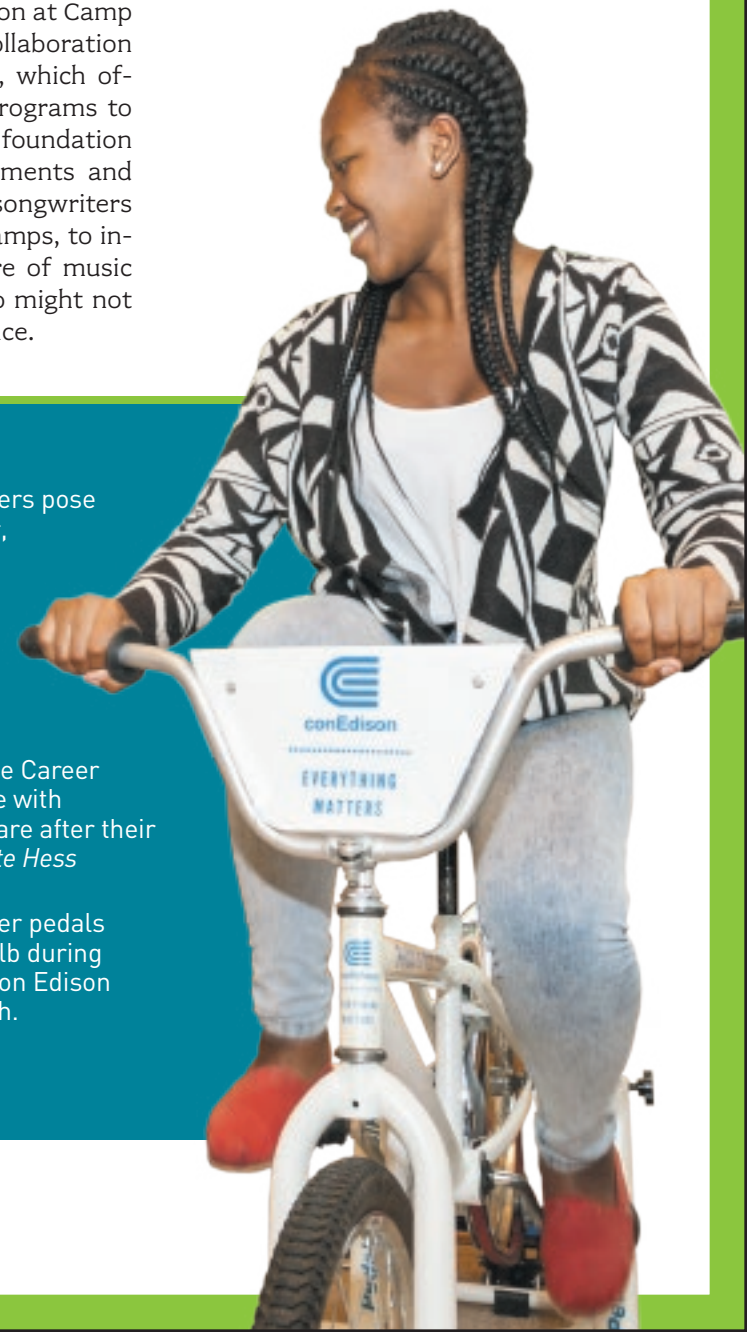
Always a supporter of music education, Merchant was nonetheless hesitant to come to camp. "I was intimidated knowing that there was little chance that these kids would be familiar with my music, and I am naturally awkward with kids of this age group," she said. "But experience has taught me that nothing breaks down barriers and removes obstacles quicker than music."

When Merchant walked into the room and saw chairs lined up as if for a lec-

TOP: Camp Mariah campers pose with their career speaker, Ogbonna Chilaka, after his presentation on his job as an operating supervisor at Con Edison. Photo: Joan Barker

ABOVE: Students from the Career Awareness Program pose with volunteers from Foursquare after their job shadowing. Photo: Kate Hess

RIGHT: A Fresh Air camper pedals a bike to power a light bulb during a demonstration with a Con Edison employee at Camp Mariah. Photo: Joan Barker





THE FRESH AIR FUND'S ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

The Fresh Air Fund's Career Awareness Program is designed to extend the camping experience beyond a summer and into a year-round enrichment program. Students apply in the 6th grade and attend Camp Mariah, The Fund's Career Awareness Camp, in Fishkill, N.Y., in the summer. They continue with the program during the school year in New York City and at camp with a focus on educational options, academic support and career exploration.

The Career Awareness Program includes intensive 24-day summer camp sessions, along with off-season weekend camping trips for 300 boys and girls at Camp Mariah. In addition to traditional activities, campers explore S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts Mathematics) topics at camp through learning about the environment, both in the sciences and sustainability; music and technology; and lessons on math and its concepts.

Other academic enrichment and leadership programs include the annual spring Career Fair in which New York City volunteers lead career workshops. Throughout the year, visits to corporate partners expose children to a range of career opportunities. From tutoring to The Fund's College Connections Program, students have a strong network of year-round support in place to help with their academic success.



TOP: A camper from Camp Hayden-Marks is ecstatic after learning a cord from his guitar instructor. *Photo: Joan Barker*

ABOVE: Singer-song writer Natalie Merchant leads an a cappella workshop at Camp ABC. *Photo: Hannah Beck*

BELOW: Keshawn, a student in The Fresh Air Fund's Career Awareness Program, has learned more than just mathematics from his tutor, DJuan; he's also learned about professionalism and the importance of hard work. *Photo: Courtney Rung*

AN EQUATION THAT WORKS

When he was in elementary school, math was Keshawn's favorite subject. Then he hit middle school. "Math got so much more complicated," said the 8th grader. "I started to hate it."

That changed when Keshawn started working with DJuan Neal, a volunteer tutor with The Fund's Career Awareness Program. Now, every Monday at 6 p.m., the two meet at The Fund's Manhattan office — along with dozens of other student-tutor pairs — and focus on math.

"At school, if most of the kids understand the problem, the teacher just keeps going," Keshawn said. "And if you don't understand, you get lost. DJuan, my tutor, takes the time to work through every problem with me until I understand every step."

With Neal's guidance and encouragement, Keshawn works on his math skills not just during tutoring sessions, but every day. That hard work has paid off. "Because I spend Monday nights racking my brains, often I'm the only one who knows the answers in class," Keshawn said. "It feels good. I have a real advantage over my peers; lots of them are struggling."

Neal, a compliance officer at Morgan Stanley, began tutoring as a way to make a difference in the lives of young minorities. In the process, he's grown through the relationship, and has come to appreciate Keshawn. "He's an interesting kid, a really good kid. He has a great spirit," Neal said.



THE BEST KIND OF BROTHER: CAMP TOMMY MEETS CAMP HAYDEN-MARKS

WHEN JOHN IS WITH HIS FRIENDS AT CAMP TOMMY, THE 15-YEAR-OLD ACTS LIKE A TYPICAL TEENAGER — TALKING ABOUT GIRLS, THE LATEST MUSIC, THE HIPPEST CLOTHES. BUT WHEN HE'S WITH THE 9- TO 12-YEAR-OLDS AT CAMP HAYDEN-MARKS, HIS DEemeanOR CHANGES. "I NEED TO BE A ROLE MODEL," SAID JOHN. "I WANT MY CAMPERS TO LOOK UP TO ME, AND I WANT TO GIVE THEM SUPPORT SO THEY FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES."

Until recently, the 12- to 15-year-old boys at Camp Tommy and the younger Camp Hayden-Marks boys had virtually no interaction, even though the camps were located just down the hill from one another.

Over the last two summers, that's all changed. Throughout their two-week camp experience, Tommy boys

now coach the Hayden-Marks boys — whom they've nicknamed "Little Wolves" — in various sports. They also lead the younger boys through activities such as dance and music (hip-hop appreciation), and even invite them to participate in their exclusive Color Extravaganza, which celebrates the friendships and bonds made at camp.

Ashley Freeman, who was a counselor and assistant director at Camp Hayden-Marks before she became assistant director at Camp Tommy, was one of the staff members who encouraged the connection between the two camps. The results have been just as she'd hoped.

"The Camp Hayden-Marks boys have close relationships with their counselors, but the Camp Tommy boys are closer to their age, so the younger boys can relate to them better," she said. "Many of the children don't have male role models, so this is a perfect big brother situation."

Nine-year-old Joey is a case in point. "I really like my counselor, but he's so old, like 20," he said. "It's fun hanging out with the Tommy boys — especially Kyle. He's 14, and he teaches



THE FRESH AIR FUND'S SHARPE RESERVATION

Sharpe Reservation has close to 2,000 acres of beautiful land, with lakes, ponds, and wooded hiking trails. Located in the Hudson Highlands in Fishkill, N.Y., Sharpe Reservation is the site for The Fresh Air Fund's five overnight summer camps, where 3,000 children experience life outside the city. During the school year, more than 15,000 children from community and school groups, as well as Girl Scout troops, visit the property. Sharpe Reservation provides an outdoor classroom for informal learning through curriculum-based activities that inspire an appreciation of nature and a greater understanding of the environment. Here on the expansive property, children enjoy interactive demonstrations and hands-on experiences guided by professionals. The reservation also houses a nature center, ropes courses, trails, lakes, ponds, a Model Farm and a planetarium, all with an environmental science and educational focus. Camp facilities are available for rent and are utilized by a variety of schools and organizations for weekend camping, day trips, conferences and retreats. To learn more, visit freshair.org/sharpe.

TOP: Campers from Camp Tommy and Camp Hayden-Marks participate in a basketball workshop as part of the new connection between the two camps. *Photo: Joan Barker*

BELOW: Former camper and current counselor Adam Graham inspires his campers with his first-hand experiences at camp and in life. *Photo: Joan Barker*

ture, she knew immediately that setting wouldn't work. Instead, she gathered the girls in a circle on the floor, and engaged them in a full-throated clapping game song. Within minutes, everyone was disarmed, smiling and relaxed — including Merchant. "Music worked its magic, again," she said. Merchant led the group from song to song, and they talked about how music connects us, teaches us, defines us. She traced the origins of the rhythms and melodies of songs by artists the girls listen to today

back through playgrounds, vacant lots and church pews. "I told the girls that this was their inheritance, these songs were their gift to give to their own children," she said. "The highlight of the day was when the girls started showing me their own clapping games. I felt honored to be brought into their circle of song."

Indeed, by connecting with Merchant the girls came to a whole new understanding of their own musical tradition. "I never thought about music this way before," said Daja. "Natalie was amazing."

PLUCKING THE HEARTSTRINGS

Twelve-year-old Kiana cradled the guitar awkwardly, but lovingly — like a mother holding her newborn for the first time. With encouragement from guitar teacher Andrew Lipow, she strummed tentatively, smiling as she created her first chords.

The Ascap Foundation Summer Guitar Project, which started in 2002, provides guitars and on-site music teachers to all of The Fund's five camps. For most of the campers, this is a rare chance to hold an instrument and to take music lessons.

"Playing guitar for the first time was one of my favorite experiences at camp," said William, 14. "I'm going to figure out a way to continue after I go home."

The experience is also rewarding for the teachers. Lipow, a professional musician, estimates that he's taught over 1,000 campers to play guitar. "Teaching campers has been very meaningful to me," he said. "To learn to create music, and to give each other support in the pursuit of music has had a profound im-

pact on their lives."

Unfortunately, now that many schools have significantly slashed their music budgets, many students — particularly those from low-income communities — do not have the opportunity to pursue music-related interests. Yet music education has been shown to be very valuable in many seemingly unrelated areas, including math and reading skills, self-discipline, teamwork and self-esteem.

"By exposing kids to the arts and music at the camps, we hope more children can blossom creatively," said Colleen McDonough, executive director of The Ascap Foundation. "This introduction will lead them to understand that they have the ability to be creative, and that creative work should be respected and valued."

"I feel that I've found a part of myself," said Desean, 15, who began playing guitar three summers ago at Camp Hayden-Marks, and has continued to teach himself. "I can't imagine my life without making music."

me cool dance moves, and he's kind of like an older brother."

Freeman is hoping to create a year-round mentoring program between the Hayden-Marks and Tommy boys. "It's great to see our youth being molded by positive young men," she said. "This is a powerful connection for both the younger and older kids."

Adam Graham, 22, a former Tommy camper and now a counselor, sees the difference in his campers since they became involved with the Hayden-Marks boys. "The older boys used to cluster up in groups, but now, when we go to Camp Hayden-Marks, they spread out and spend time with the younger boys," he said. "It's really helped the Tommy campers mature and come into their own."

Even the Counselors-in-Training (CITs) at Camp Hayden-Marks and Camp Tommy have begun partnering. The CITs from both camps do a full day hike together, and attend workshops and lead activities together.

The continuation from Hayden-Marks to Camp Tommy is an important one. Camp Hayden-Marks establishes a vital foundation, focusing

on friendship and teamwork as the children adjust to camp life. "Once they get to Camp Tommy, it's time for them to start molding who they want to be, and to develop character, building on what they learned at Hayden-Marks," Freeman said. "They're becoming men."

Hayden-Marks Camp Director Katie Toole has seen the success of the connection already. The last day of the second session at Camp Hayden-Marks, she noticed a table of the oldest boys crying during dinner. There was one exception. "The boys were crying because they did not want to leave camp," she said. "Then the one camper who was not crying said to the rest, 'It's fine, we can all go to Camp Tommy together next year!'"



WANTED: LOVING FAMILIES

This summer, join thousands of volunteer host families in suburbs and rural neighborhoods along the East Coast and Southern Canada as they share the beauty of their communities with New York City children. You don't need to be rich. You don't need to live on acres of farmland. You just need an open heart and an open home.

First-time Fresh Air visitors range in age from 7 to 12 years old, and stay for one to two weeks. New York City families can also host children during their summer vacations in the country. Children who are re-invited to visit the same host family can continue with The Fund through age 18.

Host families and their New York City visitors experience a transformative cultural exchange that is filled with friendships, smiles, adventures, trust, appreciation, growth and learning. On their Fresh Air visits, children may milk a cow, engage in the arts, discover the wonders of the nighttime sky, pick fruits and vegetables and go swimming.

Those who have hosted Fresh Air Fund youngsters never forget their visitors, or the benefits to both their family and their community. The majority of the children are re-invited to stay with the same host families year after year, and often form bonds that last a lifetime. The Fund is always looking for warm, loving people who are willing to open their homes and their hearts. Could that be you?

For more information about becoming a volunteer host family, contact The Fresh Air Fund at (800) 367-0003 or visit freshair.org.

TOP: Donna Eddins, of Manasquan, N.J., and her family have been hosting Nysan'ah since 2006, when this photo was taken. "I can't say enough great things about The Fresh Air Fund," Donna said. "We have been hosting Nysan'ah for ten years and have wonderful memories." *Photo: James Levine*

BELOW LEFT: Campers in fashion class create and design garments for their final projects at Camp Mariah. *Photo: Joan Barker*

BELOW RIGHT: Campers at Camp ABC learn the importance of teamwork, cooperation and communication during a low-ropes course challenge. *Photo: Joan Barker*

FRIENDLY TOWN: FROM BROOKLYN, WITH LOVE

AT 7 YEARS OLD, NYSAN'AH HAD NEVER BEEN OUT OF BROOKLYN. AS SHE HEADED TO HER FRESH AIR FUND FAMILY IN THE SMALL TOWN OF MANASQUAN, N.J., SHE WASN'T PREPARED FOR WHAT AWAITED.

Her first shock came when her host family, the Eddins, handed her a jar to catch fireflies. "The look on her face was like, 'Why are these people keeping bugs in a jar?'" remembered host mother Donna Eddins. Then there was the petting zoo. "Nysan'ah was clearly grossed out when the animals ate out of her hand," Eddins said. Nysan'ah even hated the beach: too much sand. Now, ten years later, 17-year-old Nysan'ah fully appreciates the joys of country life — which include not only catching fireflies, spending time with animals, sunning on the beach and swimming in the ocean, but walking the boardwalk with ice cream cone in hand, riding bikes through town and visiting Six Flags. "I've had experiences I never thought I would have in my lifetime," Nysan'ah said. "I feel very lucky."

Host sister Summer Eddins, 16, can't imagine life without Nysan'ah. Because Summer has two older sisters, age 25 and 28, Nysan'ah has fulfilled Summer's dream of having a sister her own age. Each summer, the two girls pick up where they left off the year before. "We do typical sister stuff — like hanging out, watching movies, cooking and baking," Summer said. "Our lives during the year are different, but that doesn't affect our connection."

Donna Eddins loves watching her daughter and Nysan'ah together. They appreciate and bring out the best in each other. "It's the most awesome experience ever," she said. "We get more out of it than Nysan'ah. She's like another member of our family — her picture is on the piano, with everyone else's."

Nysan'ah also considers the Eddins a second family. With them, she said, she has become more confident and wiser in the ways of the world. "It's been great to see how another family lives."

Nysan'ah's mother, Betsy Mercado, misses her daughter while she's away, but Mercado is grateful for the experience. She's watched Nysan'ah grow and mature through the years. "It's been an opportunity for her to see a different culture and a different life-style, and learn other people's ways," she said. "She loves the adventure of it."

Whatever differences there are between the two families, they all disappear when they get together.

"Nysan'ah comes from another world," Eddins said. "She takes a subway and bus to school every day, and we wouldn't even know how to get on a bus. But when it comes to what matters, we're all the same."



SUMMER CAMP ADVENTURES

At Fresh Air Fund camps, 3,000 boys and girls experience both academic enrichment and fun. Campers grow socially and emotionally, while interacting with counselors who are role models and mentors.

For at least two weeks, children swim and row boats out on the lake, and also enhance their computer skills. Campers study the planets and constellations to better appreciate the beauty of the night sky, with its sea of stars unobstructed by streetlights. They pick vegetables to prepare healthy snacks — such as a fresh tomato salsa — at the newly renovated Nutrition Center, and learn about animals at the Model Farm.

The five Fresh Air Fund camps are located on The Fund's Sharpe Reservation, which has close to 2,000 acres of wilderness property, in Fishkill, N.Y., 65 miles north of New York City. The Fresh Air camps are: Camp Anita Bliss Coler for girls, ages nine to 15; Camp Hayden-Marks Memorial for boys, ages nine to 12; Camp Tommy for 12- to 15-year-old boys; Camp Hidden Valley for boys and girls with and without special needs, ages 8 to 12; and Camp Mariah, which is also the base for The Fund's Career Awareness Program, for boys and girls in 7th to 9th grades. In honor of their generous support, Camp Mariah is named after Board member Mariah Carey and Camp Tommy is named after Tommy Hilfiger.

TOP: Fresh Air children and their host siblings take turns feeding the goats at the Great Brook Farm in Carlisle, Mass., during a get-together sponsored by Cabot Cheese. *Photo: Bridgette Braley Photography*

BELOW: Fatima Shama, The Fresh Air Fund's executive director, poses with a Fresh Air child at Port Authority Bus Terminal as he waits to board the bus to reunite him with his volunteer host family. *Photo: Jerry Speier*

A FARMER'S LIFE: BEHIND-THE- SCENES OF A DAIRY FARM

TEN-YEAR-OLD JOLENE HAD NEVER SEEN A REAL, LIVE COW BEFORE, AND WHEN FACED WITH A DAIRY FARM FILLED WITH COWS, SHE WASN'T SURE WHAT TO THINK. "THEY'RE HUMONGOUS," SHE NOTED, "AND SMELLY."

Jolene was part of a group of 18 host families and their Fresh Air children hosted by farmers Mark and Tamma Duffy at Great Brook Farm State Park in Carlisle, Mass., part of the Vermont-based Cabot Creamery Cooperative. The children and their host families toured the farm, watched as the cows were milked by a machine, and listened intently as Duffy explained the milking process. "I knew milk comes from cows, but I just thought farmers sat on a stool and milked them," commented one child. Afterward, the most daring children pet the cows, as well some wandering alpacas and goats.

"As dairy farmers, we welcome opportunities to allow kids to discover life on the farm," Duffy said. "It's important for children to learn where cheese and dairy products come from. Teaching the

next generation about production agriculture will help keep farming viable in the Northeast for generations to come."

Afterward, all 88 participants were treated to super-cheesy macaroni and cheese by Cabot's Gratitude Grille food truck. Then came the fresh ice cream. All were in dairy heaven.

Cabot Creamery Cooperative has been in continuous operation in Vermont since 1919, and makes a full line of cheeses, yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese and butter. Cabot is owned by the 1,200 dairy farm families throughout New England and upstate New York.

Cabot's farmer owners are often the first to volunteer in their own communities and that spirit of giving back permeates all Cabot does. Cabot is proud to work with partners like The Fresh Air Fund to build networks of help that can last a lifetime.



NEW KID IN TOWN:

Q. & A. WITH FATIMA A. SHAMA, THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FRESH AIR FUND.

Q: How does your background, both personal and professional, inform your goals for The Fresh Air Fund programs?

A: I was raised in New York City, in the Bronx, and like many of the children we serve, my playing outdoors was limited to playing in a schoolyard or in the street. The sound of the above-ground subway was the sound of my environment, my community. As a professional, I've gone from community-based to citywide policy work. I know how a ZIP code can impact a child's future by the quality of its public health and education. I also know that this city is rich with resources. I understand this confluence of great resources and great challenges, and the need to reach more families, partner with colleagues in the New York community of service providers, and appreciate the breadth of experiences our Fresh Air Fund children have.

Q: How do you measure success?

A: Every Fresh Air child shows courage when they leave their comfort zone to go to new environments and meet new people. These experiences push them to develop independence, creativity and confidence, and these are measures of the success of our work.

Q: What lessons do you hope children take away from their experience, both large and small?

A: Whether it's for one summer or 10 summers, my hope is that Fresh Air Fund children meet people who become friends and mentors; that they have fun and develop curiosity; that they try new things and learn to love nature, and the importance of protecting the environment. I also hope they grow up wanting to give back, whether as a counselor or one day hosting a Fresh Air Fund child of their own.

Q: What do you hope host families take away from their involvement with Fresh Air Fund children?

A: I hope host families experience a cultural exchange, which is equal parts sharing and learning. I know most find it a relationship-building experience that helps the entire family come together while sharing the simplicity of their everyday lives with a new member of the family. I also hope they gain an appreciation of what they have. Simply put, I would hope for a successful experience of discovery, growth and fun for everyone. 🌱





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