

Darius

NEXT GENERATION YOUTH PROGRAMS CLIENT

I remember living in the shelter when I was five years old. I know what it was like to not understand what was going on with my family but to feel the stress of it all the same.

I know what it was like to come to camp and feel detached from everybody in the beginning. And I remember how quickly I felt love, safety, and just relief by escaping the shelter for several hours a day during the summer. **Lifting Up Westchester's Next Generation Camp** gave me the breathing room to grow, and I often think back to those moments as saving my life.

As I grew up, I got involved with the Next Generation Mentoring and College Prep programs. I saw them as a way to break out of the circumstances that have tried to drag me down my entire life. I can't tell you enough the impact of the staff's unconditional support, guidance, and lots of tough love had on me.

Particularly during Covid, I had never felt so depressed and lonely in my life. It took a huge toll on me emotionally, and I had to take a break from college to regroup. **Now I have a great job in the lab at a local hospital, and I have only two more courses to graduate college.**

