



SUMMER 2020

A SUMMER REIMAGINED

In the spring of 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and with New York City at the epicenter of the crisis, The Fresh Air Fund made the heartbreaking decision to cancel its traditional camping and Friendly Towns (visiting host family) programs for summer 2020. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first time we had to shift how we fulfill our mission since our founding in 1877. With a global pandemic and economic crisis on our doorstep, we remained steadfast in our commitment to providing free and enriching summer programs to children from New York City's low-income communities.

The Fresh Air Fund has been a beacon for youth in New York City for over 140 years, providing the City's children with experiences and exposure that help them thrive and succeed emotionally, academically, and socially. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the tenure and track record of The Fresh Air Fund confirmed that we were well-positioned to continue providing engaging and innovative programming while also bringing fun and joy to New York City youth. As we forged ahead to realize the unimaginable for our children, incredible partners - other non-profits, funders, corporations, and government agencies - joined with us.

Fresh Air families live in the very communities most affected by COVID-19 and were disproportionately impacted by the realities of the public health and economic crises. Schools closed, learning was remote, families were struggling through managing the day-to-day on all levels - unemployment, food insecurities, and all the unknowns that were arising daily, and then the tragic events of late spring hit. The reality of racism and racial injustices were front and center, again, and serving as a stark reminder of the everyday realities for many of our New York City children. The Summer of 2020 demanded increased urgency to serve children in New York City's communities.

the *Fresh Air* fund
because a summer can last a lifetime™



INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH

Founded in 1877, in response to the tuberculosis epidemic, The Fresh Air Fund has continued to serve NYC children and families through national emergencies and public health crises. We had seen hard times before. We had weathered public health challenges before. So, with determination and purpose, and the support of our donors, the staff at The Fresh Air Fund worked together, inviting input from team members across the organization, to develop four new programs to respond to this moment.

As children and families adjusted to the loss of a structured school day, vital social services, and social interaction, and not knowing what summer would be, The Fresh Air Fund knew summer needed to happen. And we recognized that summer would look very different in 2020. We committed to finding the resources and creative solutions to provide children with the summer experiences they deserved and needed – a chance to be safe and be outdoors, to reconnect with other children and caring adults, to expand perspectives and build relationships, and to experience joy and hope. We knew we needed to reimagine summer and keep its magic alive.

As NYC and beyond responded to COVID-19, playgrounds shut down and schools and libraries were forced to close, we knew that children would need opportunities to move and play, stem losses in learning and literacy, be engaged in new experiences, and be socially connected. We also knew that our teens and young adults would equally need the same and would be eager to find educational and employment opportunities. We engaged our New York City Fresh Air Fund families and asked their thoughts and opinions. We heard that families were eager to have their child participate in programs virtually or in-person; they were eager to have their child have social interactions; and, as families, they wanted to do things together at home or outdoors.

Throughout our planning, we focused on ensuring all children from NYC would be invited to participate – returning Fresh Air Fund participants and new families. We committed that our programs would connect children with nature through live educational programming and outdoor activities or by bringing the "outdoors indoors." We also committed that all of our programming would connect to The Fresh Air Fund's positive youth development framework to: develop inner strength; build relationships and support networks; expand perspectives and set goals; and take on challenges and learn life skills.

As we planned forward and developed innovative, safe, and responsive programs, strategic partners – new and existing – were integral to our successes. Funders, understanding the importance of our work, responded with financial support, encouragement, connections, and opportunities. Partner non-profits and youth-serving organizations, themselves pivoting to virtual programming, developed new program models with us, especially in our teen programs, where we looked to industry experts and corporate partners who engaged employees to share career insights and job readiness skills with teens. And finally, we worked alongside state and city government who helped open parks and streets to ensure children had access to safe play spaces.

The development and impact of our four new programs, and the employment opportunities created for youth, were in themselves remarkable, but what was realized through these experiences was the strength of our Fresh Air community, the strong spirit of our children, families and staff, and the vital role The Fresh Air Fund has played – and will continue to play – in the future of our children and NYC.

99%

Of caregivers would recommend Fresh Air Fund to family and friends

84%

Of youth reported wanting to take better care of the environment

86%

Of caregivers reported their child(ren) is more open to trying new things

91%

Of youth reported feeling safe

84%

Of youth reported feeling more confident

88%

Of youth reported feeling active and healthy

FRESH AIR SUMMER SPACES



With social distancing requirements and a lack of available summer programs due to the pandemic and budget cuts, children in New York City had very few options. We know the importance of children playing outdoors in safe spaces and were committed to partnering with local communities to give children the chance to play outside in their neighborhoods in a safe and structured program.

With the generosity of our partners, Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Ford Foundation and The JPB Foundation, Summer Spaces turned closed streets into age-appropriate play spaces in several communities hardest hit by the pandemic. At 10 program sites in 4 boroughs (2 in the Bronx, 2 in Brooklyn, 2 in Manhattan, and 4 in Queens), children engaged in outdoor play with an emphasis on movement, arts and crafts, and recreation-based programming. Health and safety

“I want to come back here next year! When I see my friends, I’m going to tell them they should come!”

– Sara

protocols were observed to keep children and staff safe, and staff participated in the free Johns Hopkins online contact tracing course.

Children, ages five to 13, created and brought home art projects like kaleidoscopes, mobiles, and cloud climbers. Recreational activities – including basketball drills, Frisbee games, soccer, and hula hoop tournaments – unfolded on city streets. And, through a partnership with the American Ballet Theatre, professional teaching artists taught workshops at several sites. After months spent indoors with limited interactions with their peers, children glowed with joy, making new friends, and having fun outdoors.



In our continued commitment to support job training and employment opportunities for young people and with drastic cuts to NYC’s summer youth employment program, we hired 140 NYC youth, ages 17-24, to become coaches and mentors at Summer Spaces.

Through Summer Spaces, children experienced time outdoors, physical activity, and social interaction with peers and learned from caring counselors. The program serves as a model for providing community-based opportunities for safe play.

“During the Bloomberg Administration, ‘Summer Streets’ reimagined New York City’s roads and gave New Yorkers more space to be active and enjoy the outdoors. Summer Spaces builds on that idea by providing children across the city more places to get outside, participate in supervised activities, and most importantly, have fun – because when you’re a kid, that’s what summer break should be all about. In the midst of this pandemic, the mission of The Fresh Air Fund is more important than ever, and we’re glad to support this creative new way to fulfill it.”

– Patti Harris, CEO of Bloomberg Philanthropies and former First Deputy Mayor of New York City

12,000

Available slots at 10 sites

92%

Of children said their time at Summer Spaces helped them feel more active and healthy

96%

Of caregivers said they would be interested in a similar Summer Spaces program in the future

88%

Said their child(ren) is more open to trying new things

FRESH AIR EVERYWHERE

Our virtual camp, Fresh Air Everywhere, provided NYC children the opportunity to have a safe and fun virtual experience to explore the world around them and open up new horizons. The program invested in children's social and emotional needs while creating opportunities for fun activities led by camp staff who served as mentors.

Children, ages seven to 13, were in virtual bunks with peers their own age, enjoying weekly programs that cultivated their curiosity through three themes: Around the World, Nature, and Mystery and Time Travel.

Each child received a "Camp in a Box" kit filled with arts and crafts materials, books, and all supplies needed to participate in daily activities. Staff, who included Fresh Air alumni and Friendly Towns hosts, led programs in arts, literacy, and STEM. Movement activities encouraging children to be active were also integrated in the programming.



“Virtual camp was so much fun! My favorite part was the arts and crafts and going to the farm. I also grew a bean plant and it's still growing!”
- Madison

Fresh Air Everywhere benefitted from great partnerships, like the American Jewish Historical Society where participants in the Time Travel camp travelled back in time to meet poet Emma Lazarus and learn about her life and the historical context of her poem on the Statue of Liberty. Layering in literacy and learning, campers then worked independently and collaboratively to write their own poems. Campers were also invited to enjoy the outdoors through interactive learning, including a virtual trip to an aquarium and The Fresh Air Fund's own Model Farm.

“On the first day, I was nervous to meet new people, but then I had a lot of fun the rest of the week. It was a completely new experience, and I learned to draw better!”
- Micah

The virtual curriculum was designed to invite children to explore and discover, as they would at camp. The project-based activities included academic components to help address the challenges of "summer slide" and the learning loss seen when schools transitioned to remote instruction in the spring.

Through Fresh Air Everywhere, we were able to give children a safe space to become part of a new community, make new friends, and, of course, have fun.

“It's so great to see my boys putting the alarm on to wake up and looking forward to the day. We have seen them laugh, learn and be happy for the first time in a long time. The staff engages and teaches which is really nice to see. We had many struggles but your staff really goes above and beyond and we want to say Thank You.”

- The Maher Family



97%

Of caregivers would recommend the program to friends and family

87%

Of campers said the program made them feel active and healthy

2,064

"Camp in a Box" kits were sent to campers

92%

Of campers said their experience made them want to take better care of the environment

FRESH AIR TEEN PROGRAMS

Following its over 25-year history of introducing middle and high school students to career exploration and awareness, together with the barriers to summer employment and budget cuts to the Summer Youth Employment Program in New York City, The Fund created a model program on career exposure, job readiness training, and internship and credentialing opportunities for teens ages 14-17. All participants received stipends and participated in professional development workshops.



In partnership with four organizations – NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School), PennPraxis, the non-profit practice arm of the Weitzman School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania, Urban Arts Partnership, and Youthful Savings – The Fund ran "virtual academies." Participating teens were introduced to basic, industry-level skills in design and architecture, game design, and entrepreneurship, and had first-hand opportunities to learn directly from professionals in these fields. Working collaboratively, they gained leadership and team-building skills, and became more confident in developing and sharing their own ideas.

“During this program, I’ve been able to become more creative and could see myself studying architecture in college. What surprised me was that in architecture, there is no limit to a type of idea – no matter how bizarre it may seem, it is actually quite possible to achieve.”

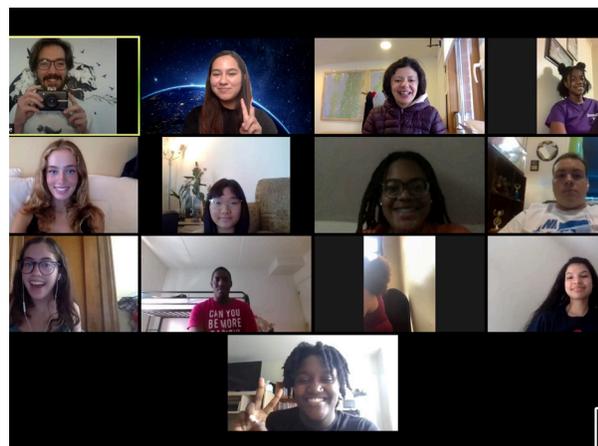
– Diarriou

Teens, ages 14 -15, in the Job Readiness program attended interactive workshops on developing communication, leadership, conflict-resolution, and time-management skills. Through online job shadowings, career panels, and a mini-career fair, students were able to speak directly with professionals representing a broad range of industries.

Teens, ages 16 - 17, in the Internship Program gained first-hand work experience, directly assisting staff in The Fund’s virtual camp, Fresh Air Everywhere, and at Summer Spaces sites. The interns developed leadership skills and participated in workshops on professionalism, financial literacy, college readiness, and post-secondary options.

When teens were feeling isolated and facing economic hardships, The Fresh Air Fund’s teen programs gave students a sense of greater purpose and community, financial resources, and a safe place to explore and express themselves. Volunteers from over 20 corporate and non-profit partners led workshops on professionalism, sharing knowledge of their career paths and opening a world of possibility through exposure.

With guidance from supportive mentors and access to industry leaders, teens gained professional and life skills, developing a strong foundation as they look ahead to their own careers and future opportunities for leadership.



“NOLS was the best experience! This program taught me so much in such a short amount of time. I was able to learn the characteristics of being a leader, more about who I am and understand why wilderness is important. I really enjoyed the three weeks and I hope to join this program again!”

– Effie

88%

Of participants reported feeling more confident

87%

Of participants found new things they were good at – that they didn’t know they were good at

500+

Youth served

\$416,800

Funds distributed to support stipends

FRESH AIR OPEN SPACES

In partnership with the City Parks Foundation, Fresh Air Open Spaces provided over 125 children, ages 12 - 15, the opportunity to participate in an outdoor environmental education and sports program for two-week sessions, meeting for four hours a day, five days a week.

At Marine Park in Brooklyn, Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, and Forest Park in Queens, youth engaged in activities including birdwatching, observing and releasing aquatic organisms, testing water chemistry, and identifying major tree species. Participants also learned fundamental sports skills, such as proper running techniques and basic tennis skills, and participated in track and field and soccer games.



93%

Of participants said their experiences made them want to take better care of the environment

“Our city’s kids endured a very rough spring, so we are eager to continue using parks to offer kids opportunities this summer to play and learn outdoors in safe, structured and enriching environments.”

– Heather Lubov, Executive Director, City Parks Foundation

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT



The Fresh Air Fund has a long history of providing leadership and professional development opportunities for young people. In a typical summer, The Fund employs over 500 seasonal staff. This summer, as opportunities for young people to gain paid work experience were dramatically limited, our commitment became even stronger.

Through Fresh Air Everywhere, Teen Programs and Summer Spaces, we employed 200 New York City youth ages 18-24. Our orientation programs provided trainings in positive youth development, behavior management, effective communication, DEI, mental health, and more. Youth working in the Summer Spaces program had the opportunity to work in their own communities, while gaining valuable on-the-ground youth development experience.



“I’ve learned the importance of being patient and understanding. I’ve tried to teach the students to be themselves, and they’ve taught me to be more creative and have fun.”

– Zachary

200

18-24 year-olds were employed as staff

45

Of the youth employed were alumni of Fresh Air programs

“I learned active listening, flexibility, communication, and team work. I learned a lot from the children, such as to be genuine, have fun without holding back, and give your all to every game.”

– Joshua

FRESH AIR FAMILY WELLNESS

At The Fund's camps in New York's Mid-Hudson Valley, Fresh Air Family Wellness provided an opportunity for parents, guardians, siblings, and other relatives of our Fresh Air Fund children to enjoy the outdoors, explore nature, and relax as a family.

Families visited the Sharpe Reservation, as well as Camp Junior in Harriman State Park. Meals and refreshments were provided throughout the day and transportation was provided if needed. To ensure safety, daily service numbers were limited, and each family was matched with an individual staff member who guided them through the day.

Families enjoyed everything from boating, swimming, hiking nature trails, visiting the planetarium, and fishing to arts and crafts, and scavenger hunts. Many families shared that it was the first time they were spending time outdoors since March, and the opportunity to sit and enjoy peaceful surroundings and nature was one of the most special parts of the experience.



“When I first got to Camp Mariah, so many memories came back. The best part is that we were able to spend time with each other and go fishing. When you're fishing it's all about patience and while you're waiting you can have many conversations, especially with your parents.”

- Titus

Welcome bags were provided when families were greeted at the start of the day and each family left with a box of fresh produce from local farms to bring home. Families rated the program 4.9 on a scale of 1 to 5. The program offered families the opportunity to connect with each other, connect with our staff, and experience the rejuvenation and magic of *fresh air*.

“It was a perfect day. Just to see my kids smiling in such a beautiful setting is priceless. The generosity, helpfulness and kindness of your staff is something I will never forget. It was so nice for us to get away from the city.

This has been a tough year and continues to be. Thank you for the food, the car service, the wonderful gifts, the kindness, the memories and allowing us as a family to be together at such a beautiful place.”

- Tynisa



“We've been stuck in the house through COVID, and Family Wellness gave us a really good day out to be in nature. My youngest daughter went to Camp Hidden Valley, so to actually see the cabins where she stayed was amazing!

We were sitting on a bench, doing watercolors and overlooking the pond, which gave us a chance to connect and talk to one another in a peaceful moment. My girls also tried fishing - it was so great and they were so happy when they caught a fish on their line!”

- Cassandra

1,257

People participated in the program

100%

Would recommend the program to family and friends

291

Bags of fresh produce were given to families

99%

Felt more connected as a family

THANK YOU

Fresh Air Summer 2020 could not have happened without the support of all our generous donors, but we give special thanks to the following donors who provided financial support specifically for our new programs.

Summer Spaces was made possible through the generosity of:

Bloomberg Philanthropies

Ford Foundation

The JPB Foundation

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Blavatnik Family Foundation

Mondelēz International

Shake Shack

Goldbelly

The Charles and Lynn Schusterman

Teagle Foundation, Inc.

JJJ Charitable Foundation

Family Foundation

Uber Eats

K Period Media

We are grateful to the many partners who helped us – by donating items, giving of their time, helping launch new programs, and providing additional encouragement and support. They made the magic of summer happen!

150th-155th Street Edgecombe Avenue
Block Association

Lishawn Alexander

American Jewish Historical Society

American Ballet Theatre

Assembly Member Catalina Cruz

Assembly Member Nathalia Fernandez

Assembly Member Victor Pichardo

Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson

Assembly Member Latrice M. Walker

Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie

Biolite

Broadway Housing Communities

Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.

Bronx Community Board 4

Bronx Community Board 6

Brooklyn Children's Museum

Brooklyn Community Board 7

Brooklyn Community Board 8

Brooklyn Community Board 16

Brownsville Jobs Plus

City Parks Foundation

City Council Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo

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City Council Member Danny Dromm

City Council Member Vanessa Gibson

City Council Member Ritchie Torres

Clinique

Comcast

Common Ground Farm

Culture Lab LIC at The Plaxall Gallery

Steven DeLuca

DJ Rashida

Eggbert Free Range Farm

ElmCor

ESPN

The Financial Gym

First Book

Flying Deer Nature Camp

Free Country

Go Go Squeez

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IDK Tonight

JCCA

Liberty Optical

MacKay Shields

Manhattan Borough President Gail Brewer

Manhattan Community Board 9

Matthew Potel Foundation

McCormick & Company

Meadowbrook Farm

Mixed Company NYC

Morgan Stanley

Mouse.org

Nantucket Spyder

NASDAQ

National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

New York City Department of Transportation

New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

NOLS

PennPraxis, Stuart Weitzman School of Design,

University of Pennsylvania

The Pit NYC

Queens Community Board 3

Queens Public Library

SCAN Harbor

Scholastic

Senator Alessandra Biaggi

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Senator Jessica Ramos

Senator Gustavo Rivera

Senator Luis Sepulveda

Senator Jose M. Serrano

Shake Shack

Sing Me a Story

Speedo

Street Lab

Styles by Pat

SUNY Downstate Medical Center

Sweet Blackberry Foundation

Syncopated Ladies

The TJX Companies

Turn A Page

Untitled Investments

Urban Arts Partnership

Warner Music Group

Tamiko White

Young Audiences New York

Youthful Savings