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Education

Bringing out their best: Kids with NYPD Giants program visit Camp Fiver

By Gabriele Holtermann

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Thirty-nine NYPD Far Rockaway and Harlem Giants players between the ages of 9-14, along with eight NYPD officers, ended their summer break with a free sleepaway camp at Camp Fiver in Poolville, New York.

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The Summer camp experience was a collaboration with the Fiver Children’s Foundation, a year-round youth development program with a 10-year history for young people ages 8-18 and funded with a grant through the Camp-School Partnership Demonstration Program in collaboration with the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration International Association and the National Summer Learning Association. Additional financial support came from the NYPD and National Grid Foundations.

The retreat, held from Aug. 20 through Aug. 23, had been in the works for about a year and was the brainchild of NYPD Youth Coordination Pierre, who, along with his twin brother Jonathan, are alumni of Fiver’s 10-year program.



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The camp is part of the Fiver Children’s Foundation and is named after one of Richard Adams’ “Watership Downs” characters, the small rabbit wanted to create a better future for his community.

With that goal in mind, retired Wall Street investment banker Tom Tucker founded the program in 1998 to create a positive and nurturing environment for New York City kids from low-income families. What started as a summer camp evolved into a mentoring and counseling program, which accommodates ages 8 or 9 through high school graduation.



The camp’s entrance.

Photo courtesy of De’Andre Henderson

Jean-Pierre and his brother benefited greatly from the program, and Jean-Pierre wanted the kids he works with to have the same experience, or to possibilities they didn’t think were possible.

“I saw the impact [Camp Fiver] had in my life,” Jean-Pierre said. “I went on a trip. The kids that I work with, they remind me of myself.”

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Jean-Pierre got the ball rolling with the help of his brother, who works

For most kids, it was their first time at an overnight camp and away from

Jean-Pierre said some parents would have never sent their kids to camp; it was a memorable one for the youngsters.

er staff to make

“Since we deal with the kids on an everyday basis, they trusted us,” Jean-Pierre said.

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Camp activities included fishing lessons.
Photo courtesy NYPD P.O. Andre Jean-Pierre

The days were action-packed and introduced the players to activities th
new memories by participating in activities like environmental educati

or social media
; bonfires, and

“It really brought the best out of all the kids,” Jean-Pierre said, pointing out that the kids most likely would have never tried weaving, creating p scarves.

Far Rockaway player Reynold had never been to sleepaway camp before. He liked the environmental education program because he enjoyed be would likely return to the camp.

“We got to go inside the creek, and we got to catch crawfish. It was fun,” Reynold said.

12-year-old Cody Martinez from East Harlem had also never been to sleepaway before. He said he wasn’t nervous before he left, but his mom w

“My mom, she was like, it was like the first time that I’m actually gonna be away like very far away from her,” Martinez said. “So she was like sc

Like most of the kids, he enjoyed playing Gaga Ball, a fast-paced sport played in an octagonal pit.

“That was a very interesting game,” Martinez said. And while he already had a bond with his mates and cops, that bond had tightened.

“I trust them more,” Martinez said.

13-year-old Leo Montgomery from Far Rockaway loved the lake and thought the whole experience was fun. He said his most rewarding experie camp was catching a crawfish.

Harlem Giants player 13-year-old Russell Francis admitted that he was a little homesick but that his friends made the experience more fun. He that camp would be boring or he had to do activities he didn’t like.

“But honestly, it was fun,” Francis declared, saying he would probably return next year.

The kids thought the cops did a great job as counselors, making the experience fun.

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“They respected us. They always put us in place and always helped us w **Ad 1 of 1 (000)**



Kids at Camp Fiver.

Photo courtesy of De'Andre Henderson

NYPD Lt. Lenora Moody started the Far Rockaway Giants Youth Mentoring Program (former Far Rockaway Colts) in 2018 as part of the “Neighborhood Coordination School Initiative” (NCSI) in Far Rockaway, an NYPD mentorship program for at-risk youth in collaboration with the Department of Education. The program aims to break the cycle of violence with tutoring, mentoring, and flag football training while improving the relationship between the school and the community. In 2022, Moody brought the project, which has a high success rate, to Harlem.

Like P.O. Jean-Pierre, Lt. Moody believes in exposing the kids to more opportunities. Moody explained team building was a critical aspect of the program, getting players from Harlem and Rockaway to get to know each other better.

“A lot of time, violence indicators are people going from one jurisdiction to another, or one community to another, and that’s how some violence happens,” Moody said.

Moody explained that from a police perspective, territorial behavior can drive violence among young people.

“But now you have people that are growing up in Harlem that say, ‘I know somebody, he is on the block,’” Moody said. “Somebody in Far Rockaway is saying, ‘I know people in Harlem. They are on the block.’”

Moody expressed her gratitude to P.O. Jean-Pierre and his brother and sister for their support during the camp season was over. “They were there for the kids even though they were not on the block.”

Lt. Moody said that some of the kids had been apprehensive about going to camp.

“Once they were free to be themselves, that was it,” Moody said. “It’s so important for them to be themselves.”

Some parents even asked Moody how to sign their kids up for the Fiver program.

“If it’s something that’s for free for city kids, they want their kids to be a part of it,” Moody said. “That’s how much they loved [Camp Fiver].”

“We have a lot of admiration for the efforts that Lt. Moody and the officers are making to build a stronger relationship between the community Ko said. “We’re happy to be a part of it.”

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