Sending Campers to Experience Summer with the Fresh Air Fund

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Growing up as a kid in the Bronx, my greatest memories were the summers my sisters and I spent upstate in the Catskills. The grit and graffiti (this was the 70's!), concrete and sirens, were left behind for something that felt otherworldly and magical. To this day, when I smell freshly cut grass or hear the summer cicadas I immediately am transported to those endless days by rivers, exploring forest paths and getting up on my first horse. The stories of our adventures came back with me to share excitedly with my pals in the schoolyard, and kept my imagination soaring until the next time.

So when I got the opportunity to join my colleagues for a send-off to the boys and girls in the Fresh Air FundFriendly Town program, I felt such a deep sense of gratitude that I could be a part of the experience that I knew was about to change these kids' lives. I learned that The Fresh Air Fund has been sending NYC kids from low-income communities off to amazing summer adventures with volunteer host families for 141 years. (Yes, the first kids left on horse and buggy!) Sitting in a designated area of Port Authority, our "job" was to entertain these kids while they waited for the busses to take them to their respective Friendly Town families for the week by playing games like UNO – which they had to teach us…and they won…every time. Mostly we just chatted and laughed and heard their enthusiasms and some of their worries as many of them were leaving their families for the first time. I was completely blown away by these smart, open-minded, creative little souls from all different ethnicities and backgrounds, spilling their feverishness out the way only children are able.

By the end of this volunteering experience, as is always the case with our For Good program activities, I was the one who received the blessing and the care and the love that I sought to give.

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