

the *Fresh Air* fund  
2023 Annual Report



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FreshAir.org





“MY FAVORITE PART ABOUT THE FRESH AIR FUND IS EVERYTHING!”

For over 145 years, The Fresh Air Fund has provided opportunities for New York City children from underserved communities to explore nature, discover new talents, meet new friends, develop confidence and create new goals for the future.



# A Message from Our Chairman & CEO



As The Fresh Air Fund looks ahead to the coming summer, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our supporters, volunteers and partners for your dedication and generosity to New York City children and families.

Through The Fresh Air Fund's summer programs, New York City youth have opportunities to

develop new skills and create memories through outdoor exploration. Children have the chance to become leaders: whether it's a young camper leading their friends in a cheer, or a teen in our Counselor-in-Training (CIT) program helping lead activities and gaining valuable life skills.

Last summer, I had the pleasure of visiting camp and meeting several Counselors in Training and was impressed with their focus and their goals for the future. They were proud to be taking on more responsibility, learning teamwork and acting as role models for younger campers. It is these moments, when I see young people able to build their leadership skills, that make me proud to support The Fresh Air Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Lauder".

William Lauder  
Chairman

As the testimonials, photos and impact statistics throughout this report demonstrate, in 2023 The Fund created opportunities for New York City children to explore nature, make new friends and learn new skills. It was incredible for me to see children returning from their summer adventure, bursting with excitement to tell their families stories about all they had done during their time away.



As we look forward to this summer, we are excited to celebrate the 30th anniversaries of Camp Mariah, as well as of Camp Tommy. We are also excited to share that our new Youth Advisory Board is giving teen leaders a voice in our programs and our Alumni and Parent advisory boards are helping build community.

I am grateful for our generous partners and supporters who have made our programs possible. On behalf of the children and families we serve, thank you so much for your commitment to The Fresh Air Fund.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Gitelson".

Lisa Gitelson  
Chief Executive Officer



# SLEEPAWAY CAMP

For the first summer since 2019, The Fund operated six camping programs: Camp ABC, Camp Hayden-Marks, Camp Hidden Valley, Camp Junior, Camp Mariah – the Career Awareness Camp – and Camp Tommy, as well as the Teen Leadership and Counselor-in-Training programs.

Over 300 camp staff, including many international staff and alumni of Fresh Air programs, provided a supportive environment for 1,240 campers, ages 8-15, to explore nature, develop independence, have new experiences and make new friends.

Activities included swimming, visiting the model farm, hiking nature trails, boating, guitar lessons, archery and art. All campers visited the reopened planetarium.

Campers returned home with new confidence, new skills and many stories to share with friends and family.

89%

Of parents / caregivers said their child is more open to trying new things after going to camp

85%

Of parents / caregivers said their child learned important skills at camp



"This is my first time at this camp. Guitar is my favorite activity – I had never played before! The counselors are fun. They taught me how to be caring and helped me play soccer and go hiking."

– Noah, 8, Camper





# FRIENDLY TOWNS



“My favorite experience from Friendly Towns was going to a pond and visiting the aquarium. I had a fantastic time with the family that hosted me – it was definitely a 10/10! My advice is to just be yourself, enjoy the moment and don’t be afraid to try new things.”

– Alitzel, 12, Friendly Towns

In 2023, over 170 children, ages 8-18, visited volunteer host families in small towns and rural areas along the East Coast through The Fund’s legacy program Friendly Towns. The program included new youth and new host families for the first time since 2019.

A visit to stay with a host family is a unique opportunity for youth to travel to a new place and have fun experiences. Families share that favorite activities include riding bikes, visiting a local lake or beach and spending time at nearby parks.

Many children form close friendships with their host families and return to visit the same host family year after year, creating lifelong connections and gaining new perspectives.

96%

Of youth said their visit to Friendly Towns helped them feel active and healthy

97%

Of parents / caregivers said their child is more confident after going to Friendly Towns





# LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

The Fund's leadership programs provide our older campers with opportunities to take on more responsibility in a safe and supportive environment.

The Teen Leadership Program provides youth, ages 13-15, with communication skills, leadership development and team-building workshops. The CIT program, a leadership and staff development program for 16-17-year-olds, is an important transition on the journey from camper to counselor. The program helps teens further develop leadership and communication skills. CITs shadow counselors and are role models for younger campers.

A summer 2023 highlight for participants in our leadership programs was the Design to Thrive program, a partnership between The Fresh Air Fund and PennPraxis at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design. The program centers around design education and involves youth in all aspects of the design process, including having a voice in what they build to contribute to the camp community. This year they built and decorated outdoor seating, tables and new camp signs.

86%

Of parents / caregivers said their child is more confident leading others after being part of a Fresh Air Fund leadership program

58

Summer staff are alumni of Fresh Air programs



**"My favorite camp memories are overcoming my fear of heights during high ropes, going on hikes and making new friends! From being a CIT, I learned to have more patience, improve my communication and time management skills, and to be a role model for the campers."**

**- Kristin, 16, CIT**



# ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS



“The best part of CCP is getting to see your friends that you went to camp with. I have been in the same group as one friend since 10th grade, and I went to camp with him since middle school. I have loved growing up together and having lifelong friends.”

– Aderinsola, 17

During the academic year, students participate in programs that provide opportunities for mentorship and building community.

The Young Women’s Giving Circle is a youth-led program which teaches young women about the importance of community service and the power of philanthropy.

The Circle of Brotherhood program provides young men with a safe and supportive space to share thoughts and discuss issues related to healthy manhood.

The Career Awareness Program is designed to help New York City adolescents understand the relationship between school and work and how to make positive choices that will impact their futures. Participants attend Camp Mariah during the summer and participate in year-round job shadowings, tutoring, camping weekends and a career fair during the school year.

The College Connections Program supports students through the application process for college and other post-secondary options. Students in 10th – 12th grade work in groups with mentors and continue to receive support during college.

Camp Junior participants stay connected during the school year and engage in programming focused on building community which takes place in the Bronx and at Camp Junior. Activities include a running club and Life Skills workshops that build connections and help campers develop SEL skills.





# DONORS & PARTNERS

The Fresh Air Fund is very grateful to our loyal and generous donors for support of our programs. Donors are recognized at [FreshAir.org/2023-Donors-Partners](https://FreshAir.org/2023-Donors-Partners) for gifts received from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

# LEGACIES & BEQUESTS

Donors who have chosen to include The Fresh Air Fund as a beneficiary of their estate leave a legacy of growth, learning and fresh air to NYC children for generations to come. They are also gratefully acknowledged at [FreshAir.org/2023-Donors-Partners](https://FreshAir.org/2023-Donors-Partners).

Visit [FreshAir.org](https://FreshAir.org) to learn about more options for planned gifts.

Visit [FreshAir.org/Annual-Reports-Financials](https://FreshAir.org/Annual-Reports-Financials) to view The Fund's Audited financials for Fiscal Year 2023. A copy of our financial reports may be obtained from The Fresh Air Fund, 633 Third Avenue, 14th floor, New York, NY 10017 (212) 897-8900, from the New York State Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, New York, NY 10005, or from the Charities Registry on the New York State Attorney General's website, [www.charitiesnys.com](http://www.charitiesnys.com).



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**THE FRESH AIR FUND**

**633 Third Avenue, 14th Floor  
New York, NY 10017**

**212.897.8900 • 800.367.0003**

**FreshAir.org • [freshair@freshair.org](mailto:freshair@freshair.org)**

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*because a summer can last a lifetime™*